THE IMPACT OF *KOLOT'S ROSH HODESH: IT'S A GIRL THING!*

ON ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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The purpose of this mixed-method study was to examine the impact, if any, of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's A Girl Thing!* on adolescent girls in the areas of friendship, school issues, family issues, body image, and assertiveness after participating in the religious-based program for nine monthly modules. Participants completed pretests and posttests in the areas of self-concept and basic Jewish knowledge. Quantitative results demonstrated statistically significant results in the areas of basic knowledge of Jewish female role models, values, and traditions, and statistically significant results in the areas of general, parental/home, and global self-concept. Qualitative results revealed inconsistent results with application of lessons taught, with some effect being acknowledged in the areas of friendship, gossip, bullying, self-defense, and assertiveness.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Girls are discouraged from expressing strong feelings and are pressured to fulfill

unrealistic expectations, to be popular, and to struggle to find their way in a society that still

reinforces narrow gender stereotypes. Under such pressure, in their frustration and anger, girls—

often unconsciously—find it less risky to take out their fears and anxieties on other girls instead

of challenging the ways boys treat them, the way the media represents them, or the way the

culture at large supports sexist practices (Brown, 2003).

Adolescence is a challenging time for children, their parents, and anyone working with

adolescents. The emotional highs are so high, the emotional lows so low. Friendships and

loyalties change from minute to minute, and children are left to struggle with the questions:

What's wrong with me? Why don't they accept me? What did I do that made me the outcast?

How can I make this better?

This dissertation is the result of a mixed-method study examining the application of

monthly lessons taught to adolescent girls as part of a religion-based program that addresses the

issues of family struggles, friendship, body image, school struggles, and assertiveness as they

apply to and within the tenets of Judaism. Sixth-grade girls who completed pretests and posttests

in the areas of basic Jewish knowledge and individual self-concept, and fulfilled the

requirements of nine monthly modules in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* (Berley-

Mellits & Gartner, 2003), then participated in focus group interviews. Teachers/group leaders

and parents of the participants also engaged in focus group interviews. This chapter includes a

background of the study, the problem statement and research questions, the professional

significance of the study, definitions of key terms, the delimitations of the study, and the

organization and timeline of the study.

Background of the Study

Adolescence links childhood and adulthood as youth move through substages over a

period of years (Pennsylvania State University, 2001). Theorists dealing with the stages of

adolescence (Erikson, 1963; Hamburg, 1974; Newman & Newman, 1995) identify early

adolescence (ages 10-14), middle adolescence (ages 15-17), and late adolescence (age 18-adult)

as times involving much change in biological, social, and psychological areas, when striking

gender differences emerge. Early adolescence is a time of growth that is influenced by the

interaction between the child's developmental changes and the surrounding social and cultural

environments, with the results being universally accepted as the cause of much emotional

turmoil. Puberty, a developmental process taking 2 to 4 years to complete, typically begins

during early adolescence and includes growth in height, redistribution of weight, and the

maturation of secondary sex characteristics and the reproductive system (Brimlow, 1998). Girls

begin puberty 1 to 2 years earlier than their male peers and, at that time, experience the onset of

menstruation, growth spurts, weight gain, an increase in muscular development, changes in body

proportions, and the development of breast buds and pubic hair. The fast physical growth, new

social roles, school transitions, and growth in thinking, feelings, and morals are expressed and

interpreted differently according to race and gender.

While many cultures actually celebrate the onset of adolescence with puberty rites

(Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 2002), there are significant difficulties that reveal themselves during

adolescence. Many mental health disorders are recognized, with females being two to three times

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more likely to report depression than males (Flemming & Offord, 1990). The depression can be associated with suicide, school failure, and significant long-term morbidity, resulting in a major public health issue that impacts economics and productivity in the United States and worldwide (Murray & Lopez, 1997). Studies show that depression and mental health diagnoses are increasing and have an earlier onset. Eleven-year-old children in the United States have the highest depressive symptoms when compared with 28 other developed nations, and 49% of 15-year-old females show weekly depressive symptoms (Scheidt, Overpeck, & Aszmann, 2000).

Additionally, youths may grow uncomfortable with childhood routines such as kissing parents goodnight and sitting in a parent's lap, thus becoming embarrassed and resisting continuation of these behaviors (Pennsylvania State University, 2001). An exciting yet awkward time, children seek greater autonomy and independence from parents as they move through adolescence, resulting in relationship changes between children and adults. Parents try to exert control and authority in the interests of their children, and children generally understand that parents have a duty or obligation to monitor actions with regard to health and personal welfare; however, conflicts arise when adults and adolescents disagree on how the control should be maintained. Once again, adolescents who report a high degree of parental control over their personal conduct often display symptoms of depression, hostility, and general psychological disturbance (Nucci, 1997).

This distancing from family comes at the exact time when a family's support may be most needed by the adolescent. A critical task during early adolescence is group identity versus alienation; individuals begin spending more time with friends and give more attention to the concept of belonging (Brimlow, 1998). The importance of relationships supersedes individualism, and what was once understood as values of absolute rights and wrongs become

diluted in a sea of social dilemmas. Females in particular tend to revolve social and moral development around relations; they understand the difference between right and wrong but their relationships become more important than individual gains and conventional rules of society (Henning-Stout, 1998)**.** Once-close families enter a time when parents may become the second choice to adolescent friends, even if those friends are new, often-changing, and not those who hold the same values as the family. Young adolescents express a strong need for independence from the family as the focus shifts from family relationships to peer relationships. This growing orientation to peers and preoccupation with social acceptance results in stronger social circles. Rather than risking that rapport, girls will stifle their voices to maintain relationships or ensure safety.

As girls typically begin puberty 12-18 months before boys do, both sexes are very aware of the physical changes, or lack thereof, being experienced at different times during puberty. While early maturation for boys may have a positive impact on the male ego, early maturation in girls is related to a worsened self-concept, lowered emotional tone and body image, higher psychopathology, lower academic success, and problem behaviors (Marcotte, Fortin, Potvin, & Papillon, 2002). Also, Orenstein (1995) and Rushton (2002) report that early-maturing females score lower on self-esteem measures than early-maturing males. Girls are taught self-effacement by the cultures in which they grow up, resulting in a loss of voice and unrealistic expectations for perfection (Lemish, 2000). Barbie dolls are transformed from mere toys to examples of unrealistic objectives; messages delivered in magazines, television, movies, advertisements, and music leave girls insecure and concerned with their femininity as our media-saturated culture puts incredible pressure on females to be beautiful and sophisticated (Pipher, 1995). Adolescence brings an increased desire to settle identity issues and an augmented tendency for self-

centeredness with issues of normalcy and comparability having a profound impact on self-concept.

Schools are partially responsible for the decline in adolescent beliefs, values, and self-esteem by not meeting the developmental needs of their students (Orenstein, 1995). White middle- and upper-class girls tend to discard feelings or beliefs that are considered socially unacceptable, all the while experiencing bias against girls' success in academic and leadership roles in schools (Henning-Stout, 1998). Henning-Stout reports that 8-year-old girls, confident in their social and emotional expression, are able to articulate their thoughts and feelings and stand firmly behind their convictions. These same girls at 12 years of age are more likely to question the soundness of their perceptions and experiences. When confident and well-adjusted adolescent females become sad, angry, and self-doubting, Intelligence Quotient (IQ), math, and science scores drop dramatically (Pipher, 1995). During the same time period boys are called on more often than girls and are perceived to be more competent in math and science than their female counterparts (Henning-Stout, 1998). In many societies girls experience marginalization due to gender (Lemish, 2000). Once females discover the disproportion in influence and status associated with life options between males and females, an avalanche of emotional problems may begin (Orenstein, 1995).

Numerous studies and books have been written regarding these difficulties. Pipher (1995) examines why American adolescent girls fall prey to depression, eating disorders, and suicide attempts at an alarming rate. Mogel (2001) tries to guide parents in raising self-reliant girls, and Wiseman (2002) addresses the subject of bullying, providing parent guides to help daughters survive adolescent challenges. Despite the advances of feminism since 1920, when women

received the right to vote, and the much more recent attempts to arm young women as they journey through adolescence, girls continue the struggle to find their true selves (Pipher, 1995).

The idea for this study was conceived as the result of the researcher's observations of numerous negative social interactions among adolescent girls at a private parochial middle school located in Texas. Teasing, gossiping, competition, poor self-esteem, and a preoccupation with body image seemed to plague these middle-school girls. *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* (Berley-Mellits & Gartner, 2003) addresses these issues. This study questions how participants, their parents, and group leaders perceive that participants apply lessons taught after participating in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program for 9 months. Also examined are changes, if any, in content knowledge and self-concept before and after participating in the study.

The Problem Statement and Research Questions

This multiple case study is designed to determine if girls, their parents, and their teachers/group leaders perceive that those girls who participated in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program over a 9-month period apply the lessons taught to their daily lives. This study will also determine if the girls' basic knowledge of Judaism and their self-concepts change after participating in the program.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do adolescent girls perceive that they apply lessons taught in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program?

2. How do adolescent girls perceive that their relationship skills have benefited from lessons learned in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing?*

3. What are the perceptions of the girls' parents and teachers/group leaders as to the effectiveness of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program for adolescent girls?

4.   What is the change in the girls' basic knowledge of Jewish people, holidays, and traditions, if any, after participating in 9 months of the program?

5.   What change in self-concept, if any, occurs in the girls after participating in 9 months of the program?

Professional Significance of the Study

According to Iglesias and Cormier (2002), girls experience emotional, physical, educational, and behavioral losses during adolescence. In addition, body image, assertiveness skills, and general confidence diminish for girls during this time of life. *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* addresses the difficulties faced by adolescent females. The loss of wholeness, self-confidence, and self-direction can last into adulthood; the way these adolescent challenges are handled will impact their futures (Pipher, 1995). Should studies reveal that this program positively affects adolescent behavior, similar programs could be developed to help both girls and boys of all religions as they experience adolescent challenges.

Definitions of Key Terms

Bullying: Behaviors such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, and stealing that are initiated by one or more students against a victim.

Deborah: The only female judge named in the Torah.

Esther: Saves the Jewish people from Haman's attempted genocide.

Hannah: Had seven sons who sacrificed their lives rather than bow to an idol.

Hanukkah: The only important Jewish festival on the Jewish calendar not mentioned in the Tanach.

Kolot: The Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies.

Lamentations: A requiem to the temple and Jerusalem; expresses both personal pain and the grief of the community.

Lashon harah: Unethical speech.

Lashon tov: Respectful communication.

Leah: Sister to Rachel; overcame conflict and jealousy.

Middle-school age: Students in grades 5-8.

Midrashim: Stories that interpret biblical texts.

Miriam: Prophet; sister to Moses and Aaron; nurtured and healed others.

Miriam's Cup (Cosot Miriam): A newer tradition for Passover that honors the motherly spirit of God that works through us all; honors the women in our history who have nurtured and healed others.

Naomi: Ruth's mother-in-law; symbolizes those who receive people not a part of the community with open and loving arms.

Omer: Time for self-reflection and spiritual self-improvement.

Parshat: Weekly divisions of the Torah.

Passover: A celebration of spring, birth, and rebirth, of a journey from slavery to freedom, and of taking responsibility for yourself, the community, and the world.

Purim: A holiday that celebrates the talents, courage, and dedication of woman.

Rachel: Sister to Leah; overcame conflict and jealousy.

Rosh Hodesh: Ancient Jewish festival of the new moon; the beginning of the new month on the Jewish calendar; traditionally associated with women because they refused to be involved in the creation of an idol.

Ruth: A non-Jew who married into a Jewish family and chose to convert; symbolizes that a non-Jew can become an authentic part of the Jewish community.

Tashlih: A custom during Rosh Hashanah when people throw bread crumbs into water to symbolize a desire to rid themselves of sins.

Teshuvah: The process of forgiveness and of forgiving others; changing from negative behaviors we wish to abandon and turning to positive ones we wish to keep.

Torah: Contains the Five Books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).

Tzedakah: Charity.

Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement.

Delimitations of the Study

This is a program that is designed for girls in grades 6 through 12 but has thus far only been used with girls in grades 6 and 7. It is a religion-affiliated program; it cannot be subjected to broad comparisons among religious groups or nonreligious groups. As it has only been used in schools and after-school programs since 2001, it is not possible to evaluate long-term change. Finally, this study can only be conducted in institutions that are just beginning to implement *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* with girls of similar ages.

To avoid bias, the researcher is not involved as a group leader/teacher of the program. To ensure quality implementation of the program, all group leaders/teachers have been trained by *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* staff.

Organization and Timeline of the Study

Chapter 1 contains the introduction, background of the study, problem statement, professional significance of the study, definitions of key terms, delimittations of the study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 is the literature review, chapter 3 explains the methodology, chapter 4 provides results, and chapter 5 contains the summary and discussion of results.

A timeline was developed which delineated the occurrence of each step of the study (see Appendix A).

Phase I: Pre-study procedures were completed. Access to the school was secured, application for approval of the investigation involving the use of human subjects was submitted, permission for the study from the Office of Sponsored Projects was secured, letters of consent/assent were mailed to parents and students, and meetings to explain the study were held with each group of participants (parents, group leaders, and students). In addition, pilot tests were completed with 7th- and 8th-grade students to establish test reliability for the content knowledge test.

Phase II: Students completed pretests in content knowledge and self-concept. Each assessment was monitored by the researcher in a period immediately prior to a scheduled *Rosh Hodesh* session. The total time for completion of both tests was 30 minutes. All tests were coded to insure anonymity.

Phase III: Students participated in nine monthly modules (lessons) of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* These sessions were supervised by trained group leaders who followed a set curriculum. The group leaders had been trained by, and followed curriculum developed by, the *Kolot Rosh Hodesh* organization.

Phase IV: Students completed posttests in content knowledge and self-concept. Each assessment was monitored by the researcher in a period immediately after the last scheduled *Rosh Hodesh* session. The total time for completion of both tests was 30 minutes. All tests were coded to insure anonymity.

Phase V: Students, parents, and group leaders participated in focus group interviews with their peer groups. Each focus group interview was scheduled within 2 weeks of the last scheduled *Rosh Hodesh* meeting and lasted a minimum of 1 hour.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Early adolescence is a formative period occurring typically between the ages of 10 and 14 years when youth undergo rapid physical, cognitive, and social transformations resulting in multiple stressors and new possibilities for growth as the transition from childhood to adulthood begins. Individuals are faced with a variety of personal and social issues and will make decisions affecting subsequent life and career choices; therefore, it is essential that youth and their parents are given appropriate and necessary guidance and support. This review explores literature that identifies key issues and challenges that adolescents and their families confront, as well as literature that examines guidance and support for all involved in this difficult developmental period. Risk factors and related characteristics are highlighted, especially in the areas of friendships, assertiveness, family issues, school struggles, and body image. The review was gathered from various sources, including, but not limited to, professional journals, textbooks and books, the Educational Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), and curricular programs.

Stages of Adolescence

Cognitive Development

For many years, Piaget's (1969) theory dominated views of cognitive development during early adolescence. It emphasized patterns of thought and how adolescents view the world, first, in concrete terms and then in a more abstract, logical manner. Piaget believed that simply growing up would increase one's understanding of the world; individuals are incapable of accomplishing a task until they became psychologically mature enough to complete that task. Piaget saw four stages of learning resulting in three major transitions taking place at 18 months,

7 years, and 11 or 12 years of age. Stage 1, sensory-motor, is when children between birth and 2 years of age recognize themselves as agents of change; whey they pull a string a toy will move; when they shake a rattle they hear a noise. Next, the pre-operational stage, from 2-7 years, is a time when he learns to use language and connects objects with images and words. The time when a child can classify objects according to several features, such as number, weight, and mass, is the concrete operational stage, occurring between the ages of 7 and 11. Finally, the formal operations stage allows early adolescents, beginning at the age of 11 years, to think more scientifically, design and test multiple hypotheses, and to manipulate objects, operations, and future outcomes in their minds without having to actually interact with physical objects (Piaget, 1969).

