

**Evaluation: PeacePlayers International – Middle East
Twinned Basketball Clubs program**

Karen Doubilet

Managing Director, PeacePlayers International – Middle East

Analyzed by Dr. Yona Miller, PhD.

Abstract

This study demonstrates that PPI – ME's Twinned Basketball Clubs program positively impacted the inter-group attitudes of Arab and Jewish participants for a number of variables. Specifically, using a pre- and post-test survey, participants reported decreased ethnocentrism and increased willingness for contact with the other side. There was also a significant difference between experimental and control subjects, indicating that positive attitude change was a result of participation in the program. Finally, results demonstrated the long-term positive impact of the program over sustained participation, with youth reporting significantly improved attitudes between 2007 and 2010.

Introduction

PeacePlayers International – Middle East's (PPI – ME) Twinned Basketball Clubs program brings together Arab and Jewish youth in Israel, utilizing the game of basketball as an outlet for structured contact between the two divided groups. The primary goal of PPI – ME's Twinned Basketball Clubs (TBC) program is to improve the inter-group attitudes of youth participants through sustained and frequent contact.

The current evaluation was conducted in order to assess the degree to which the TBC is effective in improving inter-group attitudes among participants. To this end, subjects completed a pre-test questionnaire at the beginning of the program year, and a post-test questionnaire at the end of the program year. The questionnaire assessed two primary dependent variables: (1) ethnocentric attitudes; and (2) willingness for contact with the "other" side.

“Ethnocentrism” refers to the tendency for individuals to believe that one's own cultural group is centrally important and is superior to other groups. “Willingness for Contact”

refers to the extent to which subjects would be willing to engage in varying levels of contact with the out-group, including friendship, studying at the same school and living in the same neighborhood as a member of the out-group.

In addition to assessing the degree of attitude change among participants, this study also compared the attitudes of Jewish participants to a comparable control group. The control group was comprised of children who attend the same school as participants, but who had never before attended an event of PPI – ME. We were unable to obtain Arab control subjects due to a lack of cooperation among the school at which the participants studied.

The post-test questionnaire also included additional questions that served to provide feedback regarding participants' impressions of PPI – ME programming. This supplementary section of the post-test included questions about participants' perceived improvement in basketball skill level; their degree of satisfaction in the program; whether they experienced a change in attitude; and the level of parental support cited by participants.

Finally, this study examines the impact of PPI-ME's TBC program over the long-term. Data from 2007 is compared with data from 2010. For this purpose, pre-tests from 2006 were compared with post-tests from 2010 for each veteran participant, to examine the full extent of long-term change.

Subjects

A total of 155 subjects took part in this study, including 92 Jewish subjects (30 experimental and 62 control subjects) and 63 Arab subjects. Subjects were between the ages of 12 to 16 years old. The Jewish group was comprised of both control and experimental participants. However, as explained above, there was no control group available to make a parallel comparison of Arab participants. Sample distribution according to nationality, experimental condition and gender are presented in tables 1 and 2.

The majority of the Jewish participants in the test sample were new participants, with average participation at 0.88 years ($SD = 1.41$). The majority of Arab participants were veterans to the program, with average participation of 2.89 years ($SD = 1.32$).

Table 2: Jewish subjects according to experimental condition and gender

Gender	Experimental		Control	
	pre	post	pre	post
Male	4	10	24	27
Female	23	20	29	35
Total	27	30	53	62

Table 1: Arab subjects according to experimental condition and gender

Gender	Pre	Post
Male	16	14
Female	47	32
Total	63	46

Method

PPI – ME's Twinned Basketball Clubs (TBC) program runs parallel to the school year, with each year of programming commencing at the beginning of September and culminating at the end of May. In order to assess the impact of the TBC on participants' inter-group attitudes, subjects were asked to complete a pre-test at the beginning of the programming (September, 2009) year and a post-test at the end (May, 2010). Subjects completed the pre-test questionnaire prior to engaging in joint activities with the out-group during the given year of programming. However, subjects who were veteran participants would have already participated in inter-group activities during the previous years of programming, and thus the baseline provided by the pre-test was likely influenced by prior involvement in the program.

The questionnaires tested variables of ethnocentrism and willingness for contact. "Ethnocentrism" refers to the tendency for individuals to believe that one's own cultural group is centrally important and is superior to other groups. This study aimed to examine whether participants in PPI – ME's program held ethnocentric attitudes, and whether these attitudes improved following participation in the program.

