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**DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES AND
STEREOTYPES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD:
THE CASE OF “THE ARAB” CONCEPT
FORMATION, STEREOTYPE AND ATTITUDES
BY JEWISH CHILDREN IN ISRAEL**

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ABSTRACT. *Stereotypes, which are based on the categorization process, are learned. Children first acquire a category of a social group and subsequently attribute characteristics to the group (i.e., form a stereotype). This paper illuminates the development of stereotypes among young children on the basis of cognitive theories of conceptual development. Specifically, several studies investigating the concept formation of “the Arab” among Jewish children in Israel are reported. These studies concern the five following research questions: When do children acquire the concept “an Arab”? On what basis do children form the concept “an Arab”? How do children understand the concept “an Arab”? What is the affective meaning of the concept “an Arab”? What is the visual image of “an Arab” in the minds of children? The results of the reported studies show that children acquire the word and the concept “an Arab” very early. From the beginning, even though little knowledge is associated with the concept, it has negative connotations. Young children described Arabs mostly by referring to violent and aggressive behaviors, and the characterization was unidimensional. These results demonstrate the strength of the Israeli cultural stereotype of Arabs and its influence on young children on the one hand, and show the general principles of category and stereotype development, on the other. Copyright © 1996 Elsevier Science Ltd.*

INTRODUCTION

A stereotype, defined as a set of beliefs about the characteristics of a social category of people, constitutes a cognitive basis for understanding

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intergroup behaviors. It is generally assumed that human beings as individuals and as group members are influenced in their behavior towards other group members by the stereotypes they have formed (e.g., Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Stephan, 1985). It is thus not surprising that the study of stereotypes has been a central area in psychology, which has preoccupied social, developmental and cognitive psychologists alike. Since it is well established that the contents of stereotypes, which are based on the categorization process, are learned, some of the psychological effort over the years was directed towards understanding the development of stereotypes among children.

In the course of the years, several developmental approaches were suggested. The *social learning approach* posited that stereotypes are learned from the social environment in which children live. Parents or other family members are primary sources who provide information, reinforce, and instruct stereotypic contents. Other sources, such as media, peer groups and schools also serve as influential agents in children's acquisition of stereotypes. In addition, stereotypes are learned on the basis of children's real life observations of differences between groups (e.g., Bar-Tal, in press; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Goodman, 1952; Liebert, Sobol, & Copemann, 1972). The *psychodynamic approach* focuses on childhood emotional experiences. According to this approach, negative stereotypes reflect children's intrapersonal conflict or maladjustment, which develop as a consequence of parents' rearing practices (e.g., Allport & Kramer, 1946; Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Bettelheim & Janowitz, 1950). Finally, the *cognitive developmental approach* emphasizes the qualitative changes occurring in cognitive structures as a basis for stereotype acquisition. Children develop in a sequence of stages in which different cognitive abilities emerge that serve, among other things, as a basis for the development of stereotypes (e.g., Katz, 1976; Aboud, 1988).

It has been recognized for quite a while that stereotyping is based on the categorization process (Allport, 1958; Tajfel, 1969). This stimulated much research focusing on adults, with regard to, for instance, meaning of social categories, process of social categorization, its behavioral consequences for the perceiver, its implications for memory, and so on (e.g., Hamilton, 1981; Turner, 1982; Wilder, 1986; Stephan, 1989). However, relatively few attempts have been made, especially in recent years, to study categorical development of stereotypes among children. This omission is somewhat surprising in view of the fact that, in the past two decades, the research on conceptual development has become one of the most fruitful areas in the study of children and remarkable advances in understanding the acquisition of categories have been made (Rosch, 1978; Carey, 1985; Neisser, 1987; Keil, 1989; Markman, 1989). Research in this neglected direction can shed light on the acquisition process of social group

categories among young children, on the nature of these primary categories and on how they change over time.

It is the purpose of the present paper to elucidate the development of stereotypes among young children on the basis of the cognitive theories of conceptual development. The empirical illustrations for the present analysis will be drawn from studies done with Jewish Israeli children, which concentrated on the acquisition of the stereotype of "the Arab".

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

Concepts are mental representations of classes of entities. On the cognitive level, concepts refer to abstractions due to their purely representational nature. These representations are generalizations since they refer to a group of persons, objects, or events which are recognized as being the same (i.e., a chair, an elephant, a Jew). That is, concepts capture the notion that objects, events or people are alike in some important aspects and therefore can be grouped together on that basis and treated as similar, while at the same time differentiating them from others (Smith & Medin, 1981). The term "concept" is used interchangeably with the term category, the product or categorization (e.g., Smith & Medin, 1981; Neisser, 1987). The categorization process establishes that a specific instance is a member of a concept category and that a particular concept/category is a subset of another.

In the present context, specific social groups are considered concepts or categories. Individuals habitually classify people into social groups, thus forming categories (i.e., concepts). Characteristics attributed to categories of people are stereotypes. Acquisition of stereotypes therefore entails learning the particular category of the group of people (e.g., the French, Jews, farmers) and subsequently learning the attributes that characterize this particular group of people. In addition, this learning involves the formation of attitudes and behavioral intentions. The acquisition of social group categories can cover a lifetime. There are endless ways to categorize people and individuals learn new categories throughout their life. This learning begins at an early stage. Thus, research about concept development in the first stages of life is directly relevant to the understanding of stereotype acquisition in early childhood.

Until the pioneering research by Rosch and her colleagues (Rosch & Mervis, 1975; Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976; Rosch, 1978), the dominant "classical" theory of conceptual development, called the classical approach, viewed concepts as being specified by a set of features that are common to all the members of a category. In this view, every concept has a set of necessary and sufficient features that define it (e.g., Bruner, Goodnow, & Austin, 1956; Bourne, 1966). Furthermore, it was implicitly assumed that all categories, regardless of their

origin and structure, were acquired in more or less the same way. On this basis, concept formation was studied in whatever domain and with whatever methods were most convenient. Basic learning mechanisms were investigated by means of artificial and meaningless stimuli, trial after trial, mostly with college-age laboratory students. Rosch, on the basis of her seminal work about the categories used in everyday experience, proposed a view of concepts as specified by probabilistic distributions of features and/or exemplars. Accordingly, instances of a concept do not usually have any single defining feature that determines membership in the concept or category. Rather, the concept is specified by a set of characteristic (but not criterial) features. However, concepts have *family resemblance* structures, such that any member of a category has some features in common with other members, but no set of features is held in common by all members of the category. Thus, membership of a social group, too, can be specified by a set of characteristic features, with any member having some feature in common with other members. For example, Blacks share several family features, such as black and curly hair, black skin, a flattened nose, thick lips, brown eyes, etc., but no individual black person necessarily has them all.