Piaget's theory has been extended by more recent research, most notably works by information processing theorists (Case, 1991; Miller, 1956; Siegler, 1991) who argue that, rather than progressing through radical, discrete, and global stages, cognitive development occurs in gradual, accumulative steps. Information processing, as explained by Miller, begins with encoding, when information is perceived and sensed; storage then allows information to be retained for a brief period of time up to an extended period of time. When appropriate, the information can finally be retrieved. The sensory register, which holds all information from 1 to 3 seconds, allows only that information which has passed through the "attention gate" to be recalled at a later time. Short-term memory holds data for about 18 seconds, with some type of rehearsal being necessary for the information to be retained for a longer time period. Finally, long-term memory allows the information to be held until it is needed at a later time. Metacognitive skills guide the information through the process, helping the brain categorize, organize, or interpret information. Some methods for increasing the probability of remembering

include using mnemonic devices, placing the information in a particular context, personalizing the information, chunking information into parts to learn one piece at a time, and organizing information so it can be learned in categories. This view of cognitive development suggests that physical maturation and cognitive strategies combine to improve cognitive processing and result in greater cognitive sophistication (Kearsley, 1994).

Vygotsky (1962), a lawyer and psychologist from Byelorussia, held a view of cognitive development that was different from Piaget's or the information processing theorists. While Piaget believed there were four distinct stages of learning, Vygotsky believed that learning was a continual process that began at birth and continued throughout one's life, with the lifelong process being dependent on social interaction and resulting in social learning leading to cognitive development. This Zone of Proximal Development, in which Vygotsky believed learning took place, bridges the gap between what an individual knows and what the individual is capable of knowing; in other words, an individual will accomplish more with adult guidance or peer collaboration than by working independently (Atherton, 2003). Bandura (1977), one of the leading proponents of the social cognitive learning theory, also held views that were different from Piaget's. Bandura believed people can learn by observing the behaviors of others, as well as observing the outcomes of those behaviors, that learning can occur without observing a change in behavior, and that cognition plays a role in learning; in fact, the social learning theory can bridge the gap between behaviorist learning theories and cognitive learning theories (Bandura, 1977). Bruner (1973) viewed children as active problem solvers who may be ready to tackle problems that are not in step with school curriculums. Bruner's constructivist theory—based on foundations established by Piaget (1969), Vygotsky (1962), Bandura (1977), and Miller (1956)—holds that instruction must be concerned with the experiences and contexts that make

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the child ready to learn. It should be spiraling in nature so concepts are revisited and added to on a regular basis. It should also include intuitive and analytical thinking, and an internal motive for learning, rather than the external rewards of grades, should be present. The constructivist theory suggests that knowledge is attained through interaction with information, material, and instruction. As a result, cognitive development takes place as individuals gain experience with concepts and information and then develop strategies for organizing that information into mental schemas (Bruner, 1973).

There have also been advances in biological and biochemical research in the area of brain research, which has helped to clarify the impact of brain functioning on different preferences for academic subjects, learning styles, and communication patterns (Caine & Caine, 1991, 1997). In addition, new imaging studies have found patterns of brain development that extend into adolescence. Current research (Caine & Caine, 1991; On Purpose Associates, 2001) has shown that creative learning environments which fully immerse students in an educational experience are more effective than isolated exposure; providing an emotionally safe, yet academically challenging environment allows students the opportunity to focus on learning, processing, and internalizing information to the greatest extent possible. Brain-based learning has impacted how curriculum is designed, how teachers teach, and how assessment is delivered. This results in the realization that teachers must engage students in real-world experiences that are varied, complex, and exciting. Also, students should be challenged by the content of the lesson that is delivered by a variety of learning styles and lessons to meet the varying student learning styles (Theroux, 2004).

Combining theory and research from these four major perspectives (Piaget, information processing, constructivist, and biological) reminds us that early adolescence is marked by one's

increasing ability to think abstractly and hypothetically (Urdan & Klein, 1998). Impacted by physical maturation, experiences, and socialization processes, adolescents become interested in "finding out for themselves" rather than simply accepting the word of a parent, teacher, or other authority figure. Adolescents are more able and willing to find the answers themselves and, as their interests become more focused, taking into consideration the person they want to become and developing strategies for obtaining those goals.

Physical Development

Adolescence begins with puberty, a biological maturation process that changes a child's physical characteristics. This period includes a rapid acceleration in height and weight, the development of primary sex organs that allow reproduction, the development of secondary sex characteristics, changes in the body composition of fat and muscle, and changes in circulatory and respiratory systems that impact strength and stamina (Steinberg, 2002). During puberty the peak height growth rate for a female is approximately 3.5 inches per year, with most of the height gain coming from an increase in torso length. Growth begins in the extremities and moves inward, which may account for the perception that adolescents experiencing puberty are awkward and gangly and a child's own feelings of self-consciousness (Steinberg, 2002). There is no set time period for the length of puberty, with timing and tempo primarily being influenced by one's genes, nutrition and health, and amounts of exercise (Urdan & Klein, 1998).

The physical changes experienced during puberty can directly affect behavior. Girls experiencing early maturation are often treated differently by others; a more mature-looking girl may be presumed ready for more mature activities when, in reality, she is still a young girl who continues to need nurturing and protection (Pennsylvania State University, 2001). Having

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physical changes outpace social and emotional development places adolescent girls in situations they are not yet equipped to handle, especially in relationships with the opposite sex and older teens. Declines in self-esteem are typically accompanied by other life stressors (e.g., the onset of dating, changing schools, menarche), with Caucasian girls being most likely to develop an unsatisfactory body image. In addition, hormones may affect the sleep needs of adolescents, with too little sleep resulting in poorer mental health and lowered school achievement (Blackman, 1995).

Depressive Disorders in Adolescents

Adolescence becomes a key period when many mental health disorders are recognized, with the prevalence estimated between 2% and 8% (Rushton, 2002). These disorders may include, but are not limited to, depression, dysthymia, and comormid conditions. Adolescent depression—occurring during the teenage years and marked by persistent sadness, discouragement, loss of self-worth, and loss of interest in one's usual activities—can be the reaction to a variety of situations and stresses and is often influenced by sex hormones and independence conflicts with parents. Adolescents with low self-esteem who are highly self-critical and feel little sense of control over negative events are particularly at risk to becoming depressed when they experience stressful events. Dysthymia, where one is in a depressed mood for most of the day, for more days than not, as indicated either by subjective account or observation by others, lasts for a minimum of 1 year. Adolescents will display at least two of the typical symptoms: Poor appetite or overeating, insomnia or hypersomnia, low energy or fatigue, low self-esteem, poor concentration or difficulty making decisions, or feelings of hopelessness. During the year when these symptoms are present, there is never a period of longer than two

months when the adolescent is without the symptoms (Long, 1995). Comorbid conditions occur when individuals have a dual diagnosis. For example, many people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) have one or more additional diagnoses, such as depression, substance abuse disorders, a learning disability, or Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), characterized by aggressiveness and a tendency to purposefully bother and irritate others (Animated Dissection of Anatomy for Medicine [ADAM], 2003).

Factors contributing to higher depression rates among youth in the United States may include violence, television/media, and family structure, as well as the inability to communicate feelings and poor coping skills (Rushton, 2002). According to the American Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), suicide, a possible result of depression, has increased dramatically in recent years among young people and is the sixth leading cause of death for youth between 5 to 14 years (AACAP, 2004). Typical feelings among adolescents may include stress, confusion, self-doubt, and pressure to succeed. For those adolescents dealing with divorce in the family, there may also be the formation of new families that include stepparents and step-siblings and moves to a new school or community. All of these feelings can magnify unhappiness and, for some adolescents, suicide appears to be a viable solution to their problems and stresses. Another possible result of depression is self-mutilation, the act of deliberately destroying body tissue by carving, scratching, cutting, marking, bruising, or some similar action. Becoming more popular among adolescents in recent years, self-mutilation is perceived to be a way to take risks, rebel, reject parental values, assert individuality, or simply fit in. Others may be looking for attention or expressing their feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness when they have difficulty doing so verbally, resulting in a physical cry for help (AACAP, 2004).

Family Interactions

Impact on Family Conflicts

Children moving through adolescence seek greater autonomy and independence from parents, resulting in a change in the relationship between children and adults and a greater degree of adolescent-parent conflict. While most conflicts involve preferences for television or music, appearance (makeup or dress), activities (time spent online or on the telephone), schedules (bedtime, curfew), and the range of acceptable motion (where the adolescent is permitted to go without obtaining specific permission), adolescents still see adult interference as an intrusion into their personal lives (Nucci, 1997). These adolescent-parent conflicts can be seen in three levels: *Frequent squabblers*, *placid families*, and *tumultuous families* (Nucci, 1997). The frequent squabblers include those parents and children who engage in frequent, low-intensity disagreements over day-to-day events. Placid families seldom experience conflicts and those conflicts that do occur are of a low level. Tumultuous families have frequent, high-intensity conflicts. These conflicts occur during a time of maximum change and confusion. While adolescent girls are renegotiating their relationships with their parents, those who report a high degree of parental control over their personal conduct also often display symptoms of depression, hostility, and general psychological disturbances (Rushton, 2002; Wiseman, 2002).

Impact on Adolescent Depression

The quality of the parents' marriage, role modeling, the emotional status of parents, and parenting style are all related to adolescent depression. Important to note, daughters whose parents have an egalitarian relationship and whose parents are supportive, attentive, and receptive to emotions show lower levels of depression. However, girls are more likely to react to

negative family events and model themselves after their mothers, and children of depressed

mothers have lower self-esteem (Gurian, 2001). Finally, a combination of cognitive factors and

coping styles affect the occurrence of depression; if people feel unable to predict or prevent what

will happen to them, if they feel helpless and unable to control the course of their lives, they may

give up.

Long-term depressive illness typically begins during adolescence, with 15% to 20% of

American teens experiencing a serious episode of depression (ADAM, 2003). Adolescent girls

are twice as likely as their male counterparts to experience depression as the result of stressful

life events such as a parent's death, divorce, child abuse, poor social skills, or unstable

caregiving. Parent-family connectedness and school connectedness, when they are able to remain

intact and of a positive nature, have been found to be protection against numerous health risk

behaviors (Goodman, 2001).

Relationships

The Impact of Friends

The power of peers becomes much stronger during adolescence as youth develop the

capacity and confidence to decide right from wrong and begin to distance themselves from

parental influences. Fitting in, establishing a social identity, and the perceptions of peers become

paramount, giving friends a larger role in shaping each other's attitudes and behaviors, especially

in the areas of fashion, style, and social behaviors (Urdan & Klein, 1998). Friendships become

more intimate as groups spend less time in play activities and more time just "hanging out" or

talking. Friendship groups become larger and a status hierarchy is often established, frequently

with specific rules that are understood by those included in regard to dress, hairstyles,

appropriate levels of academic success, social activities, ways of speaking, and acceptable friends. Cliques have their maximum impact during grades 6 through 8 and are sophisticated, complicated, and multilayered, with members who may use charisma, money, looks, and manipulation to control its members (Wiseman, 2002). These friends, selected largely on the basis of proximity and similarities, typically change as social networks are disrupted and interests evolve. Friends can affect one another in either positive or negative ways; highly motivated, polite students may influence their friends positively while negative students with behavioral issues may elicit the same misconduct in their peers. Additionally, friends may "dumb down" in order to fit in socially and provide social validation for one another (Wiseman, 2002).

The Impact of Adults

While the strengthening of peer bonds is taking place, early adolescents may also seek close relationships with adults other than their parents, whose advice and friendship is more mentoring than parental in nature (Urdan & Klein, 1998). Teachers, coaches, counselors, and religious leaders, among others, may have extraordinarily significant roles in the lives of adolescents, positively impacting the adolescent coping processes with their degree of influence related to their degree of involvement, power, and authority (Murray, 2002; Tatar, 1998). This is especially true if the adolescents lack adult guidance outside of school. Those adults will typically be in a position to empower adolescents, helping them learn how to solve their own problems with support and guidance.

Bullying

While some relationships may provide kindness, loyalty, commitment, and emphatic understanding from best friends (Brown, 2003), others may result in social bullying: Negative actions that can be physical or verbal, have hostile intent, and be repeated over time (Graham, 2002; O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). An experience more commonly experienced by girls (Rigby, 2000), bullying can be direct or indirect, with direct behaviors being physical (hitting), theft-related, or verbal (taunting, teasing, threatening), and indirect behaviors being gossiping, ostracizing (intentional exclusion, enforcing social isolation), or spreading rumors. Bullying is a microcosm representing the larger social settings and may involve one or more perpetrators and victims, finally impacting the adolescent's sense of self, social competency, and friendships (Wiseman, 2002). A study by Galen and Underwood (1997) revealed that American girls between the ages of 9 and 15 feel more hurt by peer aggression, whether physical or social, than do boys of the same age. The study also discovered that aggression by girls which is aimed at hurting others' relations with other people was not less painful than physical aggression. When involving peers and a power differential, witnesses may hesitate to speak up on someone's behalf due to concerns for self-preservation; getting involved may make that person the next target.

Bullying is initiated by one or more persons against a victim and includes an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse. Fifteen percent of students reported being bullied regularly or being the initiators of bullying behavior (Olweus, 1993). Incidences of direct bullying increase throughout the elementary years, peak in the middle school years, and decline during the high school years. Using bullying to reinforce one's own social status (Wiseman, 2002), bullies typically need to feel powerful and in control, seem to find satisfaction from inflicting pain and suffering on others, seem to have little empathy for their victims, and typically defend their

actions by saying the victims provoked them in some way. Bullies often come from homes where physical punishment is used and children are taught to strike back physically as a way to handle problems, are often defiant or oppositional toward adults, and will more often break school rules. Having a wide social impact on the peer group, bullies have a more positive attitude toward the use of aggression in peer relations (Banks, 1997). Victims are typically anxious, insecure, cautious, and have low self-esteem. They rarely defend themselves when confronted by bullies, may lack social skills and friends, and may be socially isolated. Victims tend to be physically weaker than their peers, have a higher rate of anxiousness and insecurity, possess a more negative self-perception, and typically feel alone at school to a greater extent than do their peers (Stevens, Van Oost, & de Bourdeaudhuij, 2000).

Methods to Combat Bullying

Bullying leads to depression and tends to increase the feeling of isolation because peers do not want to lose status by associating with victims. Teachers and parents are often unaware of the extent of the bullying problem and, for an intervention program to be successful, must target bullying as a problem that needs to be solved. Group dynamics should be used to heighten empathy for the victim, make it understood that bullying involves everyone in the school community, whether a perpetrator or victim, and help students understand bullying in both a cognitive and emotional way (O'Connell et al., 1999). Peer support systems to help combat bullying include mentoring, befriending, conflict resolution, advocacy/advice-giving, and counseling-based approaches that help individuals understand why people act the way they do (Salmivalli, 1999). Additionally, role playing helps students see the roles they play in encouraging bullying, even if the encouragement is unintentional. Role playing is an opportunity

to experience both sides of bullying and its consequences and allows for self-reflection and understanding of one's behavior and the reasons for it (Salmivalli, 1999).

Body Image

The Impact of Adolescence on Body Image

The onset of adolescence produces changes in bodies and body image, with current data suggesting that heightened attention and critical appraisal of the body might be an important correlate of depression. The depressed girl perceives her body to be less than satisfactory, typically having a very different body experience from that of her peers, the result of which may be fatigue, sleep disturbance, eating disturbance, and other bodily complaints. Menstruation adds to the biological and physical changes in a girl's body and, in a society that places a tremendous value on thinness, a positive body image is often difficult to maintain. A negative body image is a central feature of eating disorders, with resulting characteristics being a depressed mood, irritability, low energy, and low concentration. The eating disorders most often seen in adolescents include anorexia nervosa and bulimia.

Anorexics starve themselves and, eventually, suffer the effects of long-term malnutrition. Those with this disease refuse or are unable to maintain a body weight within 15% of their normal weight; sufferers have a distorted body image, a fear of gaining weight, and, as a result, have missed at least three consecutive menstrual cycles. Those afflicted with anorexia nervosa ignore feelings of hunger and thus control their desire to eat. It is not unusual for girls with controlling parents and/or chaotic and emotionally painful home environments to express their desire for control by developing anorexia nervosa. Mainly affecting adolescent girls and young

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women in their quest to achieve an "ideal" figure, this obsessive dieting behavior reflects our

culture's emphasis on being thin, as seen in advertising and the media (Wolfe, 2003).