In order to assess subjects' attitudes regarding "willingness for contact," namely Social Distance, subjects were asked to rate their willingness to engage in social contact with the out-group. T-tests were conducted to assess attitude change at the beginning and at the end of the year of TBC programming.

In order to test attitudes on both these variables, subjects were asked to respond to positive or negative statements related to the test variables on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). T-tests were conducted to compare subjects' ethnocentrism and willingness for contact before and after exposure to the experimental condition. An additional two-way ANOVA was conducted for willingness for contact.

As previously mentioned, post-tests contained an additional component whereby subjects responded to questions that concerned further elements of their participation in the TBC. By and large, this component tested the degree of satisfaction garnered by subjects from participation in the program, perceived increase in basketball skill level and the degree of parental support experienced regarding participation in the TBC.

Questionnaires were administered by a team of PPI – ME staff as well as school/community center representatives. Before completing the questionnaire, subjects received an explanation regarding the nature of the study, and were told that there are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions, and that the questionnaire is merely interested in their opinion. The subjects were also assured that the questionnaires were anonymous. They were asked to complete the questionnaire alone, which was done under the supervision of PPI – ME staff and teachers.

In order to assess the long-term impact of the TBC program, an analysis was conducted to assess participants' change in attitudes over a period of several years. Accordingly, this study compared participants' pre-test scores from the 2006/2007 program year to their post-test scores from the 2009/2010 program year.

Data was analyzed and reported by Dr. Yona Miller, an independent analyst specializing in statistics.

Results

In general, Jewish subjects demonstrated greater positive attitude change in both primary test variables: Ethnocentrism and Willingness for Contact. Arab subjects did not demonstrate significant positive attitude change; however, this can be explained by the fact that Arab participants were on the whole more veteran than Jewish participants. Having participated in the program in previous years, results from the pre-test do not

provide an accurate baseline for comparison, as participants were already likely impacted by the program when they completed the questionnaire. This is further demonstrated in the long-term analysis of the program, which does show positive attitude change on the part of Arab participants. Results are discussed in further depth below, separated according to the two primary test variables.

Ethnocentrism

Jewish Subjects

Data for Jewish subjects is presented in table 3. The results demonstrated statistically significant positive attitude change regarding ethnocentrism among Jewish participants. Participants reported significantly less ethnocentrism on the post-test (following participation in the program) than they did on the pre-test (at the beginning of the program year). Specifically, they reported more positive and less negative attitudes toward Arabs following the intervention. There was no significant attitude change among control subjects, providing compelling evidence that positive attitude change among the participants was a result of their participation in the Twinned Basketball Clubs program, and not the result of external factors.

Table 3: measures of ethnocentrism, pre and post, experimental and control group

Variable	Experimental group			Control group		
	Pre (N=27)	Post (N=28)	t	Pre (N=53)	Post (N=65)	t
My ethnicity is better than other ethnicities	2.86 (.74)	2.22 (.38)	4.05***	3.08 (.88)	2.88 (.66)	1.38
My ethnicity is equal to other ethnicities	3.65 (.58)	4.45 (.40)	-5.93***	3.53 (.96)	3.76 (.86)	-1.33

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Arab Subjects

There was no significant difference between the pre- and post-tests scores of Arab participants for the ethnocentrism variable. However, it is important to note that unlike Jewish participants, most of whom were new to the program, the Arab participants were veterans to the program. Thus, it was more difficult to assess short-term attitude change, since they had likely already been impacted by the program in earlier years. This was impossible to test in the current study, since the ethnocentrism component of the questionnaire was only added to the pre- and post-tests in the 2009/2010 program year.

Table 4: measures of ethnocentrism, pre and post (experimental group)

Variable	Pre (N=66)	Post (N=46)	t
My ethnicity is better than other ethnicities	3.61 (.65)	3.69 (.65)	.58
My ethnicity is equal to other ethnicities	3.84 (.80)	3.68 (.44)	1.20

Willingness for Contact

Jewish Subjects

In addition to T-tests, which are presented in table 6 below, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to assess pre- to post-test change, as well as differences between the experimental group and control group.

As expected, Jewish participants reported significantly more willingness to engage in contact with Arabs following participation in the TBC program ($F_{(1, 163)}=9.82, p<.01$). As can be seen on table 5, they expressed greater willingness to have an Arab friend; to invite an Arab to their home; and to play sports with Arabs. There was a significant difference between the responses of the control and experimental subjects ($F_{(1, 163)}=29.10, p<.01$), providing evidence that the positive attitude change indeed occurred as a result of participation in the TBC program.