Probabilistic studies showed some distinct characteristics of the category structure. In contrast with the notion of criterial-features and the all-or-nothing relationship. Rosch posited that the members of a family-resemblance category will vary in how representative they are of the category. First, within a given category, some category members are regarded as more typical than others. Typicality can be based on resemblance to a prototype—a summary representation of the characteristic features—or to an exemplar—a particular category member, who is considered to be typical. The prototype of a category, or concept, bears the greatest family resemblance to the members of the category and has the least overlap with any other category (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). Also, the more features a categorized object, person or event shares with a prototype, the greater the probability that it, or he or she, will be considered a category member. The prototype of a Black may include, for example, the following three characteristics: black hair, curly hair, and black skin.

In the process of concept formation, young children do not seem to regard any single feature as essential, but tend to base their judgment on the extent to which a given instance has features typical of the category as whole (Small, 1990). This is a holistic way of concept formation without analysis into specific features. It relies on linguistic definition by some common label and/or set of similarity relations. Young children's concepts take the form of simple prototypes (Kemler, 1983). Indeed, in the domain of social groups, children form concepts on the basis of prototypes. Thus, they may form a concept of an Arab, a policeman, or a

Moslem. Lakoff (1987) pointed out that stereotypes follow the rules of metonymy where one case stands for the category as a whole. They represent cultural expectations about what the category is supposed to be and therefore yield prototype effects (e.g., Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981). Only with age do children begin to consider what are the necessary and sufficient features of a category. Instead of weighting all the features similarly, they are weighted selectively. Some are attributed more importance than others for concept formation. Thus, for example, children may learn that a *kaffia* (i.e., Arab headdress) and a moustache are not necessary characteristics of an Arab.

Concepts or categories of social groups are acquired from a very early stage of life. Initially these are based on natural, visible characteristics such as skin color, facial features, body structure, or clothing. The linguistic basis becomes equally important. Children can acquire from their social environment a long list of social group concepts, without ever seeing an exemplar (Mervis, 1987). Language is one major mechanism of symbolic representation. Words, which do not bear any physical similarity to the social groups they represent, become symbolic concepts. The word Arab, for example, is arbitrarily assigned to a particular group of people. Nevertheless, this word symbolizes a social group, and the child, upon learning the word realizes this. Thus, upon hearing "Arabs", the child has a clear image of this particular group and retrieves characteristics associated with it, which in fact constitute the stereotype (Stangor & Lange, 1994).

Imagery research may indicate how concepts are represented in the mind (Kosslyn, 1980; Wales, 1990; Golomb, 1992). Moreover, from images, it might be possible to infer attitudes (Kosslyn & Kagan, 1981). In the domain of social group concepts, images of specific social group prototypes can be studied. The image of a particular group prototype may provide much information about the stereotype of that group and the attitude toward it. Images can be useful in studying developmental changes of concepts and especially concepts of social groups. This method can be especially significant in the study of young children because their concepts are mostly concrete and based on visual stimulations (McShane, 1991). It may help to reveal how young children visualize a prototype of a specific social group. An assumption can be made that even when the concepts develop on the basis of linguistic information without visualizing an exemplar, children still construct imagery of the concept. This line of reasoning seems to be especially valid for social group concepts. Children who acquire a stereotype of a particular group on a semantic basis form a visual image of a prototype of this group. This visual image is based on the interaction with the social environment, and it reflects mental representation of the perceptual exploration and/or imagination of the group representative (Dennis, 1966; Piaget & Inhelder, 1971; Golomb, 1992).

At an early age, children tend to base their definition of a concept on characteristic rather than on defining features (Keil, 1987). The latter refer to definitions of a category that may even be based on abstract theories, while the former refer to a description of observable or inferred characteristics of a category. Even if children know a defining feature, they tend to treat it as just another characteristic feature. It is thus not surprising that children are unable to define most of the social group categories such as "Arab", "physician", or "Jew", while they can, nevertheless, characterize them by means of appearance, behaviors, or through nonobservable characteristics, mostly traits.

Fivush (1987) suggested that children can construct concepts themselves on the basis of different criteria, of which the most frequently used are: visible features (perceptual basis), use of objects (functional basis), or common membership in a scripted sequence (thematic basis). Children naturally categorize according to these criteria from an early age. Mervis (1987) pointed out that features that are most salient for adults may not be so obviously important to children, and vice versa. The construction of concepts depends on language and knowledge and the nature and range of exemplars to which children are exposed. In addition, children's own spontaneous intellectual activity itself contributes to their understanding of the concept.

Although, in the process of concept formation, children tend to rely on well-known characteristic features of the concept from the age of 3 to 4, they seem to know that the critical properties of living things are not at all necessarily visible on the surface. In fact, recent research in conceptual development suggests that much of cognitive development can be accounted for by changes in children's knowledge (e.g., Carey, 1985). In studies of categorization, it has been argued that children's concepts become more theory-based with time. Keil (1989) suggested that conceptual development includes understanding the relations among attributes of objects. Children's theories identify the features that are important to category membership and describe the relations between concepts.

Of special relevance to the above presented conception is a series of studies done by Hirschfeld (1993, 1994) about children's representation of human groups. He found that children develop categories of social groups, not necessarily by attending to physical, observed differences, but by recognizing that some collectives are based on non-obvious commonalities which are derived from folk theories embedded in a particular culture. He summarized his series of studies about race by saying that "young children's racial categories do not involve a discovery of perceptual regularities, but are initially aimed at specifying a social ontology. In this regard, young children seem to be more concerned with elaborating concepts at a higher level of generality that are relevant to a theory of society and developing a conceptual vocabulary for racial variance, than

differentiating specific concepts and cataloging physical differences” (Hirschfeld, 1994, p. 177).

Much of concept development consists of the gradual movement of representational types away from those that are relatively uniform and largely describable as prototypes to those that reflect more closely the various theories which adults have about the world. As children come to understand the world around them better and develop theories about it, not only will their concepts correspondingly diverge more and more from the early prototype, but they will also be more defined, differentiated and structured in hierarchies. The formation of social group categories relies not only on the observable characteristics of the categorized people, but also considerably on the cultural beliefs (i.e., cultural stereotype) that the society has about the categorized group members. Children learn these theories in the course of their development and use them later in their processes of categorization and stereotyping.

Present Research

On the basis of the above review of concept development, I would like to outline some characteristics of the early representations of social groups that very young children acquire, and to describe the changes that these representations undergo over time. As an illustration of this analysis, results of several studies which investigated the stereotype of the Arab amongst Israeli kindergarten children will be reported. Before starting the discussion, I would like to touch briefly, however, on the question of choice of social category for the present studies.