Bulimics binge eat and then purge using inappropriate weight control methods such as

self-induced vomiting, fasting, excessive use of laxatives and diuretics, enemas, or compulsive

exercising. Unlike anorexia nervosa, bulimia is not a response to hunger but is typically a

response to depression, stress, or self-esteem issues. While the individual may experience a loss

of control during the episode, afterwards she will feel a short period of calmness followed by a

feeling of self-loathing. This cycle repeats itself, typically becoming an obsession and a cycle of

overeating and purging (ADAM, 2003). Females, especially those with difficult and pressured

family interactions for whom control and competition are extremely important, may first

experience anorexia or bulimia during their teen years (Schlozman, 2002).

The Impact of the Media on Adolescent Ideals

Over the past 30 years the prevalence of eating disorders has risen steadily, filtering

down to adolescents (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) mainly via media exposure

(Harrison, 2000). The 1920s and 1980s are the two time periods when the so-called ideal woman

was the thinnest in history, although throughout the past 50 years female media personalities

have grown steadily thinner, with more than half meeting the criteria for anorexia nervosa

(Harrison, 2000). Thinness is associated with self-control and success and, as such, the thinness

ideal became a profitable marketing tool. Magazine advertisements from 1950 to 1984 reflected

a significant increase in overly thin models, and the body measurements and weights of *Playboy*

centerfolds and Miss America contestants significantly decreased from 1959 to 1978. The

slimming trend continued from 1979 to 1988, with the number of dieting and exercise articles in

popular women's magazines increasing along with the normal weight range of the average American woman and the prevalence of eating disorders in the United States (Harrison & Canter, 1997).

Television programming reflects the social values of the prevailing culture; in the United States there is prejudice against heavyweight people, with perceptions of laziness, unattractiveness, low self-esteem and willpower, social ineptness, and intellectual slowness attached to large-sized individuals (Blaine & McElroy, 2002). A study by Fouts and Burggraf (1999) showed that the frequency of positive comments to and about female characters in prime-time situation comedies decreased as their weights increased. Prime-time situation comedies underrepresent the prevalence of heavyweight individuals, and a large body of research documents gender stereotyping images and messages in television advertising and their effects on viewers' attitudes (Blaine & McElroy, 2002). Women on television are shown in domestic situations more often than in employment settings, are more likely to be shown in clerical positions rather than professional, and are shown to be self-controlled and morally strong if the women are thin. Studies of women's roles in advertising show women to be domestic, sexually attractive, available, and thin, with thin being a requirement for being sexy (Blaine & McElroy, 2002).

Harrison and Cantor (1997) predicted anorexia, bulimia, drive for thinness, body dissatisfaction, and ineffectiveness in women after exposure to thinness-depicting and promoting media. Also predicted was body dissatisfaction after exposure to television programs with conspicuously fat women. Older adolescents are better able to understand the difference in what is being "sold" to them as part of media fantasy, as opposed to life's reality, than are younger adolescents. However, existing research of adolescents, media, body image, and mood reveal the

problematic effects of exposure to thin-ideal media images on young women; adolescent

response to social pressures to attain thinness and thinness as a physical ideal are more prevalent

in women's magazines than in men's (Harrison, 2000).

Plastic Surgery Among Adolescents

In reaction to the impact of media and society on adolescent self-image, adolescents have

begun to enter the world of plastic surgery. Liposuction of the face, torso and legs, removal of

buccal fat pads and pockets of skin above the molars, breast enlargement or reduction, collagen

or botox injections, and gynecomastia (male breast reduction) are just a few of the treatments

being requested by adolescents due to targeting by marketers. The American Society of Aesthetic

Plastic Surgery (ASAPS) reported a 48% increase in cosmetic procedures in the United States

between 2000 and 2001. While children were just responsible for 3.5% of the surgeries, that still

represents a 2.9% increase in adolescent plastic surgery cases since 1997. Parental permission is

required to operate on anyone under 18 years of age, but the surgeon is the one who determines

if the child is emotionally mature enough for the surgery (Dolan, 2003).

School Issues

The Adolescent School Experience

The transition from childhood to adolescence is typically made more difficult by the

move from an elementary school setting to junior high. Schools, being institutions within which

children must learn to negotiate and adjust their personal freedoms in relation to the

organizational guidelines, are the primary setting for the psychological and social growth of

children (Nucci, 1997). As adolescents, students want to be treated fairly and respectfully, and

they want to be able to present their personal viewpoints, even if they are not in agreement with others. Students want to communicate in class and after class, by phone or e-mail, strengthening the ties to their peers and teachers. Adults have an opportunity to play a significant role in the lives of adolescents, especially if those adults keep open lines of communication with regard to life issues as well as to subjects taught. Teachers who positively impact student comfort and achievement in the classroom are identified by students as those who promote positive teacher-student relationships, those who truly care about students, and those who are available to provide both emotional and personal assistance. These positive interactions with individual teachers result in greater student satisfaction with the entire school experience (MacLaury & Gratz, 2002).

Adolescent girls have the additional burdens brought on by pubescent changes. Female students often feel pressured by peers to be involved in sexual interchanges or relationships; at the same time boys more often dominate the classroom atmosphere until girls give up, lose interest, and watch their grades plummet (Orenstein, 1995). Teacher management of the classroom becomes an essential part of the learning potential at this time; competence in teaching, monitoring, intervention, and personal caring for students are dimensions of teacher behavior that will relieve some student stress. Teachers should focus on task activities, and they should pay close attention to the formal and informal pattern of interactions among group members. This classroom management is directly related to the bullying potential in the classroom (Roland & Galloway, 2002).

Bullying can have negative consequences for the general school climate by impacting the ability of students to learn in a safe environment. At least 5% of the pupils in primary and secondary schools are bullied weekly or more often, about 5% of pupils admit to bullying others

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weekly or more often, considerably more boys than girls bully others, but the number of victims among girls is almost as high as among boys, and many more pupils are involved in bullying on an occasional basis (Roland & Galloway, 2002). Bullying behavior at school can be impacted not only by classroom management but also by the social structure of the classroom. While the bully and victim have an inequitable access to power, peer support systems can create a socio-emotional climate of caring that supports the victim. In order to challenge and remove this antisocial behavior, schools must create an atmosphere where staff consistently encourage pro-social behavior and where there are clear sanctions against bullying and other unacceptable behaviors (Naylor & Cowie, 1999).

Loss of Assertiveness

According to Rothenberg (1995), around the age of 10, many middle-class girls have internalized messages and expectations from society: They should be pretty, kind, obedient, and never have bad thoughts or feelings. In an attempt to meet these impossible goals, girls try to suppress negative feelings and thoughts, refrain from asserting themselves, or begin judging themselves through others' eyes. These actions carry over to dating relationships; when an adolescent dates someone who does not treat her with respect she learns to be silent in the face of intimidation (Wiseman, 2002). Girls receive messages, both conscious and unconscious, telling them that they need a man to validate their self-worth (Wiseman, 2002), resulting in a loss of social and emotional confidence. The self-esteem of once self-confident and assertive girls begins to erode; emphasis on weight diverts attention from personal interests, talents, and internal character as they obsess over their appearance. Intelligence, assertiveness, and competence are seen as liabilities rather than strengths by some girls, and may result in

downplaying personal capabilities. According to Shapka and Keating (2003), math and science classes seem to be the courses that change the paths for males and females in subsequent career directions, with a disproportionately lower female population participating in the higher-level classes and continuing on in careers that advance our society and economy (Shapka & Keating, 2003). These attitudes are encouraged by our society; a lower social status for women remains in place, a traditional family upbringing fosters traits where the female serves male needs, and the media continues to reinforce these roles, all of which increases incidences of depression and decreases the chance that she will reach her personal and professional potential (Gurian, 2001).

Tactics to Improve the School Climate

Saleebey (1997) promoted the idea that empowerment can assist people in discovering and expanding their own resources. The resilient child will possess social competence, problem-solving skills, a sense of purpose, and belief in the future. Also present will be a sense of self and an ability to set boundaries, act independently, and exert some control over his environment. This sense of purpose and autonomy has been shown to be a more powerful predictor of successful outcomes than academic achievement (Brimlow, 1998)**.** To develop these feelings, the early adolescent requires positive social interaction with peers and adults, structure and clear limits, physical activities, creative expression, a feeling of competence and achievement, and meaningful participation in families, schools, and the community. Schools can assist by working in small groups and using advisory programs, task-focused strategies, interdisciplinary organization, and authentic assessment based on personal goals, progress, and improvement. Learning strategies should involve choice, with a curriculum and atmosphere that includes individual interests, exploratory programs, a variety of learning activities, hands-on projects,

service projects, project-based learning, creativity, and meaningful participation and experimentation with aspects of identity within a community (Bucher & Manning, 2001; Manning, 2002).

Adult support should come from those to whom adolescents feel attached and from whom they receive social, emotional, and academic support. These adults help shape adolescent self-perceptions and positively impact the development of the adolescent coping process (Tatar, 1998). Educators must have a clear understanding of how adolescents respond to the learning environment, be aware of the transition trauma and its sources, develop a method of communication to become more attuned to students' needs, and plan activities that involve students in common workplace ethics. Adolescents must be taught how to use coping strategies, how to acquire and use information, how to work with others, and how to manage personal growth components necessary for transition success (Richardson, 2002). In addition, students should be provided with training in active listening, empathy, problem-solving, and supportiveness so they can become a peer support group; research suggests that combining adult and peer support systems will improve the overall school climate (Naylor & Cowie, 1999). An added benefit of the peer training is that peer supporters develop greater empathy skills, their self-concepts are more developed, and they develop greater pro-social skills as a result of peer support training (Salmivalli, 1999).

Emotional intelligence, defined by Goleman (1997) as understanding and expressing emotions about one's self and others, regulating emotions in one's self and others, and using emotions in thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and creativity, should be introduced to students as they attempt to cope with, and adapt to, the emotional experiences of transitioning from elementary to middle or junior high school. Individuals are able to develop emotional intelligence at any age by developing skills in the area of mood management, self-awareness,

self-motivation, impulse control, and social skills. Emotional intelligence is an important factor in predicting success and the capacity to solve problems (Goleman, 1997). Middle school students with an understanding of emotional intelligence are more likely to be successful at accepting social challenges, communicating, participating, working cooperatively, exercising self-control, and solving problems without resorting to avoidance or aggression, all of which would be helpful during the transitioning process (Richardson, 2002).

<p style="text-align:center">Programs That Address Adolescent Issues</p>

A review of professional journals and curricular courses reveals programs for adolescent girls, or adolescents in general, that address substance abuse prevention, body image and eating disorders, and sexuality education. According to Blake, Amaro, Schwartz, and Flinchbaugh (2001), scientists know that effective substance abuse prevention approaches exist but do not know whether those programs are effective specifically for girls. Gender did not emerge as an important issue to consider regarding substance abuse programs until the mid-1970s. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute on Drug Abuse funded substance abuse programs for adult women, but the funding for these programs did not continue. In 1994 and 1995 the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) initiated an effort to address substance abuse prevention for female adolescents (Blake et al., 2001), but relatively few gender-specific interventions resulted in findings. The majority of intervention studies have targeted adolescent youth as a whole, with some effort to address racial or ethnic differences. *Girl Power*, a national media campaign launched by CSAP in 1996 to prevent substance abuse, has since expanded through the United States Department of Health and Human Services and now includes nutrition, physical activity, eating disorders, mental health issues, and

early initiation of sexual activity. It targets girls between the ages of 9 and 13. Evaluation of this program reveals improvements in school grades and attendance, improvements or stability in the area of school bonding, and improvements in the area of self-control. No impact outcomes have been determined in the area of substance abuse prevention.

There are a number of programs that address body image and eating disorders in adolescents (Paxton, 2002). *Full of Ourselves,* a program for both boys and girls, found short-term improvements with small effect sizes (Steiner-Adair et al., in press) but did not report gender-specific results. *Free to be Me* (Neumark-Sztainer, 2000) is a media activism program implemented in Girl Scout troops to raise awareness of how the media depicts women, often with dangerous dieting messages and for commercial gain. These programs are in their infancy, as is their evaluations. While some show promise, there is also a concern that focusing on body image may have a counterproductive effect: Does raising body image issues make adolescents more concerned about weight loss and more self-conscious about their bodies?

Comprehensive sexuality education programs include human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Sexuality education programs funded by government dollars are not gender-specific (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002) and research in this area is related to whether abstinence-only programs delay teenage sexual activity or whether programs that provide information about both abstinence and contraception can help delay the onset of sexual activity. Research does not address gender-specific results.

Review of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*

Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!, a program designed under the guidance of the

Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, is designed to help girls build self-confidence, self-acceptance, independence, and decision-making skills as they make the transition from childhood to adolescence. The program, which has been used in schools and after-school programs since 2001, does not have data to reflect what impact the program may have had when implemented with pilot groups. The *Rosh Hodesh* program is designed to build and strengthen relationships as well as offer tools that will foster strengths, leadership abilities, and interdependence with girls and adults from their own ethnic and religious background. Girls become agents for change as they gain a sense of their heritage, ancestors, and Jewish cultural wisdom, better understand the Jewish roots that strengthen their resilience, develop a greater sense of self, and strengthen their connection to others.

Each monthly lesson provides an overview that includes basic facts about the month, information on holidays, observances, and customs associated with the month, information on female role models who are connected to the month's theme, foods associated with the month's celebration(s), and prayers for the new month. Opportunities to brainstorm or discuss topics connecting Jewish heritage to current issues are followed by dramatic improvisation, interpretive movement, or a craft activity. "Life Lessons" are provided to highlight the essential message the activity is meant to convey, as well as facilitator tips that are designed to create a smooth transition from the discussion to the accompanying activity. An explanation of Torah portions, a glossary of singular nouns or nominal phrases, an index of monthly themes, and crisis referral information are also provided.

The program begins with an opening month designed to create a positive environment, build group cohesion, establish ground rules so each participant will feel free to express herself, explain the meanings and customs associated with *Rosh Hodesh*, and provide an opportunity for

creative expression. Instruction for what to plan and prepare in advance is provided, as are handouts, forms, and information letters designed to keep parents informed. Girls are encouraged to reflect on a variety of topics: Challenges for today's teens, how girls are impacted by media and pop culture, the effects of peer and parental pressure, how being Jewish impacts the girls' lives, the challenges and rewards of being Jewish, Jewish female heroes and their admirable qualities, and how each girl would like to be remembered by those who come after them.

Weekly Torah portions are summarized and themes and discussion questions are provided. Topics range from regret and sibling rivalry to good versus evil and the expression of anger. Discussions regarding safe places, resiliency, the power of promises, and the importance of diversity allow participants to delve into their inner beliefs and come to terms with who they really are and how they want to lead their lives. Current issues, such as the power of beauty, jealousy, rivalry between women, and being judged by one's appearance, are related to changes and growth during adolescence and the impact of the media and pop culture on self-esteem and peer relationships. Talking about how one bargains with God during times of difficulty, feeling powerless as opposed to empowered, and dealing with death and mourning allows the girls to examine Jewish customs and traditions, celebrate the lives of loved ones, and discover how one can positively impact the world. Girls are asked to examine their relationships and be truthful about how they use trickery in word or deed, react to envy, and deal with desires for revenge. Changes in family dynamics are related to differences in the treatment of children, resistance, rebellion, and stubbornness, while bullying is related to unjust accusations, acting on beliefs, having a moral code, inclusion, exclusion, special status, and being a part of a group. Sexual and marital relationships are discussed in terms of proper/improper behavior, bringing holiness into everyday acts, respect for the body, and purity, while ethical speech, blasphemy, the power of

words, and vows and commitments are related to Jewish values. Finally, one's relationship with God, the connectedness of generations, ritual, chosen-ness, the Land of Israel, God's power, and the Jewish people's covenant with God are emphasized so that participants begin to understand their roles in the world, their roles in their religion, and the potential they possess for greatness.

Chapter Summary

This review of literature discussed stages of adolescence and the difficulties experienced by many adolescent females during that time. These difficulties revolve around the physical changes experienced during adolescence as well as changes in family interactions, relationships, body image, and school challenges. These changes often lead to depressive disorders, suicide, self-mutilation, eating disorders, plastic surgery, and bullying. This chapter also provided an overview of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to determine if 6th-grade girls, their parents, and their

teachers/group leaders perceive that those girls who participated in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a*

Girl Thing! program over a 9-month period have applied the lessons taught to their daily lives.