Table 5: Willingness for Contact, pre and post, experimental and control groups, Jews

Variable	Experimental group			Control group		
	Pre (N=26)	Post (N=28)	t	Pre (N=49)	Post (N=64)	t
1. Willingness to make Arab friends	4.03 (.96)	4.79 (.50)	3.63**	3.04 (1.27)	3.10 (1.39)	1.83
2. Willingness to invite Arabs to my house	3.42 (.96)	4.46 (.79)	4.19**	2.33 (1.29)	3.45 (1.31)	1.93
3. Willingness to study at the same school as Arabs	3.60 (1.04)	4.07 (.72)	1.93	2.77 (1.42)	3.29 (1.37)	1.94
4. Willingness to live in the same neighborhood as Arabs	3.46 (1.17)	3.57 (.92)	.38	2.94 (1.49)	3.51 (1.32)	2.11
5. Willingness to live in an Arab neighborhood	2.64 (1.22)	2.71 (.85)	.26	1.84 (.92)	2.23 (1.55)	1.95
6. Willingness to play with Arabs	4.50 (.76)	4.79 (.50)	1.64	3.10 (1.37)	3.20 (1.24)	.23
7. Average willingness for contact	3.62 (.80)	4.07 (.46)	2.51*	2.68 (1.12)	2.98 (1.09)	.89

Scale 1 – 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 =Strongly Agree)

*p<.05 **p<.01

Arab Subjects

Similar to the results demonstrated for ethnocentrism, a significant difference was not found between pre- and post-tests for Arab participants regarding their willingness to engage in contact with Jews (see table 6). However, as previously noted, most of the Arab subjects were veterans of the program. As such, their pre-test scores do not provide a clear baseline for measuring attitude change. A more important and accurate measure is then the change that occurs as a result of long-term participation in the

program, as demonstrated by a comparison of pre-test scores from the 2006/2007 program year to their post-test scores from the 2009/2010 program year. These results are presented below in table 6.

Table 6: measures of willingness for Contact, pre and post (experimental group)

Variable	Pre (N=66)	Post (N=46)	t
1. Willingness to make Jewish friends	4.15 (.92)	4.16 (1.11)	.05
2. Willingness to invite Jews to my house	3.86 (1.19)	4.09 (1.06)	.96
3. Willingness to study at the same school as Jews	3.83 (1.20)	3.86 (1.18)	.14
4. Willingness to live in the same neighborhood as Jews	3.62 (1.25)	3.80 (1.18)	.68
5. Willingness to live in a Jewish neighborhood	3.81 (1.10)	4.15 (.97)	1.55
6. Willingness to play with Jews	4.15 (1.07)	4.19 (1.26)	.17
7. Average willingness for contact	3.92 (1.02)	4.02 (.92)	.55

Scale 1 – 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 =Strongly Agree)

Participant Feedback

In order to obtain direct feedback from participants on different aspects of TBC programming, subjects were asked to respond to a number of questions on various indicators of success regarding TBC programming. This portion of the questionnaire was included in the post-test only, as the information in this section could only be gathered

following a significant period of participation. Since there is no pre-test against which to compare these results, the current study cites the percentage of instances a certain answer is given for each question, in addition to the averages and standard deviations for each question.

Arab Participants

As can be seen in table 7, Arab subjects answered overwhelmingly favorably on questions related to participants' enjoyment level in the TBC; they also cited that their basketball skill level improved as a result of their involvement and that they learned new things about Jews. Moreover, they did not cite preferring to play with members of their own in-group over playing with Jews, and, correspondingly, they would like to see more joint events in PPI's programming. To a great extent, their parents support their participation in the program. As far as attitude change is concerned, Arab participants cited minimal positive or negative change, although responses were somewhat more favorable for positive attitude change. Similar to results for the two primary test variable, this finding may also be explained by the fact that most participants are veteran, and so the most major attitude change would have occurred in previous years.

Table 7: PPI frequencies (percent), mean, standard deviation

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral (Don't Know)	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Mean (SD)
I have fun with PeacePlayers	-	-	3.1	28.8	68.8	4.65 (.55)
I want to continue to participate in PPI	-	-	-	34.4	65.6	4.65 (.48)
I would recommend PPI to a friend	3.1	-	-	40.6	56.3	4.47 (.80)
My basketball improved as a result of participating in PPI	-	-	-	28.1	71.9	4.72 (.46)
I learned new things about Jews in PPI	-	3.1	6.3	43.8	46.9	4.34 (.77)