The choice of the social category “an Arab” or “Arabs” is of special importance in Israel. It is probably the most meaningful social concept for Israeli Jews, besides that of their own social group. The concept of “the Arab” is used as a basic term to label people who live in the Middle East and North Africa (except Turks and Iranians), and who have been in protracted conflict with Israeli Jews. Since Jews began to immigrate to Palestine with the intention to establish a Jewish state, i.e., in the course of the last 100 years, Jews and Arabs view each other as enemies. The long conflict has seen thousands of casualties amongst both civilians and soldiers, and has led to refugees and destruction. Violent clashes, terrorist acts and wars erupted between Jews and Arabs in the region, and each side has been making great efforts to delegitimize the other (Bar-Tal, 1988, 1990). Arabs have been stereotyped by means of negative characteristics, terrorists, “primitives”, “cruel”, “ugly” or “dirty” (e.g., Lambert & Klineberg, 1967; Tsemach, 1980; Benyamini, 1981). The concept “Arab” became a symbol of negativity among Jews in Israel referring, among other things, to sloppy work, dirt and stupidity. It can be assumed that children acquire this stereotype from early on. The acquisition of “the

Arab'' concept, as an illustration of social group concept formation, is the focus of the next section.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEIR FINDINGS

Five research questions based on the concept development research, are presented in this part of the paper. The questions concern the acquisition of the concept of the Arab by Israeli-Jewish kindergarten children. They investigate the age when the concept of the Arab is acquired, sources of its acquisition, definitions of this concept, its stereotype and attitude towards it, and the prototype of the Arab through a series of studies done at Tel-Aviv University. Each question and the results of studies, which provide partial answers to it, will be presented separately.

Prior to this, however, I would like, first of all, to describe two studies done at Tel-Aviv University as a master thesis. Their results provide partial answers to the above questions. I refer to studies by Ovadia (1993) and Israeli-Diner (1993)¹ which pose similar research questions and have a similar design, but differ in the investigated population of children.

While the 114 children (56 boys and 58 girls, aged 3.0–6.1) in Ovadia's (1993) study were drawn from two socioeconomically different Jewish neighborhoods in Tel-Aviv, the 100 children (46 boys and 54 girls, aged 2.5–6.0-yr-old) of Israeli-Diner's study were drawn from the same Tel-Aviv neighborhood (Jaffa), where a minority of Arabs live together with Jews, from three mixed Jewish-Arab kindergartens and from three kindergartens with only Jewish children. In both studies, children were individually presented with a photograph showing an Arab man from his waist up, with a traditional headdress, *kaffia*, and moustache. Each child was asked to identify the man in the photograph and subsequently (a) to evaluate him with reference to four dichotomous traits (good–bad, dirty–clean, handsome–ugly, and weak–strong), (b) to express his/her willingness for social contact, with the photographed man (to play with him, be his friend, be visited by him, visit him), and (c) to indicate behavioral intentions towards the Arab.² Children who did not identify the man in the photograph as an Arab were approached again and asked to repeat the procedure, but this time the interviewer expressly identified the man as an Arab. All the children at the end of their interview were asked about their knowledge about Arabs and their sources of information (family, kindergarten, and TV).

¹I only refer to those parts of these studies relevant to the present conceptual framework.

²The final scores for the evaluation of traits and social distance consisted of an addition of the negative alternatives selected divided by the number of questions answered. The scores thus ranged between 0 and 1, where 1 indicated the most negative evaluation.

When do Children Acquire the Concept "an Arab"?

Assuming that every Israeli Jew acquires the concept of "an Arab", the question is whether it is possible to determine at what age this happens. That is, when do children acquire the word "Arabs" or "an Arab", and when do they begin to know something about "Arabs" or at least, that the word refers to people with some common characteristics? In other words, when do children begin to use the concept in a conventional way, as adults do?

On the basis of the studies done in our project (Israeli-Diner, 1993; Ovadia, 1993; Bar-Tal, Beitan, & Devash, 1994), we find that Israeli children begin to use the word "Arab" between 24 months and 30 months of age. In all the investigations, pilot studies showed that, before 30 months of age, children either do not know the word "Arab" or possess the word without having the concept, and therefore are unable to say anything about it. Two studies (Israeli-Diner, 1993; Ovadia, 1993) found that, at 30 months, children can refer to "an Arab" and evaluate him. They have some kind of knowledge, and are able to express affective meanings which will be reported in the following pages. These results mean that the concept "an Arab" is acquired very early on. It is one of the first social concepts about social groups that a child in Israel learns.

On what Basis do Children form the Concept "an Arab"?

Children may form a concept of "an Arab" either on the basis of encountering and seeing an exemplar(s) either personally, or visually, through a picture/television, or on the basis of linguistic input from others. Children often form stereotypes on a linguistic basis without seeing a member of the stereotyped group. They may even mechanically learn the label and the attributed characteristics, without realizing that they refer to a social category of people.

The question regarding the basis for the formation of children's concept of "an Arab" will be approached in two ways. First, the answer can be based on whether children actually recognize a typical Arab. Such an investigation will reveal whether having the concept of "an Arab" requires the recognition of an exemplar. If children who have the concept of "an Arab" do not recognize a typical figure in a picture, this indicates that the basis for their concept formation may be linguistic. Second, concept formation can be proved by asking children to name sources from which they received information about "Arabs".

Bar-Tal, Beitan, and Devash (1994) explored the visual basis of the formation of the concept and its affective corollary. Forty middle class children (twenty 2.5–3.5-yr-olds and twenty 5.5–6.5-yr-olds), who reside in a city populated only by Jews, were presented individually with four

drawn pictures of a man. The men in the four pictures differed with regard to their typicality as an Arab. The first man had a beard and a moustache and wore a *kaffia* and *kumbaz* (a long Arab dress); the second had a beard, a moustache and *kaffia*, but wore jeans and a T-shirt; the third man only had a beard and a moustache; and the fourth had neither a beard nor a moustache and looked like a blond person of European-American origin. Children were asked to identify the person in each picture through the following sequence of questions. First, they were asked "Who is drawn in each of the pictures?" If the child could not answer this question, he/she was asked "Do you find an Arab in any of the pictures?" If the child responded negatively, then he/she was asked "Some of these pictures show an Arab, could you tell which do?" The findings show that, in the first phase of spontaneous recognition, only two children (5%) labeled the man in the first picture as an Arab and four (10%) did so with regard to the second picture. The results of the recognition test in the second and third phase were almost identical because children in the third phase repeated their identifications of the second phase. The responses to the second question are presented in Table 1.

In the study of Ovadia (1993), with 114 children aged 3–6, only 27 (23.6%) recognized a man wearing a *kaffia* as an Arab, in response to the question "Who is the man in the picture?"; four of them (7.5%) were from the younger group (i.e., 3–4.6 yr old) and 23 (37.7%) were from the older group (i.e., 4.7–6.1 yr old). The difference between the two age groups is significant, $\chi^2(1) = 9.11$, $p < .001$. A further recognition test, in which children were specifically asked to choose "an Arab" from between two photographs of men, one showing a man with *kaffia* and the other showing a man without *kaffia*, revealed that 80% of the children correctly recognized "the Arab".