This study also determined if the girls' basic knowledge of Judaism and their self-concepts

changed after participating in the program. This study is the product of a mixed-method research

design. Pre- and post-study inventories will be quantitatively compared using *t-test*s (McMillan

& Wergin, 1998) to evaluate changes in content (knowledge of basic Jewish traditions, practices,

and female role models) and changes in self-concept (in the areas of academics, general esteem,

the parental/home role, social esteem, and personal esteem). Perceptions of the participants'

changing abilities to maneuver through adolescent social hurdles will be qualitatively assessed

post-study using feedback provided by participants, the parents of participants, and program

group leaders. Qualitative methods of observation, focus-group interviews, and individual

interviews were used. Merriam (1988) supports the use of the qualitative research method as it is

exploratory, inductive, emphasizes processes rather than ends, and strives to understand how all

the parts work together to form a whole. Merriam also believes that the qualitative method of

case study is useful for addressing problems where understanding is needed in order to improve

practice.

Description of Sites and Approval Process

The study was conducted at a Conservative Jewish day school located in Texas. The

Jewish day school with 480 students ranging in age from 6 months through 15 years (grade 8), is a private school in a suburban setting that services families in the middle- to upper-class range. The school does not have admission testing; therefore, it services a wide range of academic abilities. Class size in preschool is capped at 15 students per class, with two teachers per class. Class size in kindergarten through eighth grade is capped at 17 students per section, with one teacher per section. The school has a dual curriculum with one third of the day being devoted to the study of the Hebrew language and Jewish studies and the remainder being devoted to language arts, social studies, math, science, the arts, computer skills, physical education, and library skills. The school prides itself on meeting individual needs in emotional, social, and academic areas, providing learning specialists and school counselors in both the lower and middle schools. Families at the school practice Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox Judaism. This site was chosen because the girls in the sixth grade were scheduled to begin participation in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* in fall 2004.

The researcher contacted the school in person because the researcher is an administrator at the school. The researcher met with the head of the school to explain the purpose of the dissertation study and how conducting the study on campus would impact the program, students, parents, and faculty. It was explained that the researcher would not be a *Kolot* group leader so that professional lines would not be blurred. The researcher was given permission to contact families about study participation. The researcher provided the school with copies of the letter of consent/assent (Appendix B) that had been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Texas (UNT) in September 2004, as well as copies of pretests and posttests that would be used to evaluate content (Appendix C) and self-concept. The letter of consent/assent introduced the researcher and explained the purpose, benefits, and possible

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dangers of participating in the study. Families were invited to a meeting to discuss the study with the researcher, and were provided with the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the researcher, the faculty advisor, and the UNT IRB office so questions and concerns could be addressed in any manner desired by the family. Parents of students who were scheduled to participate in the *Rosh Hodesh* program were mailed the letter, assent form, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope in an effort to facilitate return of the forms. Nineteen girls at the day school chose to participate; group leaders and parents at the day school were willing to participate in focus group interviews.

Participants

Youth participants were Jewish, female, and currently enrolled in grade 6 at a private, parochial school that was scheduled to begin participation in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* in fall 2004. Girls enrolled in the private Jewish day school were involved in the program as part of their school curriculum and did not have the option of nonparticipation. Group leaders—all over the age of 25, female, and Jewish—completed a 3-day training seminar provided by *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* during July 2004. Leaders facilitated the monthly modules with the girls, participated in ongoing training through the *Rosh Hodesh* organization, and, after completing nine monthly modules, participated in focus group interviews to share perceptions of changes in the girls' social skills and abilities to negotiate relationship challenges. Girls and parents participated in group and individual interviews at the program's conclusion. Student participants initially included 20 girls enrolled at the day school; two participants withdrew from the study. Parent participants ($X = 18$) included mothers or fathers. Group leaders ($Y = 4$) were teachers at the school.

Program Contents

Each *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* module was scheduled once a month during a 90-minute block of time during the school day. During the *Gather* (Appendix D) portion of the session, which took place at the beginning of each monthly meeting, the group leader welcomed participants, asked if anything special took place since the last meeting that participants wanted to share, and presented an opening question relevant to the overall theme of the meeting (Berley-Mellits & Gartner, 2003). The *Explore* portion then allowed time for discussion or brainstorming when the group identified the monthly theme and clearly stated the plans for that month's activities. The *Do* portion was an experiential opportunity such as a dramatic activity or interpretive movement. The *Reflect* segment allowed opportunities for personal reflections, creative responses, and selective sharing of personal goals and feelings. Participants were given time for a craft-making activity such as painting, collage, or papier-mâché during the *Create* portion. *Life Lessons,* essential messages that reach the heart of the theme, were discussed so real-life application of a newly learned skill could become a reality. Finally, a *Closing Ritual* brought the meeting to an end and provided closure for the meeting's topic.

Facilitators were allowed to modify sessions as they deemed necessary, tailoring activities and discussions to the individual needs or preferences of each particular group; real-life situations could be substituted in place of scripted scenarios and specific talents of group leaders or group individuals could be utilized when planning each session. The optimal group size was 7 to 12 girls, but each group began with more girls to allow for attrition. Group leaders encouraged participants to assume leadership responsibilities for each meeting. A summary notice was sent

home to the girls' families so parents could understand the month's theme and activities, allowing for further discussion and reinforcement at home.

Collection of Data

Pretests and Posttests

Two pretests and posttests were completed by student participants. All pretests and posttests were coded to ensure that the researcher could match the results to individuals so comparisons could be made using a *t-test*. All tests were completed within a 45-minute time period. A content pretest assessing basic knowledge regarding Jewish traditions, holidays, and female heroes was administered by the researcher and completed by the girls within 15 minutes. The same content test was re-administered at the completion of the program 9 months later. The content test was developed by the researcher, included a minimum of two topics from each monthly module, and was written in multiple-choice and matching formats. To establish content validity, the content test was reviewed by a coordinator of middle school Jewish studies and a campus rabbi who worked at a local Jewish day school. To establish test reliability, twenty-eight 7th-grade Jewish day school students and twenty-nine 8th-grade Jewish day school students completed the content test (Appendix C) as a pilot sample. The results of these pilot tests were reviewed with a representative from the UNT Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Analysis (CIRA). Reliability statistics revealed a Cronbach's alpha score of .760 based on 18 standardized items for the 7th-grade pilot test and a Cronbach's Alpha score of .860 for the 8th-grade pilot test.

Battle's (2002) *Culture-free self-esteem inventories—Third edition* (CFSEI-3) was administered as a pretest and posttest. This inventory, completed within 20 minutes, is a norm-

referenced self-report designed to draw out perceptions of personal traits and characteristics in students from ages 6 years 0 months to 18 years 11 months. The Intermediate Form, designed for use by ages 9 through 12, has 64 items grouped into academic, general, parental/home, and social subscales. The Adolescent Form, designed for students 13 through 18 years of age, has 67 items grouped to create five subscales: Academic, general, parental/home, social, and personal. Participants who were 12 years of age or younger completed the Intermediate Form; participants 13 years or older completed the Adolescent Form. Standard scores were used so the results of both tests could be compared. The inventories are written on a 3rd-grade reading level, allowing for independent completion even though they may be sitting in a group setting. Each participant's subscale standard scores were summed to create a Global Self-Esteem Quotient (GSEQ), representing a person's performance on the whole inventory, and a Defensiveness Score, which is a lie score. The items that comprise the lie score are designed to measure how willing an individual is to admit actions that are undesirable and socially unacceptable but commonly acknowledged. An example would be to truthfully respond to "I have never lied" or "I have never cheated."

The academic subscale of the CFSEI-3, which measures self-esteem in academic and intellectual situations and pursuits, is an indication of one's perceptions of abilities, attitudes, and values as they relate to school, academic skills, and intelligence. The general self-esteem subscale measures an individual's perceptions about him/herself as a person, considering emotional states, physical characteristics, successfulness, and self-acceptance. The parental/home subscale measures self-esteem within the family unit, asking about one's perception of abilities, interests, and values as they relate to the quality of family and home interactions. The social subscale measures self-esteem in social situations and interpersonal relationships with peers. The

personal self-esteem subscale appears only on the Adolescent Form and measures the individual's most intimate perceptions of anxiety and self-worth.

The CFSEI-3 was designed for the purpose of identifying children who may be in need of psychological assistance—to assist in planning academic, personal, or affective interventions; identifying specific areas of difficulty; and serving as a measurement device in research studies investigating self-esteem. The inventory includes normative data based on a sample of 1,727 people in 17 states, one of which was Texas. Data was collected from fall 1998 through fall 2000, with validity studies showing that the test is valid for a wide variety of subgroups as well as for a general population. The characteristics of the sample are representative of the nation as a whole with regard to geographic region, gender, race, rural or urban residence, ethnicity, family income, parents' education, and disability (Battle, 2002).

The standard scores for each CFSEI-3 subscale have a mean of 10 and a standard deviation of 3; standard scores for the composite GSEQ score have a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 15 (Battle, 2002). The standard scores for the subscales were computed directly from the percentiles associated with the raw scores made by individuals who were administered the CFSEI-3. Raw score means and standard deviations were calculated for the entire sample and then converted to normalized standard scores. The mean standard scores of 10 will allow examiners to make comparisons across subscales (Battle, 2002).

Reliability of the CFSEI-3 was established relative to content and time sampling. Content sampling reflects the degree of homogeneity among items within an inventory. Battle (2002) studied internal consistency reliability, standard errors of measurement used to estimate the confidence intervals that surround a particular score, and reliability for subgroups. Time sampling examines the extent to which a student's responses are constant over time, generally

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measured by the test-retest technique (Battle, 2002). The CFSEI-3 evidences a high degree of reliability, suggesting the inventory possesses little chance for test error.

Content-description validity was built into the CFSEI-3 by developing a clear construct definition in self-esteem in accordance with current theories, reviews of literature, and by examining the content of related instruments. The CFSEI-3 is in alignment with the theory that self-esteem is thought to not increase with age and does not discriminate between scores by gender, ethnicity, or nationality similar to the United States. Subscale scores appear to be meaningfully related to the self-esteem construct, and the self-report format may permit easy comparison of the data to other test results (Battle, 2002).

Results of the content and self-concept tests were compared in *t-tests* for related samples. A dependent means *t-test* was used to compare two conditions (before participating in the *Kolot* program and after participating in the *Kolot* program for 9 months), with the same group of participants being involved in both conditions of the experiment (Field, 2003). The *t-test*, a test of statistical significance, was used to determine whether the null hypothesis could be rejected.

Post-Program Structured Interviews

Post-program structured interviews were qualitatively assessed to determine the perceptions of those involved in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program. The researcher scheduled focus group interviews and individual interviews with three different groups: Student participants in the *Kolot* program (Appendix E), parents of student participants in the *Kolot* program (Appendix F), and group leaders of the *Kolot* program (Appendix G). Questions focused on the themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and family struggles. Meetings were scheduled with a minimum of 1 hour allotted per group

interview and 30 minutes per individual interview. Each group was asked the same series of questions, which allowed responses to be coded according to a predetermined system. The interviewer controlled the pace of each interview by using a standardized format; the same explanations, commentary, and questions were used for each interview. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), the interviewer should use standard explanations of the study and should be consistent when presenting the study's introduction, sequence of questions, or question wording, Sample answers should not be suggested and the interviewer should never agree or disagree with an answer; questions should be repeated and instructions or clarifications given rather than attempting to interpret the meaning of a question for the participant, improvising by adding answer categories, or making wording changes. The interviewer plays a neutral role and establishes a balanced rapport, being casual and friendly, but also directive and impersonal, and adopts a style of interested listening without making judgments.

Analysis of Data

The qualitative methods of focus group interviews, individual interviews, coded phrases, and key-words-in-context (KWIC) were used for data analysis. Each meeting was tape recorded with the participants' knowledge and understanding that confidentiality would be maintained; tapes were coded, transcribed, and typed into a Microsoft Word document. Coded phrases were placed under the broader themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and family struggles. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the researcher started with general themes and then added more themes and subthemes as analysis continued. Transcripts were marked for codes, which acted as tags for later retrieval or indexing. Words or phrases related to the overall themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and

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family struggles were recorded according to their frequency of mention and the order in which items were mentioned; these words were analyzed using KWIC. Verbatim quotes or summary statements were included.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the mixed methodology format of the study and provided a description of sites, the approval process, the participants, the program contents, the data collection process for pretests and posttests and post-program structured interviews, and the data analysis parameters. Pretests and posttests in content and self-concept were quantitatively compared using a *t-test*. Student participants, parents of participants, and group leaders participated in focus group and individual interviews that were qualitatively assessed.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General Observations

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact, if any, of the *Kolot Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program on adolescent girls after participating in the program for nine monthly modules. Qualitative data sources consisting of focus group meetings with student participants, focus group interviews with adult group leaders, individual interviews with participants, and individual interviews with parents of participants allowed for patterns, categories, and themes to emerge and data to be analyzed. Quantitative data sources of program pretests and program posttests were analyzed so that comparisons could be made in the areas of basic Jewish knowledge and self-concept. This chapter presents the findings based on each research question.

Specific Observations

Qualitative Results

Post-program structured interviews were held as a focus group with participants, a focus group with group leaders, individual interviews with parents, and individual interviews with students. Questions focused on the themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and family struggles. Meetings were scheduled to last 1 hour per group interview and 30 minutes per individual interview. Each group was asked the same series of questions, which allowed responses to be coded according to a predetermined system. The interviewer controlled the pace of each interview by using a standardized format; the same explanations, commentary, and questions were used for each interview. The interviewer played a neutral role

and established a balanced rapport, being casual and friendly, but also directive and impersonal, and adopted a style of interested listening without making judgments.

Each meeting was tape-recorded with the participants' knowledge and understanding that confidentiality would be maintained; tapes were coded, transcribed, and typed into a Microsoft Word document. Coded phrases were placed under the broader themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and family struggles. The researcher started with general themes and then added more themes and subthemes as analysis continued.

Research Question 1: How do adolescent girls perceive that they apply lessons taught in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program?

Family issues. Some participants acknowledged that conversations took place with family members involving *Kolot* topics but they were not specific about the issues discussed. One participant noted that "it made a topic at the dinner table."

Friendships. Conversations about friendship centered on the topics of popularity and gossip. Participants had much to say about who is popular, who or what determines who is popular, and characteristics of popular people. One participant stated that "no one's really popular. People just think other people are popular." When an individual believes she is popular, a participant said, "it makes [other] people think they're popular too." When asked by the researcher who decides what is popular, the participants agreed with one another that, while they may not be happy with what is created by their perceptions, they are responsible for deciding who or what is popular. Who decides? Answered included: "Us ;"It just happens. It's there"; "And then we make ourselves miserable."

Conversations about the topic of popularity brought tender feelings to the surface. Participants are searching for definitions and guidelines for their social circle, including the impact family finances have on the perception of popularity. Participants noticed how access to

money affected being popular: "Just because they think you dress good or anything, it doesn't mean that you're popular"; "Rich people think that they're popular people . . . [because they]. . . care so much about how they look"; "How much money they spend on what designers they wear." One participant noted: "They're like they're better than everyone else. Sometimes they're arrogant people."

Participants observed that popular people may not always be the nicest individuals, or have the maturity to handle popularity in the most positive way. One participant noted: "The popularity [module], it helped, because a lot of people think . . . some people think one group is popular, but they might not be popular because they might not be the nicest or something." Another participant said: "Most of the popular people aren't as nice as the people that aren't as popular."

Participants discussed how people react to those who bully others or express a different opinion from someone in a "popular clique." One participant stated:

> There are four people that nobody wants . . . to mess with, nobody wants to stand up to because they don't want to get in a fight, and then there are these other groups that actually have more friends and have more fun and are popular people.

Another participant concurred by stating: "[Schools] mainly have people that think they're popular, and a lot of other people probably think they're popular, but it's only because they don't want to stand up to them and stuff."

Participants discussed characteristics of so-called popular people. A participant felt that some students who are regarded as being popular may also be "fake sometimes." Another participant said: "I don't think those people are popular, because you probably are if everybody likes you, and a lot of people don't like them because they're mean." A participant noted that

"sometimes the nicest people . . . you need to be friends with them if people are picking on them or something." Another agreed:

> I sort of like what [girl's name] said. Some people think that they're really popular. They think that everybody likes them, but when people think that, they're really not popular because they're rude to people, so then if . . . and also like what [girl's name] said, if the people that think they're popular are being rude to people and stuff, the nice people can ask the people who are getting picked on or are getting rude to ask them to come be their friends.

