

If my group stereotypes others, others stereotype my group... and we know. Concept, research lines and future perspectives of meta-stereotypes

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Abstract

This paper presents a review of sociopsychological literature on the recent topic of meta-stereotypes, i.e., beliefs that group members typically have about how others see them. The impact of meta-stereotypes on intergroup relations and their connection with stereotyping processes are analyzed.

Antecedents, concept and traits of meta-stereotypes are described in an attempt to show that meta-stereotypes fit into the general category of processes derived from group members' awareness that outgroup members stereotype their group. In order to arrive at a proper definition of meta-stereotypes, its differences with related concepts are underlined in the second section of the paper. A review of research published or in progress on meta-stereotypes follows, trying to show how they have contributed to the study of this process and to open new lines of research. Finally, three recent theoretical developments in social psychology, i.e., social stigma, stereotype threat, and empathy are analyzed and their connection with meta-stereotypes is emphasized.

Keywords: Meta-stereotypes, meta-perception, intergroup relations, stereotypes.

Si mi grupo estereotipa a los otros, entonces los otros grupos estereotipan al mío... y nosotros lo sabemos. Concepto, líneas de investigación y perspectivas futuras en el estudio de los meta-estereotipos

Resumen

El objetivo principal del presente trabajo consiste en realizar una revisión de la literatura en psicología social que se ocupa del estudio de un tema muy reciente: el meta-estereotipo. Se entiende por meta-estereotipo las creencias que tienen las personas sobre cómo les ven los demás.

En primer lugar, se examina el impacto del meta-estereotipo en las relaciones intergrupales y su conexión con los procesos de estereotipia. Además se describen los antecedentes, el concepto y las características del meta-estereotipo en un intento de mostrar que los meta-estereotipos se encuentran dentro de la categoría de los procesos derivados de la consciencia, por parte de los miembros del endogrupo, de que los miembros del exogrupo les estereotipan. Seguidamente, en una segunda parte del presente artículo y para comprender de manera adecuada la definición de meta-estereotipo, se señalan las diferencias con otros conceptos relacionados. En tercer lugar el trabajo continúa con una revisión de estudios publicados o en proceso para intentar mostrar cómo cada uno de ellos ha contribuido al estudio de los meta-estereotipos y para abrir nuevas líneas de investigación. Finalmente, se analizan tres líneas teóricas recientes relacionadas con tener en cuenta la perspectiva de los demás (estigma social, amenaza del estereotipo y empatía) y se enfatiza su conexión con los meta-estereotipos.

Palabras clave: Meta-estereotipos, meta-percepción, relaciones intergrupales, estereotipos.

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Introduction

The impact of beliefs about how others see my group (that is, meta-stereotypes) on intergroup relations struck me first when I began to work for my doctoral dissertation in 1994. At that time, sociopsychological literature about this topic was practically non-existent. Despite this fact, my conviction about the importance of meta-stereotypes was so firm that I decided not only to measure them and to study their relationship with other variables of psychosocial significance, but also to manipulate them. Since that date I have been involved in research dealing with meta-stereotypes, which has originated several studies either in progress or about to be published. At the same time, I have been in contact with colleagues from different places in Europe (including Spain), the U.S. and Canada, and Africa, who happened to be also interested in this topic. Some of them are currently collaborating with me (Barreto, Böen, Hollbach, Huici, Morales, Moya, Puertas, Rodríguez-Bailón, Ros and Yzerbyt), and others will do so, I hope, in the near future (Branscome, Dovidio, Finchilescu, Gordijn, Kessler, Klein, Otten, and Vorauer).

Now is the time, in my opinion, to undertake a thorough review of research on meta-stereotypes, with special attention to research currently in progress. The essential features of meta-stereotypes, that is, their antecedents, concept and traits, will be referred to the first place. We will then try to provide a comprehensive definition of meta-stereotypes, so as to differentiate them from a set of similar and related concepts. Relevant research about meta-stereotypes, either published or in progress will also be reviewed, since the data on this process will provide an overview of the possibilities of this concept for social psychology. Through the presentation of the concept, definition and research lines of meta-stereotypes, we hope to be in a condition to suggest new avenues of research on this topic. Finally, three recent lines of research of sociopsychological significance will be considered in relation to meta-stereotyping processes. They are social stigma, stereotype threat and empathy.

Stereotypes and Meta-stereotypes

Lippman's (1922) definition of the sociopsychological meaning of stereotypes is: peoples' "pictures in the head" of other groups (p. 21). These pictures inform us about the world before seeing it. Other definitions describe them as "exaggerated beliefs" (Allport, 1954, p. 187), or connect them with categorization processes (Tajfel, 1969). These definitions share the notion that stereotype boils down to attributing general psychological characteristics to human groups.