My attitudes about Jews changed for the positive	3.2	-	41.9	32.3	22.6	3.71 (.94)
My attitudes about Jews changed for the negative	35.5	12.9	22.6	16.1	12.9	2.58 (1.45)
I would like there to be more joint activities with Jews	-	12.9	12.9	29.0	45.2	4.06 (1.06)
I prefer to play with kids from my own nationality	32.3	41.9	9.7	12.9	3.2	2.13 (1.12)
My parents support my participation in PPI	-	-	6.3	31.3	62.5	4.56 (.62)

Scale 1 – 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 =Strongly Agree)

Jewish Participants

Table 8 demonstrates the results for Jewish subjects, which on the whole are similar to those obtained for Arab subjects. The only major differences could be found in the attitude change questions. Accordingly, Jewish participants cited far greater positive attitude change regarding Arabs, and lower negative attitude change.

Table 8: PPI frequencies (percent), mean, standard deviation

Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral (Don't Know)	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	Mean (SD)
I have fun with PeacePlayers	-	2.8	-	33.3	63.9	4.58 (.65)
I want to continue to participate in PPI	2.8	2.8	2.8	41.7	50.0	4.33 (.89)
I would recommend PPI to a friend	-	-	8.8	44.1	47.1	4.38 (.65)
My basketball improved as a result of participating in PPI	-	2.8	-	36.1	61.1	4.56 (.65)
I learned new things about Arabs in PPI	8.3	2.8	11.1	33.3	44.4	4.03 (1.21)
My attitudes about Arabs changed for the positive	5.6	-	11.1	38.9	44.4	4.17 (1.03)

My attitudes about Arabs changed for the negative	63.9	25.0	8.3	-	2.8	1.53 (.88)
I would like if there was more joint activities with Arabs	2.8	-	36.1	36.1	25.0	3.80 (.92)
I prefer to play with kids from my own nationality	22.6	32.3	25.8	9.7	9.7	2.52 (1.23)
My parents support my participation in PPI	-	-	9.7	38.7	51.6	4.42 (.67)

Scale 1 – 5 (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 =Strongly Agree)

Long-term Impact

A t-test was conducted to assess attitude change among participants for the willingness for contact variable over the long term. The analyses compared participants' attitudes as reported in pre-test questionnaires in 2006 to those they reported in 2010 post-test questionnaires. Pre-test data from 2007 was compared with post-test data from 2010, in order to illustrate the program's impact over three years of participation. Data is presented in table 9.

The results demonstrate the positive impact of the TBC program over the long term. There was a significant difference between participants' attitudes between 2007 and 2010, with both Arabs and Jews reporting greater willingness to engage in contact with the out-group in 2010 than in 2007. This difference was statically significant for both Arab ($t(170)=6.16, p<.01$) and Jewish participants ($t(93)=9.50, p<.01$).

These data testify to the positive impact of frequent, intensive and long-term contact. Continued positive experiences serve to strengthen the positive inter-group attitudes acquired among participants from year to year.

Table 9: average willingness for Contact, pre (2007) and post (2010), Arabs and Jews

Arabs		Jews	
Pre (N=126)	Post (N=46)	Pre (N=67)	Post (N=28)
2.85 (1.14)	4.02 (0.92)	2.36 (0.90)	4.07 (.46)

Scale 1 – 5 (1 = not at all willing; 5 = completely willing)

Discussion

Jewish participants demonstrated positive attitude change in both ethnocentrism and willingness for contact with the out-group between the pre- and post-tests. There was no significant difference, however, between the pre- and post-tests scores of Arab participants for either the ethnocentrism or the willingness for contact variables in the 2009/2010 pre- and post-test comparison. However, it is important to note that, unlike Jewish participants, most of whom were new to the program, most Arab participants had participated in the program in previous years. Thus, it was more difficult to assess short-term attitude change, since they had likely already been impacted by the program in earlier years. However, the assessment of the long-term impact of the program is very encouraging, with Arab, as well as Jewish, participants demonstrating statistically significant attitude change over three years of participation in the program, with regard to willingness for contact. It was impossible to test the long-term effects of participation with regard to ethnocentrism in the current study, since the ethnocentrism component of the questionnaire was only added to the pre- and post-tests in the 2009/2010 program year.

Moreover, an overwhelming majority of Arab and Jewish participants cited that they enjoyed the program, and through involvement obtained positive benefits, including improved basketball skill and greater intercultural familiarity. Corresponding with findings for both primary variables, Arab participants did not cite experiencing attitude change regarding the out-group, whereas Jewish subjects did. This can also be explained by the longer enrollment of Arab participants compared to Jewish participants.