Participants acknowledged that, while they continue to gossip, they have experienced a heightened awareness of gossip, and some have at least tried to curtail their time spent in that practice. One participant noted: "I can't honestly say that I didn't gossip at all, but it made me more aware." Another participant thought the modules were "fun, and it made a difference, like for the lashon harah [unethical speech] one." A third participant stated: "I don't think people will gossip as much because they think about it a little more." Another participant did not have the same confidence: "I think people will still gossip the same." One participant made a goal regarding gossip: "My social goal, to stop gossiping . . . a little less."

Participants also discussed society, celebrities, the media, and what constitutes gossip in the "real world." One participant said that talking about celebrities is "not gossiping" while another questioned that assertion. "Is that gossiping? Because, I mean, they're people, of course, and you tell secrets about them, but they're in magazines. I mean, we read the magazines; we see the secrets; we tell our friends."

Participants noted a difference in how they treat one another since participating in the program. One participant acknowledged personal change: "I have changed because I'm nicer to certain people, like [girl's name]. I'm nice to her now." Another participant confirmed the change: "She always is nice." A third participant mentioned: "I've become nicer."

One participant was able to integrate her lessons from religious studies to the popularity topic discussed during a *Kolot* session:

> In the Torah, God said that everybody is equal, and if somebody thinks that they're the head of everybody and tries to be the head of everybody, like some popular people do, like think that they are the gods, then that's not a very good thing to do.

> *Body image.* Body image was a topic that elicited much conversation among participants. Some of the participants did not readily remember discussing the topic; others felt that this topic had already been discussed in other classroom settings over a number of years:

> I don't think we did body image. . . . Oh, we did do that one. We did do it. We looked at different pictures in magazines. We've been talked to about like that for years. And we've talked about it in the human growth and development class before.

Some participants recognized the impact of the media on their self-image and the personal goals they set for themselves: "Okay, I'm sure magazines have a lot of influence on people, like young people, like teenagers." Participants acknowledged that photographic touch-ups change the pictures of models and stars: "A lot of it is airbrushing." However, participants also admitted that they continue to want the image of beauty that is being portrayed: "I already know that, and I'm going to believe that, and I mean, you just want to be just like them. They're so pretty."

> I think we know the airbrushing . . . They airbrush, and they do all that. But that doesn't make it less . . . It doesn't make it to where we don't want to be like them. We still want to be like them because they're so pretty and everybody likes them.

> Participants discussed how the media sometimes portrays stars to be thinner than they are:

> Like this lady, Kate Winslet; they're about to sue a magazine for making her look skinnier because she really wasn't that skinny. And she was ashamed that . . . because everybody thinks that she wanted them to do that, but she's not like that.

One participant did think that it would be wise to repeat this type of module:

I mean, it's kind of our choice to believe the stuff that's in magazines. I mean, if we don't believe it, it's our . . . like if we have more classes like these, we'll learn not to believe or be like the people in the magazines because some of the people even aren't that skinny or that real. Because for one thing, they're probably [inaudible], and two, it's on the computer and magazines.

One portion of the body image module included a lesson on self-defense. An instructor came to the school to discuss situations where individuals need to be alert, prepared, and aware. A demonstration and practice session also allowed individuals to be participants in their own safety. A participant noted that "it really got me thinking, what we did in *Kolot*. . . . not really a self-defense class in particular, but the part where we talked about what happened, like in self-defense, like molesters and stuff like that." Another participant said: "They make you more prepared." A third participant added: "They make you more prepared and alert on what I can do, and alert, like I know if someone's about to [attack you]." Another participant said:

So I know what to do, and it made me a little more confident. . . . You don't have to go up to every person that I think is suspicious and kick them, to go up to every . . . like, to be suspicious and don't trust everyone you see on the street.

The practicality of the session was noted by a participant:

[T]he self-defense kind of made me feel like I could protect myself. While we were on the Texas trip, I kind of realized, like while we were walking around the mall and stuff, that I can't trust anybody, and to stand up straight and not slump over [being] kind of scared of a molester.

Other participants added: "If somebody came up to me and did that stuff, I just know what to do now, and I feel more aware of what to do when anything happens," "[Now I know] how to get yourself out of it," and:

I knew self-defense, but it just helped me more. I felt like I was more on top of it, and if, pretending someone came up to me, I knew multiple strategies, so I knew if they tried to do multiple things, I could do multiple strategies, because the more I learned, the more I knew what to do.

Two participants felt the self-defense module was not presented well and that the demonstrations and directions were not realistic: "[T]hey shouldn't have taught us self-defense; they should have talked about what to do . . . like, not exactly demonstrated it to us, but tell us to be suspicious and aware"; and:

> Because the guy was like, well, it doesn't matter if you're small or if you think . . . All you have to do is stomp on their feet, and you can run away. Well, it's not always that easy, so I just thought that was . . . that just bothered me a little because I had seen similar stuff on TV, and it didn't . . . not on the movies; on the news . . . and it just didn't seem realistic to what could happen.

School issues. Participants perceived *Kolot* sessions to be an opportunity to talk about issues important to them, but did not recognize the impact assertiveness, friendships, body image, and family issues can have on the school day; in fact, one participant seemed to separate *Kolot* conversations from other behavior-related programs that the school had initiated: "It's nice that we're having this *Kolot* thing, because it's the one school-oriented thing that doesn't have to do with the ethical covenant." Participants did recognize improved communication with their peers and adults since the program began.

Assertiveness. Participants noticed a greater ability to verbalize feelings, emotions, and opinions since participating in the *Kolot* program. One individual felt comfortable sharing personal experiences with her peers and group leaders in a variety of settings:

> I'm just trying to remember, but I think one time we were saying our most precious things or whatever, and someone close to me had just passed away, and they had given me something, and I was talking about it. Talking about it made me feel better.

A participant stated that she was "able to communicate better with everybody. . . . Last year, I was really quiet, and I didn't talk too much. I didn't talk." Another participant verified this perception, saying that she had "become more outspoken." One participant noted that she talks "a lot more, not during class, like in [unintelligible] classes and everything. And I'm a little

more outgoing." Another participant agreed: "I used to keep some things to myself, like I wouldn't say it. And now, this year, I usually always say what I have to say."

Research Question 2: How do adolescent girls perceive that their relationship skills have benefited from lessons learned in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh*: *It's a Girl Thing*?

Most participants stated that they had grown more comfortable with their peer relationships, either expanding or changing their social circle as a result of the *Kolot* program. One girl said that she "[became] friends with more people." Another said:

> I was with a group of friends, but then if they're being mean and then the next day nice, then the next day mean, then mean, then nice, and it kept switching off and stuff, then I just . . . because they were being mean to me and stuff, so I just didn't want to be their friend anymore, so I went with another group of friends, and now I'm a lot happier and my mom's noticed that I'm a lot happier when I come out of school.

One participant said: "I don't know if anyone else has noticed it or not, but now I think I'm more friendly." Another discussed being clingy, as in being insecure and possessive with her friends, stating:

> I think I've changed a little bit, because I started just . . . I'm friends with everybody now. Before, I was just clinging to some people, but now this year . . . like fifth grade, I was just clinging just to people, but this year I'm friends with everybody.

Another participant noted that her change in friendships did not mean that she "didn't want to be their friend. . . . [S]o I'm still nice to them. It's just I don't hang out with them as much." Three individuals called this being "more spread out." One girl thought she was said "less clingy" and not friends with "just one person." Another participant also reported being "not as clingy as I was last year." One participant said, "I think that I've changed because I'm not only with certain people. I hang out with the person on this side of me a lot, but I also hang out with her and everybody else." Another participant affirmed that she noticed her friend being friends with a greater variety of people.

Two individuals reported the opposite change in themselves: "I've changed, so this is kind of different. I used to be straight out, and now I'm clingy," and "This year, I'm kind of her, because I'm more clingy."

Two other participants reported that they had noticed no change in their social patterns:

In my opinion, I have not changed at all. This hasn't helped, for some reason. But last year I wasn't really friends with a few people, but now [inaudible] is one of my best friends. I don't think *Kolot* had anything to do with that, but it just happened. [Inaudible] and now I'm not really [inaudible], like when people are ignoring me, I go, "Stop ignoring me" and just tend to keep on annoying them, and then [inaudible]. That's pretty much it.

One participant also felt more comfortable standing up on behalf of her friends:

I think that the woman who just told us about the popularity and stuff . . .
I think that one helped, too, because now your friends . . . because we were talking about other friends and stuff . . . now you know . . . you can stick up to the friends who are being mean.

Research Question 3: What are the perceptions of the girls' parents and group leaders as to the effectiveness of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program for adolescent girls?

Participants communicated in varying ways with their families. Participants who, according to their parents, did not tend to share their thoughts or feelings, said their children continued to follow that same inclination. One parent stated: "I would guess that she could have gotten a whole lot out of this program, and I would not necessarily have known. . . . But that's not atypical of her behavior, as far as we might not know." Those participants with a history of open communication within families continued that pattern.

Family issues. Parents indicated that they did have family discussions based on the *Kolot* topics.

[Lashon harah] has now become kind of a work in progress at home, and we kind of . . . if it's not going to get mileage and if it's not kind and true, don't say it, is what she's now aware of, so that has worked.

One family reported differences of opinion based on the body image/self defense module:

> Self defense caused a little bit of contention in the home because I've been now accused
> of being an overprotective mother because she knows how to defend herself and she
> knows where to hit and who to hit and how to hit. . . . And I'm explaining that we live in
> a kind of difficult world with kind of creepy people, so I don't want her walking the
> streets by herself to a friend's, or even as much as going to a movie with a friend. She
> told me that she's had [*Kolot*] meetings and she feels confidently equipped to deal with
> situations, and she's even given me examples of what she would do if somebody came up
> to her and tried to approach her, so that was interesting. So that's been a contention in our
> house, okay, because she thinks she's properly equipped.

Another family noticed that their daughter's conversations about the *Kolot* topic was tied

to the daughter's degree of interest in the particular topic:

> She would come home very regularly, though, and tell us about what they had done in the
> day. Some days she would come back and feel like she had gotten a lot out of the
> program, based, I guess, on the conversation that was elicited. And I got the feeling that
> she tended to give quite a lot of her input. And then some days she would actually come
> home and not say much, so I think it all depended on the area, because her area of interest
> . . . yes, then there was a spark. I think overall it was a good program, and I like it, and
> we try and keep those . . .what I did was I kept the list on my board at home, so we try
> and talk about some of the values, maybe not at the same time as the school was doing it,
> but I've been accused of being a Dr. Laura-type mother.

Friendships. Group leaders noticed different levels of lesson applications involving

friendships. One group leader noticed very few social conflicts taking place within her

classroom:

> I can't think of any . . . In the context of my classroom, they seemed to get along pretty
> well. Anyway, I can't think of a major change in their social behavior, other than the fact
> that there was very little bickering between the girls. Whatever it was, it was more
> underlying in other situations, not in the context of the class.

Another group leader observed interactions between participants who had not previously

been friends. These increased interactions were attributed to the *Kolot* program.

> Without specifically using names, but some of the girls maybe that weren't in . . . that
> were in the same *Kolot* group, but weren't in the same clique. I saw sometimes girls from
> one clique looking and listening to girls from another and interacting in a way that they
> may not have normally interacted with one another. So I thought that was extremely
> positive. I mean, maybe they were kind of in a forced situation, where they heard

something about another girl's personality, but they wouldn't have taken the time to listen to before.

Parents noticed a positive difference in how participants interacted with their peers. Some parents compared the experiences of these children with the experiences of older siblings.

I absolutely think it impacted. Something for me that was very important is [girl's name] is part of a sometimes four-girl group, sometimes three-girl group, and even sometimes five-girl group. When I was growing up, I was always told two is company and three's a crowd. I'm not seeing that happening in this group, and I think a lot of it has to do with the fact that they are discussing issues with a facilitator who is then reinforcing the importance of things like popularity, like lashon harah. So I'm definitely seeing a lot more tolerance than if I was to be honest and think about the girls that I saw in [girl's name] grade and how they worked together.

One mother noted the conversations based on the popularity module:

Popularity; she is aware of that. She'll often come home and say things to me like, "You know, Mom, everybody wants to be my friend," or she'll come to me and she'll say, "I've had a bad social day." Well, she'll say, "I've had a bad day," and I'll say, "What do you mean?" She'll say, "Well, bad social day." It's either a bad academic day or a bad social day, so she's actually able to see the difference between if it's been a bad day with a teacher or a bad day with a friend. And she can actually delineate the two very, very clearly. So she'll always get in my car, and she has certain facial expressions. And when it's a smile, it's great, but when it's a downward smile, then I'll say, "Was it a good day today?" And she'll go, "No." And I'll go, "Academic or social?" And she'll tell me what it is. So the popularity thing is also something that's made her aware of pain and where the pain is coming from. . . . She has her close . . . that little group, that core close group, but she's absolutely comfortable with branching out. Oh, absolutely. In fact, her theory is that she wants to have more friends so that if she's having a bad social day with one of her closer ones, she has other opportunities.

A positive change in one participant's possessiveness with friendships and personal confidence was attributed to the *Kolot* program.

That was a development, yeah. . . . She always tended, right through preschool, in fact . . . and I can even name the girl that she almost obsessed over as being her property. She's not like that anymore. Not like that anymore, not at all. She's quite comfortable . . . In fact, she's now going to camp for the first time because she feels like she'd like to expand her social base. So yeah, now I think that definitely has come out of the program, definitely.

A change in a participant's understanding of who her friends are and feeling

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confident enough in herself when not included in a peer's party were also attributed to the *Kolot*

program.

> She's definitely more confident about that, because there's not this need to . . . She's aware that there are cliques, and she will tell me exactly who's who and which one's the popular one, whatever. But . . . and she will also tell me where she doesn't really fit in, but that she will not be best friends with them; that they're just not her type. . . . But she won't be mean to them. In fact, a good example came up the other day. She said, "Oh, by the way, so and so had a birthday party," to which she was not invited. She did not feel slighted. She said, "In fact, I wasn't surprised because I really never talk to her, because we really have nothing in common." So she's really able to understand what makes and breaks friendships. No, I think it's been great in terms of her attitude.

> *Body image.* Group leaders and parents noticed different reactions from participants when

referring back to lessons involving body image. Group leaders observed girls giving thought to

body image issues after sessions had been completed, while the participants were discussing

things at school. Conversations in the counselor's suite, in classrooms before and after class

started, and in the hallways revealed that participants continued to think about body image

issues.

> Well, I thought that . . . I mean, the girls . . . I saw them, at times, refer back to that. I mean, sometimes when they were just hanging out, some of those same girls that were in our group that were there to study at lunch time, and they would come into my office. And sometimes they would be talking about issues like the body image issue, which I thought was so powerful for them and that they really identified with. And they would refer back to something that we had talked about. I think that it helped them see some things about each other.

> Parents observed children on an individual basis rather than as a part of a larger group. In

these settings, parents felt there had not been enough carryover from the body image lesson to

affect a change in individual perceptions.

> Self image still remains an issue for me, and I think that's an area that is critical for this age. I'm concerned about her self image . . . her self image, and probably if she heard me telling you this now, she'd kill me, okay. But she thinks she's fat. So that is a problem. I think it's a 12 year old girl thing, okay, that I don't want to push right out of proportion, but I'm not comfortable hearing those kinds of things when there's no way she's fat. She'll say things to me like, "When I'm older, I would like to have the freckles taken off

my forehead. If that was gone, then I think I could be pretty." So the self image for me definitely is a concern . . . Having read my own preteen and teen books, I'm aware of it; it's definitely part of where we're at in the age, but I think it's something that, if we're going to continue with the program, this is a huge one for girls. With [girl's name], it has definitely been a problem. No, not a problem, but an issue. I don't know if that particular area gave her enough information because she still feels unresolved about her own self image.

One parent even considered taking her daughter to see what people with eating disorders really look like: "I mean, I'm almost at the point where I would like to take her to a hospital to see what an anorexic person really looks like, what somebody really who has a bad self image looks like."

Parents are aware of the impact of the media on adolescents. One parent spoke about it, but was unresolved with what to do about it.