Specially relevant for social psychology is that this cognitive aspect of stereotypes has consequences at a behavioral level. Stereotypes are used to justify the behavior towards members of a given category, thus establishing a bridge between stereotypes and prejudice. If we consider stereotypes at the intergroup level, attention has to be paid to their relational aspects. According to Wilder (1984), the content of stereotypes typically includes relational aspects (e. g., "They feel superior to us", or "They despise us") as well as non relational ones. Therefore, the stereotype that members of a group hold towards a specific outgroup, in addition to referring to the assigned traits and their evaluation, must also include what the outgroup thinks with respect to the ingroup. In other words, relational aspects of stereotypes have to be borne in mind. This means that it is crucial to know what ingroup members think with respect to outgroup members, specifically, if they consider that they are

better or worse than ingroup members, or simply different, and how they interpret this difference.

Contact between two groups are likely to make some processes salient. Specifically, ingroup members will be aware of the stereotype of outgroup members, in such a way that intergroup relations depend on reciprocal stereotypes of ingroup and outgroup. Awareness of the stereotype brings up ingroup's evaluation by the outgroup. There is a double component in this variable: a) *the content of the stereotype* ingroup members believe the other group holds about them, and b) *the evaluation of the stereotype*. Both content and evaluation are the two faces of their meta-stereotype.

The meta-stereotype implies a dissociation between ingroup's and outgroup's perspectives inside its own group, since this stereotyping process demands that ingroup's beliefs about how the outgroup perceives things should be taken into account. That means that, in this specific case, ingroup members have to adopt outgroup's perspective to define their own group. It should be pointed out that this is not exactly empathy, but a projection contaminated by the stereotype that ingroup has about the outgroup. From the perspective of relational cognition, it appears as if the ingroup is concerned about its evaluation by other groups.

The Meta-stereotype as part of "The others' perspective" in Social Psychology

The stereotype that members of one group hold about other groups has at least three components: a) traits directly attributed to outgroup members, b) traits used to compare ingroup and outgroup implying that one group is better or worse than the other in some respect, c) a combination of a) and (+) b); if people are conscious that they stereotype other groups (a), and they know that one part of this stereotype includes relational traits (b), ingroup members will conclude: "If we stereotype the outgroup, the outgroup is likely to stereotype us". As a consequence, the third component would include the beliefs about the image outgroup members hold of the ingroup, that is, the meta-stereotype.

The processes of meta-stereotyping can be categorized as part of a series of processes that take into account "the others' perspective" on intergroup relations (Gómez & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2000; Gómez, Rodríguez-Bailón, Huici, Moya & Jetten, submitted for publication). By "the others' perspective" I mean those processes derived from the fact that people are aware that their group is stereotyped by outgroup members, mainly studied under the rubrics of Social Stigma, Stereotype Threat, Empathy and Meta-stereotypes. Meta-stereotypes are the main character of this paper. The other three processes, along with their relation with meta-stereotypes, will be dealt with later in the paper.

What are Meta-stereotypes? Antecedents, Concept and Traits

This section deals with antecedents, concept and traits of meta-stereotypes, in an attempt to show that meta-stereotypes fit into the general category of processes derived from ingroup members' awareness that outgroup members stereotype their group.

Antecedents

At the individual level, when *someone feels* him or herself accepted or rejected by others, this perception affects in significant ways his or her behavior, as

testified by psychosocial research on interpersonal attraction. For example, Heider's balance theory (1944) analyzed gestaltic assumptions on object perception. His theory tried to apply the same principles to the person perception. Heider postulated a harmonious or balanced situation when reciprocal feelings between people are identical.

In general, it has been found that a positive evaluation provokes positive affect and attraction (Baron & Byrne, 1996), and inversely. People will be offended when realizing that others evaluate them negatively (Coleman, Jusim & Abraham, 1987) and feel happy when they get a positive feedback (Backman & Secord, 1959). Taking a step further, another question is what happens when *someone receives information* about how others perceives him or her.

It has been recognized that people's perceptions about how others see them have been the focus of attention by disciplines other than social psychology, as shown by Kenny and DePaulo (1993). An excerpt of their contribution is presented below.

From a sociological perspective, both Cooley (1902), and G. H. Mead (1934) have wondered whether self-perceptions are an exclusive product of one's own perceptions or rather depend on how people think that others see them. Mead tried to distinguish between the conscious "self" (the reaction towards another's attitudes) and the social "me" (a set of another's attitudes adopted by the person). In this opinion, when one person takes others' perspective into account, he or she organizes these ideas and builds the "me". These authors paved the way for subsequent authors who underlined the relevance of studying people's understanding of how they are perceived by others (Goffman, 1959; Kenny, 1988; Schlenker, 1980; Swann, 1987; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). In this respect, we call attention to the remarkable review by Shrauger and Schoeneman (1979).