Israeli-Diner's (1993) study, of 100 children aged 2.6–6, 56 (56%) recognized the man in the photograph as an Arab, when asked "Who is the man in the picture?" Thirty-two of the children thought he was a Jew, and 12 did not know his origin. Among the older children, 67.3% recognized him correctly, and among younger children, only 45% succeeded to do so. The difference was significant ($\chi^2(1) = 5.84$, $p < .05$). A surprising finding is that children in the mixed Jewish–Arab kindergartens did not differ on this question from children of all-Jewish kindergartens (54% and 58%, respectively).

In addition, children were asked "Who told you about Arabs?". In Ovadia's (1993) study, 86.7% of the children mentioned television programs as a source of information about Arabs, 80.6% mentioned parents (at least one of them), and 28.1% mentioned kindergarten. Forty-eight children (42%) claimed that they had personally met an Arab. Israeli-Diner (1993) showed a somewhat different distribution of information sources. Only 10.3% of the children who named a source ($n = 69$)

TABLE 1
Percentage of Children Identifying the Drawn Person as an Arab (after Bar-Tal, Beltan, & Devash, 1994)

	Picture 1 A man with kaffia and kumbaz, a beard and moustache	Picture 2 A man with kaffia, a beard and moustache	Picture 3 A man with a beard and moustache	Picture 4 A man without a beard and moustache	Criterial knowledge*
Younger children 2.5–3.5 yr old (<i>n</i> = 20)	45%	45%	35%	20%	30%
Older children 5.5–6.5 yr old (<i>n</i> = 20)	45%	65%	5%	10%	85%
Total (<i>n</i> = 40)	45%	55%	20%	15%	

*A child was considered to have recognized "an Arab" if he/she identified as an Arab a person only in pictures 1, 2 and 3, or pictures 1 and 2, or picture 1 only or picture 2 only.

noted television as a source of information about Arabs, 35.3% mentioned parents, 10.3% mentioned both parents and television, and 44.1% mentioned kindergarten. In both studies, neither age nor gender nor any other differences (i.e., SES or type of kindergarten) were found.

The differences among the findings of the three studies are not surprising. While the children interviewed in Israeli-Diner's study live in a mixed Jewish–Arab neighborhood, the children in the other two studies (Ovadia, 1993; Bar-Tal, Beitan, & Devash, 1994) reside in neighborhoods where only Jews live and Arabs can be met on very rare occasions. Thus, more children in Israeli-Diner's study recognized an Arab than in the other studies, and the former noted various sources of information about Arabs, including the kindergarten, where half of them attended with Arab children. These findings indicate that children's daily environment has a profound effect on their concept formation of social groups.

How do Children Understand the Concept of "an Arab"?

Research of concept development shows that very young children are unable to describe defining features of objects. It is thus expected that they are also unable to define social groups, but actually they can describe a particular social group referring to such features as behaviors, global traits, or appearance.

In Ovadia's (1993) study, children were asked "What do you know about Arabs?" Eighty-four children (73.7%) had knowledge of some kind to answer the question. The great majority of the responses pertained to the violent behavior of Arabs; 71% of the children noted only this type of behavior (i.e., acts of war, 30%; Persian Gulf War, 32%; terrorist attacks, 13%; combination of acts of war and terrorism, 4%), 14% referred to violent acts and neutral descriptive features, and 7% focused on neutral descriptive features only. No differences were found with regard to gender, age group or type of kindergarten. Israeli-Diner (1993) similarly found that 78.5% of the children who had some pertinent knowledge (only 74 out of 100 had some knowledge) described "an Arab" negatively (i.e., in terms of behaviors, traits and appearance), 13.5% focused on neutral descriptive features only, and 8% combined neutral descriptive features and negative characteristics.

In a recently completed study, Bar-Tal, Teichman, and Yahel (1994) investigated 44 fourth-grade children (9–10 yr old), 36 fifth-grade children (10–11 yr old) and 23 sixth-grade children (11–12 yr old) of middle class SES status, from a city north of Tel-Aviv about their concept of "an Arab". The children were asked the following open-ended questions: (a) "Who are Arabs (define them)?"; (b) "If you see a person in the street, can you know whether or not he is an Arab? If you can, explain how"; (c) "Is there one kind of Arab or are there several kinds? If there are many,

name the kinds of Arabs.”; and (d) “Please describe Arabs.”. Children’s responses to these questions appear in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that, with age, children begin to define Arabs as a people, a religious group, and a nation. That is, they begin to use defining features. This use emerges increasingly from ages 9 to 12. Correspondingly, there is a decrease in defining Arabs via their attitudes towards Israel. There are no age differences regarding features which allow the identification of a person as an Arab. The majority of children mentioned dress and language cues. Of special interest are the answers about the kinds of Arabs. The majority of children categorized Arabs into two groups—those who have positive attitudes towards Israel and are good Arabs, and those who have negative attitudes towards Israel and are bad Arabs. The description of Arabs mostly relies on external features. The use of traits decrease with age.

These findings clearly indicate that the categorization basis changes with age. While young children form their social categories on the basis of behaviors and traits, older children are able to use defining features to define a social category. Also, the social categories of the older children are more elaborated and differentiated.

What is the Evaluative Meaning of the Concept “an Arab” and its Stereotype?

Evaluative meaning or attitude towards Arabs was investigated in different ways in several studies. Israeli-Diner (1993) compared the evaluations of the photographed Arab with *kaffia* by children who recognized him as an Arab with those by children who did not recognize him as such. The results showed that the former group attributed more negative traits (i.e., more negative stereotype) to the photographed man and expressed less willingness for social contact than the latter ($M = .72$ versus $M = .37$, $t(93) = 5.36$, $p < .001$ for the evaluation of traits and $M = .77$ versus $M = .34$, $t(93) = 4.77$, $p < .001$ for social distance). In addition, those children who did not recognize the man in the photograph as an Arab were asked to evaluate him again 2 weeks later, but this time the experimenter notified them before the evaluation that the man on the photo was an Arab. Comparisons between the children’s evaluations before recognizing the man as an Arab and after doing so show that these evaluations became more negative. About seven children out of 37 in the study changed all attributed traits from positive to negative, and about five changed their mind to the effect of refusing to have any contact with the Arabs in the photo (the remainder of the children did not change their responses). Quantitative comparisons showed a significant negative change with regard to trait attribution ($M = .37$ before versus $M = .67$ after recognition, $t(37) = 4.20$, $p < .01$)

TABLE 2

**Categories of Responses to Questions about Arabs (percentage)
(after Bar-Tal, Telchman, & Yahel, 1994)**

(a) Who are Arabs (define them)?

Categories	Age 9-10 (n = 44)	Age 10-11 (n = 36)	Age 11-12 (n = 23)
Have negative attitudes toward Jews	57	33	30
Definition based on being bad or good	20	30	26
People and nation	11	38	39
Religious group	2	25	35
Having negative traits	13	22	—
Definition based on appearance and customs	16	13	—
Place of residence	2	8	8
Language	—	3	4

(b) If you see a man on the street, is it possible to know whether he is an Arab?
If yes, how is it possible to know?