The message is thin and wear clothes that make you look. . . . They don't get it that when people come on TV, the face they see is done up and has got lighting on it. I want them to understand that what they see is not the truth. . . . I'm not going to stop my children from watching TV, but I want them to understand what it's like---the reality.

School issues. One group leader did not notice any connection between *Kolot* and the school experience: "I couldn't say at all what they did once they got out of the classroom." Other group leaders observed that lessons taught during *Kolot* directly related to participants' Jewish Studies classes. Comments included: "The input from the kids . . . was very interesting;" "It made it more relevant," and "It made the classroom very relevant to their lives."

Group leaders also noticed when participants were learning something new within the Jewish studies domain but not as a part of their typical curriculum, and that it resulted in the subject matter becoming more relevant to the students' lives as a result. Sessions also provided an opportunity for participants to speak candidly about events and atone for mistakes that had been made. A group leader stated:

That really gave them the opportunity to look at Jewish values in a way that was interesting to them. It was something that they could really relate to, and I think that was really important. Sometimes they realize that . . . they were able to see that and share [inaudible] feel like it was right or when they felt something was wrong, and to apologize within the group, in the discussion when [inaudible] taking over or saying something that another child's answer was not the right answer. Through the discussion, they were able to see that everybody had valuable input and that no answers were wrong. They were able to even apologize for things they did at that meeting or in the past to each other. But I'm seeing it mostly in the context of the meeting where they were open and discussing things.

Another group leader noticed the connection made by the participants between the program's contents and the religious curriculum of the school:

I just thought it was nice that . . . and I think you had touched on it . . . that they have the Hebrew and Judaic and [unintelligible] background at the school. I think this kind of was a way for them to tie that into their personal lives and their social situations. I mean, I think some of them knew it in here, but it wasn't brought to the surface. And I think this kind of tied in what they learned in the Judaic background class to how they relate to each other in this day and age. I thought that was great. Even if the kids didn't realize it, I think it affected them in that way. They were able to see the connection.

A third group leader commented on the participants' excitement as they made the program/curriculum connections.

Well, I agree, and I remember a couple of times they talked about things they had learned in Jewish studies class, within the discussion, and they were so . . . most of them were so incredibly knowledgeable. You heard them excitedly saying, "Oh, remember when we learned this, and now we're learning this," and they were kind of putting it together, which was very exciting to see.

Group leaders also noticed excitement when "there was a lot of new stuff that they brought in … a lot of the kids were like, 'Well, I never heard that one before,' so it was like that was a new story to me."

Group leaders noticed that lessons taught in *Kolot* had an impact both within and beyond the modules: "Well, I think it happened in both. It happened in the session, and then it transferred out." They also noted that participants related information taught from prior sessions to current ones: "Yeah, and then transferred back into the next time."

Parents noticed minimal amounts in regard to how participants handled issues involving the school experience specifically. Assertiveness, body image, and friendships were areas that overlapped with the school experience, so these observations were discussed in other areas. One parent stated:

> [My] daughter says she doesn't like to be seen as somebody who always pleases the teacher, but she would never be disrespectful to the teacher. She doesn't go out of her way to suck up, but she would never be disrespectful. I don't know. The program might have given her self-confidence, maybe, to deal with that other situation, but I think her interpersonal relationships with teachers are okay. They've been pretty healthy.

Assertiveness. Group leaders observed participants who were looking for an opportunity to share their feelings and thoughts. Participants told of experiences and how they might do things differently if given the opportunity. One leader stated: "They were very ready to share their experiences on whatever topic it was and how it related to them, as well as to go that next step on what would they do differently about it." Another noted:

> I just feel that this group of girls just love to talk . . . and talking to each other about it. Whatever question we ask, they could go on and on and on, and we have to push them along because of the time. . . . They really love sharing specific personal experiences, and sometimes that could get boring to other children.

Group leaders also recalled a program-related community event where participants were introduced to female Jewish role models. Group leaders observed the powerful impact of this activity. A leader stated:

> Well, I don't know if you all spoke about this already-- about the introduction of the female role models. Jewishly, it was so incredible because I don't know how much of that they get during the regular course of the year, and they really felt that was really cool. I know that for the girls that were there at the community-wide event, several of them . . . and not just our own kids—girls I knew from other synagogues and whatever— said to me how wonderful it was to hear these real women, Jewish women, talk about things that were important to them, how they made these decisions in their life, what they did. They really loved that, and they said they get so few opportunities to do that, so I thought that was an extremely powerful piece.

One parent observed little difference in assertiveness and felt her child already possessed the skills and desire to speak up for herself, take a stand, and handle her own problems: "Taking a stand at any *Kolot* wouldn't have been any different. She takes a stand irrespective." Another parent related an experience where a child handled a school issue without parental intervention.

> She had some issues at a point in the year with Mrs. [name], and we said we would intercept and go and talk to her, and she said she would like to first discuss it with her Oasis teacher, which she did. Her Oasis teacher then gave her tools to go and use with Mrs. [name], which she did, and they worked. And she was very proud that Mommy and Daddy didn't help her. There were other issues down the line, and we did intercede a little bit. But that was . . . I just think she couldn't quite verbalize, and we did it on her behalf. But then when we had done it, she came back and said the relationship is amazing now. So she was again able to discern between a good and a bad situation.. . . [O]ther than that one, she doesn't really have an issue.

Quantitative Results

Two pretests and posttests were completed by student participants. All pretests and posttests were coded to ensure that the researcher could match the results to individuals so comparisons could be made using a *t-test*. All tests were completed within a 45-minute time period.

A content pretest assessing basic knowledge of Jewish traditions, holidays, and female heroes was administered by the researcher and completed within 15 minutes by each of the girls. The same content test was re-administered at the completion of 9 months of participation in the program.

Battle's (2002) Culture Free Self-Esteem Inventories: Third Edition (CFSEI-3) was also administered as a pretest and posttest. Each participant's subscale standard scores on the Intermediate Form were summed to create a GSEQ and a Defensiveness Score. Pretest versus posttest results of the content test and the self-concept test were compared in *t-test*s for related

samples. A dependent means *t-test* was used to compare two conditions (before participating in

the *Kolot* program and after participating in the *Kolot* program for 9 months), with the same

group of participants being involved in both conditions of the experiment.

Research Question 4: What is the change in the girls' basic knowledge of Jewish people,
holidays, and traditions, if any, after participating in 9 months of the program?

Results of content knowledge pretests and posttests (Appendix C) were compared to

assess any change in content knowledge. Answers were coded according to whether they were

correct or incorrect. Each correct answer was given 2 points; every incorrect answer was given 1

point. Scores were compiled, resulting in a mean score for each item. Pretest and posttest means

were then compared using a paired samples *t-test* to determine if changes were statistically

significant with an *alpha* level set as .05. As shown in Table 1, statistically significant levels of

improvement occurred in 1 item involving holidays (number 7), 1 item involving people (number

12), and 1 item involving traditions (number 17).

Table 1

Paired Samples t-*Test for Content Knowledge*

Item	Pretest	*SD*	*n*	Posttest	*SD*	*n*	MD	*t*	*p*
1-Peo	1.94	.24	18	2.00	.00	18	-.06	-1.00	.33
2-Peo	1.61	.50	18	1.67	.49	18	-.06	-.33	.75
3-Tra	1.83	.38	18	2.00	.00	18	-.17	-1.84	.08
4-Tra	1.72	.46	18	1.72	.46	18	.00	.00	1.00
5-Peo	1.83	.38	18	1.94	.24	18	-.11	-1.46	.16
6-Peo	1.61	.50	18	1.67	.49	18	-.06	-.33	.75
7-Hol	1.56	.51	18	1.83	.38	18	-.28	-2.56	.02**
8-Hol	1.89	.32	18	1.94	.24	18	-.06	-.57	.58
9-Tra	1.61	.50	18	1.67	.49	18	-.06	-.33	.75
10-Hol	1.83	.38	18	1.89	.32	18	-.06	-.44	.67
11-Tra	1.94	.24	18	2.00	.00	18	-.06	-1.00	.33

(table continues)

Table 1 *(continued).*

Item	Pretest	*SD*	*n*	Posttest	*SD*	*n*	MD	*t*	*p*
12-Peo	1.72	.46	18	2.00	.00	18	-.28	-2.56	.02**
13-Hol	1.61	.50	18	1.78	.43	18	-.17	-1.37	.19
14-Tra	1.72	.46	18	1.67	.49	18	-.06	.33	.75
15-Hol	1.94	.24	18	1.94	.24	18	.00	.00	1.00
16-Hol	1.67	.49	18	1.78	.43	18	-.11	-.81	.43
17-Tra	1.28	.46	18	1.83	.38	18	-.06	-4.61	<.001**
18-Hol	1.72	.46	18	1.83	.38	18	-.11	-1.00	.33

MD = Mean Difference   **Statistically Significant   Peo=People   Tra=Tradition   Hol=Holiday

Twenty participants completed the pretest; two participants withdrew from the study. Eighteen participants completed both the pretests and posttests. Items with higher means resulted in lower standard deviation, indicating less variability in resulting answers. The range of mean differences went from .00 to -.28. Mean comparisons for Item 14, involving a tradition, reveals that participants marked the wrong answer more often on the posttest than on the pretest. Closer examination by the researcher did not reveal a explanation for this; it may have been that participants were more lucky in correctly guessing the correct answer on the pretest than on the posttest.

Research Question 5: What change in self-concept, if any, occurs in the girls after participating in 9 months of the program?

Results of Battle's (2002) *Culture-free self-esteem inventories—Third edition* (CFSEI-3) pretests and posttests were compared to assess any change in the areas of academic esteem, general esteem, parental/home esteem, social esteem, and global esteem. Defensiveness scores, which indicate how honest a participant is being, were also compared from pretest to posttest. Defensiveness scores from a total of 3 participants' pretests or posttests were greater than 6, resulting in those participants being disqualified due to questionable reliability according to the

scoring standards set by CFSEI-3. Four other participants were removed from the study as a result of participants dropping out of the program or not completing the self-concept pretest or posttest. Twenty participants completed the pretest; a total of 13 participants successfully completed pretests and posttests. The final data analysis contains the results from these 13 participants.

Raw scores were determined according to the CFSEI-3 scoring process as outlined in the manual; raw scores were converted into standard scores which were then plotted on a chart showing the profile of each participant's scores. Standard scores were compiled, resulting in a mean score for each item. Pretest and posttest means were then compared using a paired samples *t-test* to determine if changes were statistically significant with an *alpha* level set as .05. As shown in Table 2, improvement was made in all areas of self-concept, but the results were statistically significant only in the general, parent/home, and global self-concept. The range of change as shown by mean differences in the self-concept areas ranged from -10.92 to -.77; the defensiveness mean difference decreased, meaning fewer people lied on the posttest than the pretest. As previously noted, the defensiveness score is a tool to determine if participants are answering questions honestly.

Table 2

Paired Sample t-*Test for Self-Concept*

Item	Pretest	*SD*	*n*	Posttest	*SD*	*n*	MD	*t*	*p*
Academic	9.23	2.20	13	10.15	2.58	13	-.92	-1.11	.287
General	8.62	1.50	13	10.54	2.54	13	-1.92	-2.67	.02**
Parent/Home	8.54	3.43	13	10.77	1.88	13	-2.23	-2.87	.01**
Social	10.15	3.34	13	10.92	2.02	13	-.77	-1.30	.22
Global	94.38	13.14	13	105.31	9.21	13	-10.92	-3.39	.01**
Defensiveness	1.69	1.03	13	1.54	1.27	13	.15	.562	.58

MD = Mean Difference   **Statistically Significant

Summary

Conclusions were made about qualitative data after individual and focus group interviews were held with participants, parents of participants, and group leaders. Pretests and posttests in content knowledge and self-concept were quantitatively compared using a paired samples *t-test* to determine if changes were statistically significant with an *alpha* level set as .05. The results of the general, parent/home, and global self-concept scores were statistically significant. Only three content knowledge questions, one involving a Jewish month, one involving a Jewish holiday, and one involving a female Jewish role model, were statistically significant.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the findings that emerged through qualitative and quantitative

research methods when examining the application of monthly lessons taught to adolescent girls

as part of a religion-based program that addresses family struggles, friendship, body image,

school struggles, and assertiveness as they apply to and within the tenets of Judaism. Feedback

from participants, parents of participants, and group leaders was qualitatively assessed using

post-study feedback from individual and focus group interviews. Pre-study and post-study

inventories were quantitatively compared using paired samples *t*-tests.

Qualitative Results

For the three qualitative research questions, post-program focus group and individual

interviews were held with participants, parents of participants, and group leaders. Questions

focused on the themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and family

struggles. Each group was asked the same series of questions; sessions were tape-recorded, and

results were coded, transcribed, and recorded into a Microsoft Word document. Coded phrases

were placed under the broader themes of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness,

and family struggles before being broken down into additional themes and subthemes.

Research Question 1

How do adolescent girls perceive that they apply lessons taught in the *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program?

Family Issues

Participants were willing to take home flyers about *Kolot* modules to show their parents,

but participants either did not want to have detailed conversations about the sessions with their parents or did not want to admit to their peers that they did. It was easy to see the struggle between childhood and adolescence; participants wanted the protection of parents but also wanted to be viewed as independent, mature, and ready for new freedoms. Sharing too much from the sessions could harm their chances for those new freedoms. Also, acknowledging to peers that they had shared session information/conversations with parents may have been viewed as a sign of immaturity or an indiscretion; while the sessions were never billed as being confidential, there had been discussions about keeping private information within the group. During this time it was easy to witness adolescent feelings of stress, confusion, self-doubt and pressure previously discussed by Ruston (2002).

Friendships

Participants were experiencing awkwardness and instability during adolescence. The popularity module provided an opportunity for the girls to reflect on their uncertainties. There are no rules about who or what is popular; groups and alliances are constantly changing, and nothing seems stable to the adolescent. Participants discussed attitudes (if you think you are popular, then other people will believe you are), social skills (being nice to others, being arrogant), money (designer labels), and gossip. Participants admitted that they gossip to varying degrees, but also discussed how society and the media play into that. Participants mentioned that widely-read magazines discuss other people's private lives and questioned why this is perceived as a negative habit in their own lives.

Bullying was defined as when people are rude to others who are not a close member of their social circle. Participants discussed being a source of support for the victims because

everyone will be a victim at one time or another. Participants also mentioned that sometimes it is a smaller group that is being unkind to others; if everyone outside the smaller clique would band together, the impact of the clique would be reduced. Participants may recognize this intellectually, but most are not at the stage of emotional maturity to put this theory into practice. The realization that the "mean" girls often consider themselves to be popular or better than others did not come as a surprise, but all freely admitted that standing up to certain cliques and getting into a verbal fight was more trouble than it was worth. Participants would rather avoid confrontation and keep their distance, as necessary.

Many of the participants mentioned that they had become more comfortable within their friendships and now had the confidence to expand their social circles. Some of this was attributed to participation in the *Kolot* program, but it must be noted that the girls were 1 school-year older when the program ended; they would have matured regardless. The question is, "To what degree?" The girls found the modules helpful and positive. If these sessions allowed for an open exchange of ideas and expressions, then the perceptions of the girls must be accepted as their reality, and the program must be given credit for helping participants mature in a more positive way.

Body Image

Participants reacted to the body image module in one of two ways: "We've heard this before" or "I don't hear what you're saying." Participants who said that they had heard this lesson before said they still wanted to be like the media-perfect image of a female, despite knowing that the photos are modified with lighting, that a makeup artist applied the makeup, and that a stylist fixed the hair; though the image is not real, it is still the goal. Participants also

realized that the media influences how they feel about themselves, but they considered it a part

of their reality--something that must be accepted. This point, previously made by Wolfe (2003),

reflects our culture's emphasis on being thin as seen in advertising and the media. A few of the

girls, mainly those with distorted body images, did not remember that a body image module had

taken place until reminded of what the session had included. The researcher had the impression

that this message would be mentally blocked until participants reached a more mature stage of

development that included increased self-acceptance.

Participants discussed plastic surgery, celebrities who did not want to be portrayed as

thinner than they really are, and the impact that the media has on them. Plastic surgery did not

become a major topic, probably because this is not yet their reality. The celebrity who did not

want to have her picture airbrushed was brought up by a participant with a poor body image,

almost as if to say, "See? She's famous, and she doesn't think being skinny is so important! Why

should we?" As Harrison (2000) pointed out, older adolescents are better able to understand the

difference in what is being "sold" to them as part of media fantasy; girls are impacted by the

media images whether they realize the effect or not.

The session on body image included a self-defense class. Students were involved in a

discussion as well as a practice session. During the interviews, one student expressed that she did

not feel the session was realistic. In the interview with this child's mother, the mother mentioned

that this had been a contentious issue at home. The child maintained to her mother that she had

learned how to keep herself safe; while at school, the participant had expressed the opposite.

This would be an instance where a session was being used by a participant to try to get

permission for increased parental freedom, even though the information being exchanged with

the parent was false. This is another example of the adolescent desire for increased

independence, even when the child knows she is not really ready for it.

School Issues

Participants perceived school issues as dealing with grades and teachers. They considered

friendships, home issues, and assertiveness to be independent of school issues. They did not

realize the impact that family and friends had on their academic days or their days in general.

Participants enjoyed having the opportunity to discuss issues they felt were important to them but

did not recognize a connection with this program and other school programs that highlight

citizenship, honesty, integrity, respect, and holiness.

Assertiveness

Participants enjoyed being given the opportunity to discuss their feelings, thoughts, and

events in their lives. As a result, they became more comfortable with exchanging personal

information with one another, listening and having an opportunity to give one another feedback,

and developing the tools to effectively communicate with peers, parents, and teachers.

Additionally, as we learned from brain-based learning, students must be engaged in real-

world experiences that are varied, complex, and exciting in order for the curriculum to make an

impact; students should be challenged by the content of the lesson that is delivered by a variety

of learning styles and lessons to meet the varying student learning styles (Bucher & Manning,

2001; Manning, 2002; Theroux, 2004). Methods used to meet varying student learning styles

during the monthly modules included group discussion, hands-on crafts, project-based learning,

participation in self-defense classes, creativity, role playing, and writing. This variety of

instructional methods allowed participants to more fully appreciate the information being offered.

Research Question 2

How do adolescent girls perceive that their relationship skills have benefited from lessons learned in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing?*

Most of the girls noticed a greater sense of independence, more confidence, or the ability to remove themselves from unhealthy relationships after participating in the *Kolot* program. Part of this may be attributed to natural growth and maturity over a 9-month time span, but comments from the girls seemed to indicate that the structured module discussions had a positive impact on their personal growth. Participants had important and relevant conversations not just with their closest circle of friends, but also with girls who were not a part of their social world. They were given an opportunity to hear the doubts, confusions, and concerns of people who typically try to show a tough veneer. The group discussions allowed participants to realize that they all had basically the same insecurities; they were not alone in their adolescent upheavals.

Participants spoke of being less clingy or possessive in their relationships. They were willing to broaden their circle of friends and move from one group to another. They were able to keep their long-time friends, but were also able to add more girls to their social circles. Only four girls felt they had become more clingy over the last school year, or had stayed the same in their social comfort zone, and could not understand why the program did not have the same effect on them as it had on their peers. Girls still had difficulty speaking up to those who were being unkind to others; no one considered it worth a fight.

It seemed that the structured conversations gave relationship conversations a direction that was more than the typical chatter among friends. This enabled participants to truly examine

feelings, motivations, and the insecurities of themselves and others, broadening the focus from

the narrow scope of their own little world to one that includes a greater number of personalities.

Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of the girls' parents and group leaders regarding the effectiveness of
Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! program for adolescent girls?

Family Issues

Many of the participants had already established comfortable patterns of communication

within their families; those who did not did not improve communication skills as a result of

participation in the *Kolot* program. Topics of the monthly modules were sent home to parents so

families would be aware of what was being discussed. Some families used this information as a

topic for family discussions while others rarely gave the flyers a glance. Participants sometimes

used the lessons taught as a tool to try to get more freedom from parents; since the parents were

not involved in the sessions, they would have had no way of knowing the full details of each

module. This seemed representative of adolescent desires for greater independence as previously

discussed by Nucci (1997), Rushton (2002), and Weisman (2002), even when the participant was

not ready for it.

Friendships

Group leaders noticed very few disagreements between the girls during or between *Kolot*

sessions. This may have been due to the numerous and improved guided communication

opportunities provided by the modules; another possibility may be tied to the way the groups

were organized by school faculty. At the end of every school year the current teachers consider

learning styles as well as social concerns when organizing class lists for the upcoming school year.

Great pains are taken to ensure that students with personality conflicts are not placed in the same class section. The *Kolot* groupings were determined by the class sections; therefore, it is possible that fewer conflicts took place because of the way teachers had organized the groups.

Group leaders also noticed girls from different cliques, but in the same *Kolot* groupings, listening carefully to what was said by one another. It was a case of not previously having had an opportunity to listen to a different group of people as well as not wishing to take the time to do so. The modules provided a forced opportunity; participants listened to one another because they were a part of the same group.

Parents noticed their daughters applying lessons involving ethical speech, better communication, and making wiser choices when faced with social concerns. Participants were more willing to take a bold step, explore new friendships, and find appropriate people to help them solve problems as situations arose. Participants were able to cognitively understand the change in relationships, or understand the different qualities one person looks for in a friend as compared to what another person looks for in a friend. Once again, this is attributed to the communication opportunities provided by the sessions. Research by Naylor & Cowie (1999), Salmivalli (1999), and Richardson (2002) are consistent with the results of this study in that adolescents taught how to use coping strategies and provided training in active listening techniques will result with those individuals developing greater skills in showing empathy and an understanding of others.

Body Image

Group leaders noticed participants continuing to discuss topics associated with body image long after the sessions had ended; parents did not witness continued topic discussion. This may be because the school provided a safe place for participants to share feelings with one another--feelings that came out of the same informational session. Parents, on the other hand, tend to overreact when their child mentions issues related to body image. Adolescents need the opportunity to discuss without hearing or seeing a reaction tied to panic or continued discussions that an adolescent may not wish to have. Also, participants' discussions were not in the context of trying to gain additional freedoms when those topics were discussed at school. This left the conversations free from ulterior adolescent motives and discussion for the sake of discussion only.

School Issues

The biggest impact of *Kolot* on the school day involved Jewish Studies classes. Typically, these classes are viewed as history rather than current events. Most adolescents simply do not make the connection to their daily lives at this age. *Kolot* provided an opportunity for participants to make the connection between the lessons taught by their religion and the relevance to their daily lives. Unethical speech and gossip, repairing the world and community service, treating your body as a temple and eating healthy foods, exercising, and not abusing drugs or alcohol are all relevant to their lives. In addition, students made the connection between what they learned in a religion class and what they learned in a *Kolot* session; participants were excited to make these connections, and the power of the message increased.

Assertiveness

Group leaders and parents agreed that group participants enjoyed the chance to share feelings and experiences. Participants tended to be outspoken; few individuals were afraid to speak up for themselves by the sixth grade, and they had learned more appropriate ways to express their feelings. Participants used tools learned during *Kolot* sessions to help deal with school, social, and family concerns.

Quantitative Results

For the two quantitative research questions, two pretests and posttests were completed by student participants. All pretests and posttests were coded to ensure that the researcher could match the results to individuals so comparisons could be made using a paired samples *t-test*. All tests were completed within a 45-minute time period.

A content pretest (Appendix C) assessing basic knowledge regarding Jewish traditions, holidays, and female heroes was administered by the researcher and completed within 15 minutes by each of the girls. The same content test was re-administered at the completion of 9 months in the program.

Battle's (2002) CFSEI-3 was also administered as a pretest and posttest. Each participant's subscale standard scores on the Intermediate Form were summed to create a GSEQ and a Defensiveness Score. Pretest results versus posttest results for the content test and the self-concept test were compared in *t-tests* for related samples. A dependent means *t-test* was used to compare two conditions (before participating in the *Kolot* program and after participating in the *Kolot* program for 9 months), with the same group of participants being involved in both conditions of the experiment.

What is the change in the girls' basic knowledge of Jewish people, holidays, and traditions, if any, after participating in 9 months of the program?

Jewish concepts that were part of the program were always presented and discussed, but the emphasis was more focused on the adolescent issues at hand. Most of the religious knowledge was a part of the standard Jewish day school curriculum; therefore, minimal changes would be expected within the Jewish day school locale. Participants not enrolled in a Jewish day school might be a better pool to assess for this information.

During the pretest, participants first marked answers they easily knew, getting them out of the way so they could then struggle with the remaining questions. Since the questions were written in matching and multiple choice formats, answers should not have been left blank, but some participants wanted assurance that this assessment was not for a grade and wanted to know if their Jewish Studies teacher would have access to the results. After being reassured that there would be no negative repercussions, participants completed their assessments.

One answer each in the areas of traditions, people, and holidays were statistically significant. One question on traditions was marked wrong more often on the posttest than on the pretest; this and any other items correctly marked on the pretest but incorrectly marked on the posttest could be attributed to carelessness or being a luckier guesser on the pretest. In general, participants left little room for improvement from the pretest to the posttest. As seen in Table 3, the mean score on all pretests combined was 1.72; the mean score on all posttests combined was 1.84. Also, the standard deviation on the posttest was lower than the standard deviation for the pretest. This would indicate that all scores were closer to the mean on the posttest than on the pretest. While there was improvement overall, there was little room for statistically significant change.

Table 3

Comparison of Mean Scores for Pretests and Posttests

Test	Pretest Means	Pretest SD	Posttest Means	Posttest SD
Test 1	1.94	0.24	2.00	0.00
Test 2	1.61	0.50	1.67	0.49
Test 3	1.83	0.38	2.00	0.00
Test 4	1.72	0.46	1.72	0.46
Test 5	1.83	0.38	1.94	0.24
Test 6	1.61	0.50	1.67	0.49
Test 7	1.56	0.51	1.83	0.38
Test 8	1.89	0.32	1.94	0.24
Test 9	1.61	0.50	1.67	0.49
Test 10	1.83	0.38	1.89	0.32
Test 11	1.94	0.24	2.00	0.00
Test 12	1.72	0.46	2.00	0.00
Test 13	1.61	0.50	1.78	0.43
Test 14	1.72	0.46	1.67	0.49
Test 15	1.94	0.24	1.94	0.24
Test 16	1.67	0.49	1.78	0.43
Test 17	1.28	0.46	1.83	0.38
Test 18	1.72	0.46	1.83	0.38
Mean Scores	1.72	0.41	1.84	0.30

Research Question 5

What change in self-concept, if any, occurs in the girls after participating in 9 months of the program?

The self-concept scores that proved to be statistically significant were in the areas of general, parent/home, and global self-concept. Overall, self-concept seemed to improve once participants had an opportunity to share feelings and thoughts on a regular basis. Participants spoke freely during each meeting after a general theme was presented. Even though the self-

concept tests were broken down into categories, the conversations during *Kolot* sessions were not. Participants were never told the subthemes of the program; they were simply told topics for each module. All components of a person's feelings and self-concept overlapped during session discussions; therefore, it seems natural that more than one self-concept area, in this case the general, parent/home, and global self-concept data, revealed themselves to be statistically significant. Academic self-concept would not have changed so easily; better communication skills would not typically translate into better grades on a test, homework, or a student's work ethic. It does make sense that if one's overall (global) self-concept improved, so too would all other areas improve. Academic self-concept improved from 9.23 on the pretest to 10.15 on the posttest; this gain was not statistically significant. Also, the overall social challenges experienced during adolescence would continue to hamper positive gains in the social self-concept area. Social self-concept improved from 10.15 on the pretest to 10.92 on the posttest, minimal gains that would punctuate the difficulties faced by adolescents during this time of their lives.

Summary

Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! provided an opportunity for participants to examine their personal life challenges and then apply Jewish values and beliefs to their everyday experiences. Qualitative results revealed that participants inconsistently perceived they were able to apply the lessons taught in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program. Participants acknowledged some application of lessons taught in the areas of friendship, gossip, bullying, self-defense, and assertiveness. Few participants applied lessons taught to the area of body image. Most participants perceived that their relationship skills benefited from lessons taught

during the monthly modules, referencing their abilities to expand their social circles. The perceptions of parents and group leaders as to the effectiveness of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program varied in relation to the level of open communication between the participants and the adults. Adults who had open lines of communication with participants expressed greater perceptions of program effectiveness; adults who participated in fewer discussions with the participants noticed neither the effectiveness nor ineffectiveness of the program.

Quantitatively, only 3 questions results proved to be statistically significant: one question involving female roles models out of the 5 questions asked, 1 question involving traditions out of the 6 questions asked, and 1 question involving holidays out of the 7 questions asked.

Statistically significant changes in self-concept were revealed in the areas of general, parent/home, and global self-concept; statistically significant changes were not revealed in the areas of academic or social self-concept.

Tying the religious component to daily adolescent experiences allowed participants to see just how relevant their beliefs are and how they can be a source of strength during difficult times. However, based on qualitative responses and conversations during monthly modules, the most striking revelation seemed to be the importance of communication. Parents and group leaders with open lines of communication were able to observe developmental changes taking place in the girls' lives. In addition, having assigned groups allowed, and almost required, that participants take the time to listen to those outside their personal circle of friends. This resulted in an awareness that their insecurities and feelings were common among their peers; they began to realize that nothing was "wrong" with them. These group discussions also provided a stronger base upon which they could lean in times of self-doubt and negative peer pressure situations.

<center>Recommendations</center>

Affording adolescents the opportunity to develop personal tools to deal with the typical challenges of friendship, body image, school struggles, assertiveness, and family struggles experienced during their teen years results in a less stressful and more positive adolescent experience; many of the pitfalls that await the typical adolescent can be avoided or better controlled. The positive impact of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program on its adolescent participants, as documented in this study, may provide a springboard for similar programs to be developed in other venues. Developing parallel programs for every religious group would give adolescents from a variety of backgrounds an opportunity to connect their basic beliefs and value systems to guide them through adolescence, helping them develop better tools for dealing with adolescent challenges.

Recommendations for the authors of this program include adding a parent-participant portion. Families with already established open lines of communication seemed to gain more than families with minimal communication. Requiring parents to be a part of the program, even if only to assure participant/parent communication, would be a positive addition. Another recommendation would be to modify some of the content for the younger participants. Some of the material needed to be toned down because it was not appropriate or relevant for the sixth grade child. Being more sensitive to the social realities of the younger participant, such as the level of typical involvement in boy/girl dating relationships, would improve the power of the program.

Future studies should include another examination of the same participants after they continue to participate in the *Kolot* program for an additional school year, as well as comparisons between day school programs in public versus private schools. Studies should also be conducted

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to see what difference, if any, can be found when the program is part of a school day with all the

girls participating as opposed to an after-school program with girls voluntarily being involved.

Additionally, programs developed for adolescent boys could provide them with tools to deal with

their particular challenges, and these programs should be evaluated for their effectiveness as

well.

APPENDIX A

TIMELINE

Phase I	Pre-Study procedures
April-August 2004	Secure access to schools
August 2004	Submit application for Approval of Investigation
	Involving the Use of Human Subjects
August 2004	Secure permission for the study from the Office
	of Sponsored Projects
September 2004	Mail parents letters of consent/assent
	Meet with group leaders to discuss the study
	Meet with parents to discuss the study
	Meet with students to discuss the study
	Administer pilot tests to 7th- and 8th-grade
	students to establish test reliability for
	the content knowledge test
Phase II	
September 2004	Administer content and self-concept pre-tests
Phase III	
September 2004 -	Girls participate in monthly modules
May 2005	

Phase IV

May 2005   Administer content and self-concept posttests

Phase V

May-June 2005   Conduct focus group interviews:

                            Girls

                            Parents

                            Group leaders/teachers

Phase VI

July-August 2005   Transcribe, code, and review data.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF CONSENT/ASSENT

September 2004

Dear Parents of *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* participants,

You are being asked to give permission for you and your child,

_____ (child's name), to participate in a research project I am

conducting as part of my doctoral program at the University of North Texas (UNT) Department

of Educational Administration. This study involves how girls apply lessons learned in the areas

of body image, friendship, assertiveness, family issues, and school issues after participating for 9

months in *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*

Your child will be asked to complete a pre and posttest in two areas:

Content (basic knowledge of Jewish traditions, people, and holidays)

Self-concept (self-esteem)

The content assessment will take 10 minutes to complete. The self-concept assessment

will take 20 minutes to complete. Both of these will be administered either immediately before or

after a *Rosh Hodesh* session. Also, you and your child will be asked to participate in a 1-hour

focus group interview in May (time/date to be determined).