Categories	Age 9-10 (n = 44)	Age 10-11 (n = 36)	Age 11-12 (n = 23)
Clothing and <i>kaffia</i>	54	58	43
Language and accent	40	39	30
Dark skin	18	14	13
Moustache and beard	16	14	17
Sloppy and dirty clothing	—	11	13
Face	4	8	13
Carrying weapon	9	—	—

(c) Criteria for classifying Arabs

Criteria	Age 9-10	Age 10-11	Age 11-12
Attitude toward Jews	57	66	61
Living in country	20	11	8

(d) Description of Arabs

Categories	Age 9-10 (n = 44)	Age 10-11 (n = 36)	Age 11-12 (n = 23)
Traits (negative)	31	13	13
<i>Kaffia</i>	34	41	26
Dirty and sloppy	20	28	13
Skin color	9	11	13
Moustache and beard	9	14	4

and less willingness to have contact ($M = .34$ before versus $M = .56$ after recognition, $t(37) = 3.88$, $p < .01$).

In response to the question "What do you think should be done to the man in the picture?", 65.9% of the children expressed negative intentions (43.9% "to kill him", 17.0% "to hit him", 4.9% "to put him in prison"), 19.5% of the children expressed positive behavioral intentions (17.1% "should be loved", 2.4 "should live well") and 14.6% expressed neutral intentions.

Ovadia (1993) came up with similar results. Both studies found only one age difference: older children (4.7–6 yr old) expressed less willingness for social contact than younger children (below 4.7 yr old) ($F(89) = 6.81$, $p < .01$; $M = .73$ versus $M = .44$ in Israeli-Diner's study and $F(1, 106) = 4.82$, $p < .05$; $M = .63$ versus $M = .47$ in Ovadia's study). Ovadia (1993) found a nearly significant difference between the two age groups regarding trait attributions ($F(102) = 3.17$, $p < .08$) with older children ($M = .73$) evaluating "the Arab" more negatively than younger children ($M = .58$). This result may be clarified by the fact that his study also found that, for children who did not recognize the Arab spontaneously, a comparison between their evaluations before recognition and after receiving the label showed no difference between younger and older children before identification ($M = .49$ versus $M = .48$ respectively), while, after it, older children ($M = .78$) evaluated "the Arab" more negatively than did younger children ($M = .58$). This shows also that, while the younger children did not change their evaluations following the identification of the man as "an Arab" by the interviewer, the older children did (the interaction was $F(1, 102) = 4.34$, $p < .05$). It should be noted that, in both studies, high positive correlations were found between attribution of traits and willingness to have contact with "an Arab" (.68 in Israeli-Diner and .78 in Ovadia).

Bar-Tal, Beitan, and Devash (1994) asked two groups of kindergarten children (2.5–3.5 and 3.5–6.5 yr old) questions on two persons, "an Arab" and "a Jew", whose ethnic identities were explicitly stated. Subjects were asked to attribute three dichotomous traits (nice–not nice, handsome–ugly, good–bad), to report emotional reactions (like–dislike, unafraid–afraid) and to express yes–no willingness for social contact (to play with the person, to be visited by him at home).³ Since no sex differences were detected, the responses for each of the variables—trait attribution, emotional reactions and social distance—were analyzed by a 2×2 ANOVA design, Age Group \times Ethnic Identity. The analyses of trait attribution and social distance yielded an interaction effect

³The scoring was done as in Ovadia (1993) and Israeli-Diner (1993). The scores consisted of an addition of the negative alternatives selected divided by the number of questions answered. The scores ranged from 1 to 0.

TABLE 3

Means and Standard Deviations (in Parentheses) for Trait Attribution and Social Distance as a Function of Social Group and Age (after Bar-Tal, Beltan, & Devash, 1994)

	Trait attribution		Social distance	
	An Arab	A Jew	An Arab	A Jew
Young children (2.5–3.5 yr old) (<i>n</i> = 20)	.39 ^b (.36)	.19 ^a (.34)	.58 ^a (.46)	.53 ^a (.47)
Older children (5.5–6.5 yr old) (<i>n</i> = 20)	.73 ^c (.32)	.28 ^{ab} (.29)	.95 ^b (.22)	.55 ^a (.43)

1. The higher the number, the more negative the evaluation.

2. For each variable, means with completely different subscripts differ significantly at $\alpha = .05$

($F(1, 33) = 3.30$, $p < .05$ for trait attribution and $F(1, 34) = 8.32$, $p < .01$ for social distance). The means and standard deviations are reported in Table 3.

Trait attributions results show that older children evaluate "the Arab" more negatively than younger children, and both groups evaluate "the Arab" more negatively than "the Jew". With regard to social distance, the results indicate that, while older children are less willing to have contacts with "an Arab" than with "a Jew", younger children do not differentiate between "a Jew" and "an Arab" in this respect. In addition, the ANOVA performed on emotional reactions yielded only a main effect for the person evaluated ($F(1, 33) = 14.5$, $p < .01$). Children expressed a more negative affect towards "an Arab" ($M = .51$) than towards "a Jew" ($M = .27$). The percentage of children selecting negative items in evaluating a Jew and an Arab is presented in Table 4.

The results show that, with age (between 2.5 and 6.5 yr), the stereotype of "the Arabs" becomes more negative, and Jewish children are less willing to have contact with him. These results imply that the concept "an Arab" acquires a negative affective meaning. Children acquire the social category of "an Arab" at an early age, and with time, they learn about the negative qualities of this group. Therefore, they express negative feelings and avoid social contact. The early learning is, in most of the cases, based exclusively on verbal information, and a negative evaluation appears to a mere exposure to the word "an Arab".

What is the Visual Prototype of "an Arab" in the Minds of Children?

One of the important questions in a study of stereotypes concerns the features of a particular social group's prototype. Since group members

TABLE 4

Percentage of Children Selecting a Negative Item to Evaluate a Jew and an Arab as a Function of Age Group (after Bar-Tal, Beitan, & Devash, 1994)

	An Arab		A Jew	
	Younger children 2.5–3.5 yr old (<i>n</i> = 20)	Older children 5.5–6.5 yr old (<i>n</i> = 20)	Younger children (<i>n</i> = 20)	Older children (<i>n</i> = 20)
Not nice	20	70	5	15
Ugly	60	70	20	60
Bad	40	80	20	10
Dislike	30	80	25	50
Fear	70	30	20	10
Does not want to play with	60	95	50	45
Does not want to be visited by	55	95	55	65

have varying features, some are more typical than others of the set of features which are believed to characterize their group. The prototype is a representation of a typical category member. It consists of the central characteristics or average features deemed to be most representative. Thus, a prototype of a particular social group can be viewed as a stereotype (see Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Bar-Tal, Teichman, and Zohar (1994) assume that the examination of prototypes can be extended from linguistic to visual representation. Pictures that children draw represent the imagery that they have about objects, persons or events (Krampen, 1991). Wales (1990), in his study of Aboriginal children's drawings, pointed out that children represent in their pictures what they know. They represent the world in which they live, including its cultural contents (Golomb, 1992), and social groups are part of this world. Once children acquire the concept of a particular social group, it is represented in their mind. It can be thus assumed that children, even if they have not seen an exemplar of the social group, will have an image of the typical group member. Children's drawings of "a group member" provide a method for studying their representation of a prototype (i.e., a stereotype).