Some of the self-concept questions may cause your child to feel uncomfortable. If you

decide to give permission for you and your child to participate in this study, please understand

participation by you and your child is voluntary and you have the right to discontinue your or

your child's participation at any time without any penalty or loss of rights or benefits. I may

choose to discontinue your or your child's participation at any time; no compensation is being

offered for you or your child to participate.

Also, the confidentiality of your and your child's individual information will be

maintained in all publications or presentations regarding this study. Signed consent forms and

coded survey results will be kept in separate locations; audio and/or video tapes recorded during focus group interviews will be disposed of at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, you may contact me at [address omitted] or xxx-xxx-xxxx (home number). You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Jane B. Huffman, at the University of North Texas, Department of Educational Administration, at huffman@coe.unt.edu or 940-565-2920. I will be available to meet with parents, girls, and group leaders (date and time to be determined) to explain the study and the rights and protections of those involved.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). If there are any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the UNT IRB at 940-565-3940.

A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Susie Wolbe

~~~~~~

I understand the purpose of this study and my and my child's rights as a research participant. I voluntarily consent to my and my child's participation in the research study.

Signature of Participant (Parent)_____ Date _____

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

ASSENT OF CHILD

"I understand I am being asked to participate in a study about adolescent girls. If I agree

to participate I will be asked to answer questions about the *Kolot's Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl

Thing!* sessions and questions about what I think about myself. I will also be asked to be part of a

discussion group about these subjects.

By signing below, I agree to be part of this study."

_____

Signature of Child Participant

WAIVER OF ASSENT

The assent of _____ (name of child) was waived because of:

___ Age   ___ Maturity   ___ Psychological state of the child

_____   _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian   Date

APPENDIX C

PRE AND POST CONTENT TEST

How Well Do You Relate?

Connect the term/name with its meaning

_____ *Esther*   a. Unethical speech.

_____ *Hannah*   b. Changing from negative behaviors we wish to

_____ *Lashon Hara*   abandon and turning to positive ones we wish to _____

Lashon Tov   keep.

_____ *Leah and Rachel*   c. A woman who nurtured and healed others.

_____ *Miriam*   d. Day of Atonement.

_____ *Hanukkah*   e. Had seven sons who sacrificed their lives

_____ *Rosh Hodesh*   rather than bow to an idol.

_____ *Teshuvah*   f. The only female judge named in the Torah.

_____ *Yom Kippur*   g. Sisters who overcame conflict and jealousy.

_____ *Tzedakah*   h. Holiday associated with women.

_____ *Deborah*   i. Saved the Jewish people from Haman's

                                         attempted genocide.

                                         j. Charity.

                                         k. Respectful communication.

                                         l. The only important festival in the Jewish

                                         calendar not mentioned anywhere in the Tanach.

Circle the correct answer

According to legend, *Rosh Hodesh* was given to the women of Israel because

a.   they refused to be involved in the creation of an idol

b.   they gave their jewelry to make the golden calf

c.   it's a day where women have to work twice as hard

d.   none of the above

Tashlih is a custom during Rosh Hashanah when people

a.   fast from dawn to dusk

b.   build temporary dwellings to symbolize the 40 years Jews wandered in the desert

c.   throw bread crumbs into water to symbolize a desire to rid ourselves of our sins

d.   wave a lulav and etrog

The holiday of Passover

a.   is a fast day marking the destruction of both Temples

b.   helps us be our best selves

c.   reminds us that some one should be in charge of a recycling program

d.   celebrates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery

The 10th of Tevet is *Yom Hakadish Haklali,* a day to mourn those whose date of death is unknown, including victims of war, genocide, or accidents. This is important because

a.   it helps us honor everyone in our past

b.   we are inspired to live a life worthy of their memory

c.   we can learn from the actions of those who came before us

d.   all of the above

Adar is unique in the Jewish calendar because

a.   some years contain two Adars

b.   it makes us responsible for preserving, protecting, and repairing the natural world in every way we can

c.   it is the time when Moses broke the first tablets of the Covenant upon finding the Israelites worshipping a golden calf

d.   it is a time to focus on long- and short-term goals

Tu Beshevat is a time

a.   when we can apply ancient principles to modern dilemmas

b.   that brings us greater emotional, interpersonal, and spiritual fulfillment

c.   to focus on the environment and planting trees

d.   to focus on positive relationships

APPENDIX D

PROGRAM CONTENTS

GATHER	Coming together, creating a sacred place.
EXPLORE	Discuss what will make their meetings a time when they feel comfortable sharing their concerns and thoughts.
DO	Establish guidelines for meetings.
REFLECT	Role-play how they might respond if someone asks for personal details that someone shared during a meeting.
CREATE	Create a ritual cloth using paints, pens, and markers. Each girl draws what is most reflective of her and her values.
LIFE LESSONS	Sharing feelings and concerns with others helps us understand that we are not alone, we are not the only one with concerns/problems, and that others have the same insecurities.
CLOSING RITUAL	Girls share what they added to the ritual cloth and why it is important to them.

OCTOBER 2004

GATHER	Review the ritual cloth and guidelines established during the last meeting.
EXPLORE	Tishrey (month) and Teshuvah (behavior): During this month we turn away from behaviors we are not proud of and embrace those we feel good about because they better reflect our values.
DO	Role play: Practice ethical speech (Lashon Tov) instead of unethical speech (Lashon Hara).
REFLECT	Girls write their own Letter of Life that describes three behaviors they will try to avoid and three ways they hope to improve themselves.
CREATE	The letters.
LIFE LESSONS	Having one formulate goals for personal growth and write them down for later reflections can strengthen one's commitment to making that change.
CLOSING RITUAL	Allow each girl the opportunity to she one goal or time to repeat the goal to herself silently.

GATHER	Share who feels they have made progress in working on their goals. What future plans do people have to reenergize them in accomplishing the goals?
EXPLORE	Share the story of Rachel and Leah.
DO	Discuss the themes of competition and envy. Share times when you felt jealous of someone or someone seemed jealous of you.
REFLECT	How did your feelings impact your behaviors? How did these feelings change your relationships with that person and with friends you have in common?
CREATE	Create friendship pins using pins, beads, etc.
LIFE LESSONS	We may not like feeling envious, but it is a normal part of life. When we feel this way we should focus on the things we like, the things we can do something about, and try not to feel threatened by people just because we are envious of them.
CLOSING RITUAL	Put all the pins in a bag, shake, and have people pick a different person's pin to take home. Also, add some extra pins to the ritual cloth to show commitment to the group experience.

GATHER	Explain that a flood is coming. What are the five things you would want to save from your home as you leave?
EXPLORE	Discuss consumerism and how Chanukah is impacted by its close proximity to Christmas.
DO	Explain the ladder of Maimonides relating to tzedakah (charity).
REFLECT	Read and respond to Jewish teachings on money and charity.
CREATE	Design IOU Coupons to be given to friends and family rather than traditional gifts given at the holiday season.
LIFE LESSONS	As Jews, we are obligated to share what we have with those in need.
CLOSING RITUAL	Light appreciation candles and say what things they are appreciating.

JANUARY 2005

GATHER	Announce that at this meeting we will focus on our bodies and body image.
EXPLORE	Look through magazines and try to decide what messages the advertisements are giving.
DO	Have girls write something that bothers them about their body on a strip of paper, put that paper in a balloon, blow up the balloon and tie a knot in it.
REFLECT	How would their lives be different if the things that didn't bother them didn't exist?
CREATE	Have girls create their own prayers of thanks for their bodies. Girls can choose to creatively write or create a dance to symbolize their feelings.
LIFE LESSONS	Judaism promotes an appreciation for the beauty, power, and abilities of our bodies. We should treat our body as a temple because God gave it to us—nourish it, exercise it, respect it.
CLOSING RITUAL	Pop the balloons and reframe any negative thoughts.

GATHER	Discuss what about nature is special and how being in nature makes us feel.
EXPLORE	Make analogies between fruits and people (i.e., tough on the outside but soft on the inside).
DO	Have a seder (feast) with fruits of the season.
REFLECT	We can learn much from nature if only we take the time to observe and appreciate it.
CREATE	Make rainsticks out of tubes, pins, beans, and decorative items (paints, ribbons, colored papers, stickers, etc.).
LIFE LESSONS	If we can't physically get to nature, we can at least go there in our minds. Taking the time to reflect on the gifts God has given this world can help us find our place in the scheme of things.
CLOSING RITUAL	Ask each girl to think of one part of nature for which she is especially grateful.

GATHER	Announce that at this meeting we will focus on what is considered beautiful.
EXPLORE	Review the story of Purim and how physical beauty plays a part in the story.
DO	Look through magazines and try to decide what society considers beautiful.
REFLECT	Discuss the difference between inner beauty and outer beauty.
CREATE	Girls will participate in self-defense lessons, creating their own plan for safety.
LIFE LESSONS	Esther's looks won her a place in the palace, but her intelligence and bravery saved the Jewish people and earned her a place in Jewish history. The story also reminds us of the importance of making good choices in potentially dangerous situations.
CLOSING RITUAL	Challenge the girls to identify a strength not associated with outer beauty that should contribute to their feelings of self-worth.

GATHER	Ask the girls to reflect on a time in their own lives when they were faced with a situation that required they take a risk.
EXPLORE	Discuss the difference between safe and unsafe risks (taking up for someone else versus getting in a car with a drunk driver).
DO	Tell the story of Miriam.
REFLECT	Brainstorm other people who have taken an unpopular stand for the right reasons.
CREATE	Girls will each create their own Miriam's Cup for the Passover seder.
LIFE LESSONS	It's not always easy to take an unpopular stand, but sometimes it must be done. It can make all the difference in the world.
CLOSING RITUAL	Girls commend each other on how their bravery was the right thing to do.

GATHER	Have girls share a time in their lives they really looked forward to.
EXPLORE	Discuss counting friends versus friends that count.
DO	Take turns reading the article How to be Popular.
REFLECT	Discuss what qualities (characteristics) make someone popular.
CREATE	Make Omer bracelets.
LIFE LESSONS	Having a few good friends who appreciate us for who we really are is more important than having many superficial friends whom we feel we need to impress.
CLOSING RITUAL	Girls share the significance of the colors they chose in designing their bracelets.

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP

INTERVIEWS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact, if any, of the *Kolot Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program on adolescent girls after participating in the program for nine monthly modules.

Today I will ask you a series of questions. There are no wrong answers. I want to know what you think, how you felt during the sessions and feel now after participating in the program, and if you think the program, or any part of it, made a difference in you or your relationships with other people.

If you think it made a difference, I will ask you *how* you think it made a difference. I hope you will be able to give me examples; even if you cannot think of an example, I still want to know what you think.

No matter what you say, nothing will result in a bad grade or anything else that you could consider bad. My feelings won't be hurt; my research won't be hurt. I just want to know the truth from your point of view; I want to know what you think.

Do you have any questions?

**The first questions have to do with how you think you've applied the lessons taught during each *Kolot* session. Let's review the topics taught each month. Here is a summary of what each monthly topic was and the activities you participated in. Look at the topics. Are there any topics where you think you really learned something and then used that skill or information when you weren't still in a *Kolot* session? Is there a lesson that helped you understand something, feel better about yourself, or better about one of your friends, teachers, or a parent?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how a certain lesson helped you?

**The next questions have to do with how you think what you've learned has made any of your relationships better. Think about your friends your age, your teachers, coaches, parents, or anybody else you have contact with. Looking back over the lessons taught, do you think your relationships and how you deal with other people has improved? Did you learn anything that you think helped you?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how a certain lesson improved or changed any of your relationships?

**The last questions have to do with if you think your parents, group leaders, or teachers have noticed a change in the way you interact with others as a result of your participation in this program. Has anyone said anything that would make you think they noticed that you learned a new skill?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how the program has impacted you as an individual or how you deal with other people?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You helped me, you helped the school, and there is a very good chance that you have helped thousands of other girls just like you who, when they reach your age, will have the same questions, concerns, and worries as you have during adolescence. If this study shows that it helps adolescent girls, then this program, or others like it, will be developed to help other adolescents just like you.

Thank you again. Good job!

APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS

GROUP INTERVIEWS FOR PARENTS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact, if any, of the *Kolot Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program on adolescent girls after your daughters participated in the program for nine monthly modules.

Today I will ask you a series of questions. There are no wrong answers. I want to know what you think, how you felt and now feel after having your daughters participate in the program, and if you think the program, or any part of it, made a difference in your, or your daughter's, relationships with other people.

If you think it made a difference, I will ask you *how* you think it made a difference. I hope you will be able to give me examples; even if you cannot think of an example, I still want to know what you think.

No matter what you say, nothing will result in a bad grade for your child or anything else that you could consider bad for your child or anyone else. My feelings won't be hurt; my research won't be hurt. I just want to know the truth from your point of view; I want to know what you think.

Do you have any questions?

**The first questions have to do with how you think your daughter applied the lessons taught during each *Kolot* session. Let's review the topics taught each month. Here is a summary of what each monthly topic was and the activities your daughter participated in. Look at the topics. Are there any topics where you think your daughter really learned something and then used that skill or information when she wasn't still in a *Kolot* session? Is there a lesson that helped her understand something, feel better about herself, or better about one of her friends, teachers, or a parent?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how a certain lesson helped your daughter?

**The next questions have to do with how you think what your daughter learned has made any of her relationships better. Think about the friends her age, her teachers, coaches, parents, or anybody else she has contact with. Looking back over the lessons taught, do you think her relationships and how she deals with other people has improved? Did she learn anything that you think helped her?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how a certain lesson improved or changed any of her relationships?

**The last questions have to do with if you think the group leaders, teachers, or other adults your daughter has contact with have noticed a change in the way your daughter interacts with others as a result of her participation in this program. Has anyone said anything that would make you think they noticed that your daughter learned a new skill?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how the program has impacted your daughter as an individual or how she deals with other people?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You helped me, you helped the school, and there is a very good chance that you have helped thousands of other girls just like your daughter who, when they reach her age, will have the same questions, concerns, and worries as your daughter has during adolescence. If this study shows that it helps adolescent girls, then this program, or others like it, will be developed to help other adolescents just like your daughter.

Thank you again for your help.

APPENDIX G

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP

INTERVIEWS FOR GROUP LEADERS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact, if any, of the *Kolot Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* program on adolescent girls after participating in the program for nine monthly modules.

Today I will ask you a series of questions. There are no wrong answers. I want to know what you think, how you felt when participating in the program, how you feel now after participating in the program, and if you think the program, or any part of it, made a difference in the girls' relationships with other people.

If you think it made a difference, I will ask you *how* you think it made a difference. I hope you will be able to give me examples; even if you cannot think of an example, I still want to know what you think.

No matter what you say, nothing will result in anything negative for you, the girls, or anybody or anything else. My feelings won't be hurt; my research won't be hurt. I just want to know the truth from your point of view; I want to know what you think.

Do you have any questions?

**The first questions have to do with how you think the girls have applied the lessons taught during each *Kolot* session. Let's review the topics taught each month. Here is a summary of what each monthly topic was and the activities participated in. Look at the topics. Are there any topics where you think the girls really learned something and then used that skill or information when they weren't still in a *Kolot* session? Is there a lesson that helped them understand something, feel better about themselves, or better about one of their friends, teachers, or a parent?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how a certain lesson helped anyone?

**The next questions have to do with how you think what the girls learned has made any of their relationships better. Think about friends their age, their teachers, coaches, parents, or anybody else they have contact with. Looking back over the lessons taught, do you think their relationships and how they deal with other people has improved? Did they learn anything that you think helped them?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how a certain lesson improved or changed any of their relationships?

**The last questions have to do with if you think parents or other teachers have noticed a change in the way the girls interact with others as a result of their participation in this program. Has anyone said anything that would make you think they learned a new skill?

Can you give me any examples to help me better understand how the program has impacted the girls as individuals or how they deal with other people?

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You helped me, you helped the school, and there is a very good chance that you have helped thousands of adolescent girls just like the students here who will have the same questions, concerns, and worries as these adolescent girls. If this study shows that it helps adolescent girls, then this program, or others like it, will be developed to help other adolescents just like them. Thank you again.

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