In a study by Bar-Tal, Teichman, and Zohar (1994), 36 children (15 boys and 21 girls) aged 60–78 months ($M = 67.5$) were asked to draw pictures of "an Arab" and "a Jew" using five differently colored pencils. The children drew the two pictures individually in their kindergarten. Pictures were analyzed with a coding system based on methods developed by Hammer (1967), Koppitz (1968), and Machover (1948).

The coding system pertained to the following criteria: size and proportions of the person and his/her specific organs, number of details

drawn, artifacts added, including clothing, the colors used for the drawings, facial expression, and strength of lines. On the basis of these criteria, a comparison between drawings of "a Jew" and "an Arab" was possible.

First, it was found that girls tended to vary the gender of the two drawn persons. About 43% of them drew a "Jewish" woman and an "Arab" man. Since no major differences were found between the genders of the drawing child, as well as between the genders of the drawn person, the comparisons were done only between the drawn "Jew" and the drawn "Arab". The following significant differences were detected: (a) the heads of "Jews" were drawn in more detail (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth) than those of "Arabs" ($M = 4.0$ versus $M = 3.6$, $t(35) = 2.79$, $p < .01$); (b) the heads of "Arabs" were drawn larger than those of "Jews" ($M = 2.05$ versus $M = .180$, $t(35) = 2.31$, $p < .05$); (c) in general "Jews" were drawn in greater detail than "Arabs" ($M = 12.61$ versus $M = 11.41$, $t(35) = 2.44$, $p < .05$); (d) more "Jews" (77.7%) than "Arabs" (83.3%) were drawn with hair (sign test was $p < .01$); (e) more "Jews" (66.7%) than "Arabs" (38.9%) were drawn with hands ($p < .075$); (f) more "Jews" (52.8%) than "Arabs" (38.9%) were drawn with fingers ($p < .05$); (g) six "Arabs" were drawn wearing a *kaffia* but none of the "Jews" wore one; (h) more "Arabs" (58%) than "Jews" (35%) were drawn in dark colors ($p < .05$); (i) the expression of "Jews" tended to be more positive than that of "Arabs" ($p < .10$). In sum, several differences were found between the representations of "Jews" and "Arabs". The drawings of "Arabs" tended to be less elaborate, more blurred, less defined and less positive than the drawings of "Jews".

Most of the children (66%) who drew "an Arab" reported that they had seen an Arab at least once. Forty-four percent had seen an Arab on a street and 17% had done so on television. Almost half of the children (42%) considered "an Arab" a bad person, 36% thought that this depended on the nature of the particular person, and 22% reported "an Arab" to be a good person. The following three questions are of special interest because they address differences between pictorial representation and verbal reports: (a) "If you see a person in the street can you identify the person as an Arab? If yes, how?" (b) "If you see a person in the street, can you identify the person as a Jew? If yes, how?" (c) "Is there a difference between a Jew and an Arab?" Distributions of answers to the questions are presented in Table 5.

The analysis of the drawings indicates that the children do not differentiate relatively between Jews and Arabs at the early age. In general, the drawings of Jews and Arabs were similar, with few reported differences. Indeed, the majority of these same children report that they cannot differentiate between an Arab and a Jew in the street. Their pictorial representation of Jews and Arabs was found to be similar in

TABLE 5

**Distribution of Responses to Three Questions ($n = 36$)
(after Bar-Tal, Telchman, & Zohar, 1994)**

(1) Question: If you see a person on the street, can you identify the person as an Arab?
If you can, how?

Categories

Cannot identify	23 (63.9%)
Can identify by:	13 (36.1%)
skin color	6
clothing	3
skin color and face	1
clothing and artifacts	1
artifacts (i.e., knife)	2

(2) Question: If you see a person on the street, can you identify the person as a Jew?
If you can, how?

Categories

Cannot identify	23 (63.9%)
Can identify by:	13 (36.1%)
skin color	5
face	1
clothing	4
language	3
lack of knife	1

(3) Question: Is there a difference between Jews and Arabs?

Categories

No difference	9 (25%)
Yes —	
Aggressive behavior	3 (8.3%)
Negative traits	3 (8.3%)
Skin color	4 (11.1%)
Language	2 (5.5%)
Dirty clothing	1 (2.8%)
Artifacts	3 (8.3%)
Aggressive behavior and negative traits	2 (5.5%)
Negative traits and dirty clothing	4 (11.1%)
Skin color and language	1 (2.8%)
Skin color and residence in another country	2 (5.5%)
Negative traits and residence in another country	1 (2.8%)
Language and aggressive behavior	1 (2.8%)

terms of their appearance, though they know that Arabs are a separate social category with distinguished characteristics, mostly negative, which they can describe verbally.

DISCUSSION

The results of the presented studies shed light first of all on the development of the concept "an Arab" among kindergarten children, but, they also carry meaningful implications for the understanding of children's stereotype acquisition and their conceptual development in general. The choice to study the stereotype of "an Arab" is not arbitrary. Arabs are probably the most significant outgroup for Israeli Jews. The decision to investigate the development of this stereotype stems from the recognition that the relations between Jews and Arabs, and especially the success of the peace process which attempts to resolve the ongoing violent conflict between these two peoples, depend in part on the stereotypes that each group will eventually evolve about the other group. Arabs are not only the neighbors of the Israelis, and the overwhelming majority in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but they also constitute about 18% of the citizens of Israel. They are a considerable minority with whom the Jewish majority is supposed to live in peaceful coexistence and equality.

Very young children already acquire the concepts of social groups. They have only a limited repertoire of such concepts which refer to the most significant and frequently encountered groups in their personal and collective space. However, with age, children acquire numerous additional social group concepts. Although the general principles of concept development can also be applied to the acquisition of all these concepts, the course of social group concept acquisition depends on several particular factors. This process of social group concept development and the resulting contents depend on the beliefs about the group presented to the child by the family and by other socialization agents, on the availability of exemplars for direct contact in terms of frequency and variety, availability of exemplars on television programs and through other channels of mass communication, and in general, on the intensity and extensity of the particular group's cultural stereotype which it holds. The intensity refers to the level of confidence that group members have in the contents of the stereotypes, and the extensity refers to the degree of consensus among group members (Bar-Tal, in press).

Since the word "Arab" is frequently used in Israel, since Arabs are often seen in the streets and on television, and stereotypes about Arabs are widely spread, children's encounter with the label "an Arab" is highly probable. It is thus not surprising that, from a very early age, children acquire the word "Arab", which becomes a concept stored in their mind. The words "an Arab" or "Arabs" are probably acquired by most Jewish Israeli children during their third year of life. At this age, children internalize the categorical and symbolic principles of language and thus become able to learn words which are context-free. They also become able

to acquire words on the basis of linguistic input available in their social environment, especially from parents.

Many of the children in the presented studies had a concept of "an Arab" at the age of 2.5–3 yr. Before that, few children who knew the word were unable to say something meaningful about it. Between the ages of 2.5 and 3, it becomes clear that children possess a prototype of the concept according to Barrett's (1986) criteria. At this point in their development, children begin to understand that Arabs are a group of people different from Jews. Moreover, they are able to characterize them with various features. Their use of the word "Arab" begins to be categorical and conventional—independent of context. Children at this early age are able to describe linguistically the most typical representative of the concept—the prototype. They also are able to draw a picture of an Arab man which concretely represents their image of him.

It is hard to determine how the children in these studies acquired the concept of "an Arab" whether it is derived from a linguistic basis alone, an observational basis alone, or both. Many of the young children who do not live in mixed Jewish–Arab neighborhoods were unable to identify a person with a typically Arab appearance, dressed in traditional Arab clothing as an Arab, and few reported that they had ever met an Arab personally. Many children, however, reported that they had seen Arabs on television. Indeed, not only current affairs television programs provide a prominent channel of information about Arabs, but also many children's programs also refer to them. The present study shows that older children (aged 5–6) were better able to recognize an Arab than younger 3–4-yr-olds. Also, a relatively high percentage of children who live with Arabs in one neighborhood recognize Arabs, having the opportunity to meet them in the streets, and even attend the same kindergartens.

The low rate of identification of "an Arab" depicted in traditional dress may be explained by the fact that the majority of Arabs seen on streets or on television do not wear *kaffias* and even fewer of them are dressed in *kumbaz*. Nevertheless, *kaffia* and *kumbaz* represent Arabs in the Israeli culture; for instance, in most children's books; Arabs are shown wearing them. Indeed, among children aged 9–12, who were asked to draw an Arab, almost all included a *kaffia* and many also drew the *kumbaz*.

Of interest are reports of how children aged 5–6 identify "Arabs". In a study Bar-Tal, Teichman, and Zohar (1994) believe that the majority (about 65%) cannot identify "an Arab" among people in the street. One third, claiming that they could identify an Arab, relied on physical appearance (skin color and face), clothing and artifacts. Later, at the age of 9–12, all children claim to be able to identify "an Arab". Regardless of their age, these children rely mostly on clothing and language, and, to a lesser extent, on skin color, moustache, or beard. Thus, older children

weigh up the relevant identification cues in a different way than the younger ones and add some new features (i.e., language, moustache and beard).

The majority of children reported that their parents were the main source of information about Arabs. Adults frequently talk about Arabs since Israeli-Arab relations are focal on the public agenda. Many children reported that either the father or mother talked with them about Arabs. In many cases, one or both of the parents warned them not to have any contact with Arabs, or described them in negative or even delegitimizing terms.

One of the important objectives of our studies was to reveal how children understand the concept of "the Arab". All young children with any knowledge about Arabs described the concept with descriptive features only. Between the ages of 3 and 6, not all children have any knowledge about Arabs, but it was found that some of those who were able to say something about Arabs, came up with negative descriptions.

The majority of young children with any knowledge about Arabs associated them with violent and aggressive behaviors, directed mostly against Jews. Very few of them described the concept of "an Arab" with neutral characteristics, such as appearance. With age, notable differences appear. A study of 9-12-yr-olds by Bar-Tal, Teichman, and Yahel (1994) shows first indications of the use of defining features. Eleven percent of 9-10-yr-olds described "the Arabs" as a nation or people and at the age of 11-12, the percentage of children who used this definition increased to about 38%. Also the definition of "an Arab" by religion increased dramatically from 2% to 35% in the range of ages 9-10 to 11-12. At the same time, description by negative attitudes or behaviors dropped from 57% at the age of 9-10 to 30% at the age of 11-12. There is also a decrease in description by negative traits or appearance. In addition, there are attempts to define by reference to Arab countries and the Arab language. Finally, the study shows that children aged 9-12 use the superordinate category of "human beings" to describe Arabs—"Arabs are human beings who ...". Some are even able to use subordinate concepts by classifying Arabs according to their countries of residence (e.g., Syrians, Egyptians). However, the majority of 9-12-yr-olds categorize Arabs according to their attitudes towards Israel and Jews, that is, "good Arabs" who do not harm Jews, who want peace, etc., and "bad Arabs" who kill Jews, want to expel Jews, etc.

It should be noted that, when Israeli children characterize Arabs, many of them use delegitimizing categories, mostly those of "killers" and "murderers". Delegitimization is defined as classifying groups into extremely negative social categories which are excluded from acceptable humanity (Bar-Tal, 1989). Delegitimization can be carried out in different ways, one of which is outcasting. Outcasting, which involves

categorization into groups considered as violators of pivotal social norms (e.g., murderers, thieves, terrorists), is the most frequent form of delegitimization used by very young children. However, while the younger children view Arabs globally, without differentiation, mostly as killers, the older children differentiate between "good" and "bad" Arabs. Children's delegitimization of Arabs is based on their exposure to delegitimizing information about terrorist attacks and to negative cultural stereotyping through various channels (see Cohen, 1985; Bar-Tal, 1988; Bar-Tal & Zoltack, 1989).

The present findings clearly show that the word "Arab" carries a negative affective meaning which reflects the priming experience with this word. From the first stage of its acquisition, the word "Arab" has a negative connotation. In fact, as noted before, information from parents usually takes the shape of warnings to refrain from contact with Arabs or of descriptions of their violent acts. Similar negative information is probably provided by other sources. Thus, it is not surprising that, in reaction to the word "Arab", even very young children often express negative evaluations which increase with age, at least up to 6–7 yr. Thus, our findings show that the evaluation of a male on a photograph changes when the label "an Arab" is added. That is, the same man was evaluated more negatively when an identifying label was added for children who did not recognize his ethnic identity in the first evaluation. The negative evaluation of Arabs was found in responses to dichotomous items pertaining to trait attribution and willingness to establish social contact, but there was a clear difference between very young children aged 2.5–4 yr and somewhat older children of 5–6 yr. Not only were the former less capable of recognizing the traditional Arab, but fewer of them, too, had negative evaluations. With age, the evaluations become more negative: children aged 5–6 attribute more negative traits and more often refuse to have contact with an Arab. The results clearly show that the evaluations in the 3–6 age group are unidimensional. These children have a global evaluation of the Arab. There is a consistency of negativity across items. The positive correlation between negative trait attributions and refusal of social contact is very high among 3–6-yr-old children (about .70). It is, thus, not surprising that children who more frequently have a negative stereotype of "an Arab" also more frequently avoid social contact with him.

One study examined the children's images of Arabs through their drawings, on the assumption that pictorial representation can reveal valuable information about children's prototype (i.e., stereotype) of "an Arab". In this study, children were asked to draw "a Jew" and "an Arab". The analysis of the drawings showed, in general, that very young children could hardly make a distinction between "Arab" and "Jew". The two main differences between "Jew" and "Arab" in their drawings were that the former was drawn in greater detail and with brighter colors. The dark

colors symbolize negativity, and fewer details indicate more global perception and blurring. The tendency to draw the "Arab" with less details, especially in depicting the head, makes him/her look more defaced and generalized. Young children exerted more efforts in drawing a "Jew". These findings show that young children do not have a clear differentiated visual representation of Arabs. Indeed, other studies showed that they have difficulty recognizing a person dressed in Arab traditional clothing as an Arab. Arabs and Jews look externally similar to them. The negative evaluation of Arabs is expressed mainly in the description of their behaviors and traits.

This trend changes at the age of 10–12, when children begin to form defining features of Arabs, describe Arabs multidimensionally, positively and negatively, and differentiate between "good" and "bad" Arabs on the basis of their attitudes and intentions toward Israel and Jews. These findings suggest that children acquire the negative view of Arabs in early childhood and this unidimensional negative perception peaks at about age 6–9. Later, the global negative view is moderated as reflected in the differentiated perception of Arabs.

The negative stereotyping of Arabs, avoidance of social contact with them, the negative emotions and the negative behavioral intentions toward them, as a general trend among Jewish Israeli children should not surprise anyone in view of the intractable conflict between Jews and Arabs during this century. Through decades, and especially during the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Jews and Arabs were engaged in vicious cycles of violence, in a conflict which seemed irreconcilable (Azar, Jureidini, & McLaurin, 1978; Sandler, 1988; Bar-Tal, 1996). Arabs, being an enemy, were portrayed very negatively in the Israeli society. The conflict dictated the negative stereotyping (Bar-Tal, *in press*; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1967). However, since the historic visit of the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Jerusalem in 1977, the conflict has been slowly but steadily moving towards its peaceful resolution. The peace treaty with Egypt, the Madrid convention, the Oslo agreements, the peace treaty with Jordan and the negotiations with Syria are hallmarks of the peace process which is continuously changing the relations between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

The presented results are compatible with findings obtained in line with research concerning the development of children's concept of another person (e.g., Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Peevers & Secord, 1973). This line of research indicates that young children tend to describe another person in terms of his/her looks and behavior, focus on a few observable and concrete features, and use unidimensional descriptions: either all negative or all positive. Young adolescents, however, describe others in a more differentiated way, focus on inferred characteristics, and use several descriptive criteria (Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Shantz, 1983).

While the research in the area of concept development focuses mainly on natural concepts, the present studies tried to apply the accumulated knowledge for understanding the development of a social concept and a stereotype of a particular group. Notions concerning particular groups, such as "Arabs", can be viewed as concepts which develop according to general principles.

The results of the present studies show that children acquire the word "Arab" very early on, and probably it has negative connotations from the beginning, even though it is accompanied by little knowledge. With time, the word becomes a concept which is defined with characteristic features only, but is used in a conventional way. With the concept, children also acquire the prototype. They store a representation of a typical "Arab", though the prototype may change with time. In the early years, "Arabs" are cognized holistically, and only with age does their perception differentiate. From an early age, the holistic view of the "Arab" is based on beliefs that children acquire. Their knowledge is based on observable features only to a small extent. Information from various sources allows them to construct the prototype of "an Arab". In this respect, Barrett's (1986) model, which outlines the phases of lexical development through a probabilistic approach of concept development, can serve as a conceptual framework for the described stages of the development of the concept of "an Arab". This model suggests that children at a very early stage acquire the prototype of a concept verbally expressed. Language maps the categorical world and is closely interrelated with cognition. Words, through decontextualization become increasingly symbolic, conveying socially agreed meanings. According to Barrett, the first prototypes are under-extended, and only with time, does new information extend the scope of their features.

The presented results are also in line with Hirschfeld's (1993, 1994) findings. Children's social categories are not necessarily based on observable cues. Rather, children as active society members, acquire the social categories and their accompanying knowledge from experiences in the environment (i.e., information from parents, television, and teachers, direct contact with the outgroup members). From very early on, they learn various social theories which are prevalent in the particular society. These social theories serve as a basis for the development of social categories, stereotypes and prejudice.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the study of early stereotype acquisition is of special importance as it has been recently established that the early acquisition of stereotypes has a significant imprinting effect (Devine, 1989). Devine (1989) suggested that stereotypes (as the present studies showed) "are well established in children's memories before children develop the cognitive ability and flexibility to question or critically evaluate the stereotype's validity or acceptability" (p. 6). These

early established stereotypes, according to Devine, are based on widely spread beliefs—that is, the cultural stereotypes prevailing in any particular society. Only with age do individuals develop their personal beliefs about other groups, personal stereotypes, which may differ from, and even contradict, these cultural stereotypes. However, cultural stereotypes, acquired at a very early age, “have a longer history of activation and are therefore likely to be more accessible than are personal beliefs” (Devine, 1989, p. 5). Moreover, they are probably automatically activated in the presence of a member of the target group. Thus, individuals who possess more mature nonprejudiced beliefs have to inhibit the automatically activated, older, negative stereotypes and intentionally activate their nonprejudiced beliefs. This is not a simple cognitive task because it requires overcoming deep-rooted, early socialization experience.

The present studies showed that almost all the investigated children, regardless of their social environment, acquire a negative stereotype of Arabs. They are not born with these perceptions. Studies show that very young Israeli children, aged 2.5–3.5, as they begin to use the word and construct the concept, are still neutral in their evaluation of Arabs. Soon, however, information coming from the environment shapes their view, and by the age of 6, the majority of children already have a negative stereotype of Arabs.

As we all know, many Israeli Jews do not change this stereotype throughout their life, and continue to view Arabs negatively, even in delegitimizing terms. They find enough information and support in the cultural, political, and societal channels of communication to continue to hold this primordial, dogmatic and simplistic concept of Arabs. However, even those who are open to information view Arabs in multidimensional ways, and differentiate among them, must overcome an automatically activated negative cultural stereotype about Arabs and replace it with nonprejudiced concept of Arabs.

The results of the present studies demonstrate the strength of the cultural stereotype of “the Arabs” and its influence on young children. Since the present era is witnessing a meaningful change in the political relations between Jews and Arabs, it is imperative to socialize our children with different stereotypes of Arabs for the sake of new generations who will, hopefully, live peacefully side by side.

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