In clinical psychology (see Alloy & Abramson, 1988; Dunning & Story, 1991; Smith, 1966), the process of trying to anticipate how oneself is perceived by others has been analyzed in people with paranoid symptoms. Personality psychology has been interested in how people with social anxiety, or for whom it is specially important how others evaluate them, cope with intergroup relations. These people will be specially affected by the fact that, while they usually tend to evaluate their own skill in this kind of relations (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964; Leary, 1983), their own evaluation may not coincide with the evaluation they project which will bring negative consequences for them.

In social psychology, the antecedents more closely related to this line of research are those that study accuracy (Funder, 1987; Jones, 1990; Kenny & Albright, 1987), and self-presentation (Baumeister, 1982; DePaulo, 1992). These two concepts will be defined later to differentiate them from meta-stereotypes.

Prior to 1990, the word "meta-stereotype" had appeared in some works (Stening & Everett, 1984; Yamamoto, Davis & McEachron-Hirsch, 1983; Yamamoto & Dibrell, 1984), but meaning something different from what is implied by the term in this paper. For example, Yamamoto et al. (1983) coined the expression "cultural meta-stereotypes" and defined them as perceptions of the organization of different cultures compared with one's own. The implication is that cultures are defined by their similarities or differences with other cultures. They investigate which countries are the most similar to and the most different from to Japan in the perception of people, taking into account economy, political ideology, language and social development. Their results indicate that reciprocal perception of different cultural groups does not

coincide. For example, members of culture A may think that members of culture B are the most similar to them. But this does not imply that members of culture B will think that members of culture A are the most similar to them. Yamamoto et al.'s (1983) concept of meta-stereotype is different from the concept we use here. For them, meta-stereotypes are really inter-cultural comparison indexes.

Concept

In social psychology, meta-stereotype has been defined as "a person's beliefs regarding the stereotype that out-group members hold about his or her own group" (Vorauer, Main & O'Connell, 1998, p. 917). Vorauer et al. (1998) link this concept to intergroup relations. They assume that an aversion to intergroup interaction can be more justified by the impressions people think others have of them (for example, if they believe others do not like them) than by their stereotypes of the outgroup.

The possibility of being evaluated by an outgroup member will lead people to activate the meta-stereotype. But what does the activation of the meta-stereotype mean? What happens when people focus their attention on how they are considered by members of other groups? Usually, people perceive their behaviors as reflecting only their own evaluations. When the analysis of the behavior one's own group is undertaken, it is less usual to consider other's evaluation concerning one's own group (Vorauer & Ross, 1993). We submit that there are two reasons for this. The first one is that this conception is less usual or accessible for people. The second one is that to consider how others evaluate one's own group can entail a risk, in so far as that this evaluation may be negative.

Taking the literature about social awareness into account, one of the components of Stephan and Stephan's intergroup anxiety model (1985) is fear of negative evaluations by outgroup members. This model is based on a concern for an evaluation by the outgroup *previous* to intergroup interaction. Devine, Evett and Vazquez-Suson (1996) also focus on evaluative concern, but *during* the interaction and in a more specific way. Devine et al. (1996) study people's concern about being perceived as prejudiced towards others. However, to date no studies have been made on how people build or represent intergroup interaction depending on how ingroup members think that outgroup members evaluate them (Vorauer, Hunter, Main & Roy, 2000).

A crucial feature of the approach developed here is the consideration of meta-stereotypes at an *intergroup level*, not at an interindividual level. From this perspective, meta-stereotypes are defined as shared beliefs that members of one group have about how others evaluate them (Gómez, 1998). This conception implies that Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) is going to orient our analysis of meta-stereotyping processes.

Traits

The third point is to describe what the characteristics of meta-stereotypes are. Following Vorauer et al. (1998, p. 917-918), three main characteristics can be distinguished. In the first place, meta-stereotypes have a *contextual component*. They depend on the comparison context, which varies as a function of the specific outgroup. For example, in Spain, Madrileniens' meta-stereotype when the outgroup is Catalans (similar status and high competitiveness between them) would be completely different from the meta-stereotype when

Andalusians (lower status) is the outgroup (Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication-a). This is specially relevant for relations between groups of different status, or different social positions (Gordijn, Brix, Wijnants, Kooemen & Finchilescu, submitted for publication), given the importance of the relational nature of meta-stereotypes.

A second characteristic of meta-stereotypes is their *behavioral component*. When people think that beliefs that another group hold about their own group are negative or inconsistent with their self-stereotype, three consequences may follow: to avoid contact with this group, to establish a selective interaction (the same process is found in those people who are conscious of suffering social stigma), or to have a hostile reaction towards the outgroup, derogating outgroup members if they cannot avoid the contact (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Wills, 1981).

The third characteristic of meta-stereotypes is *their cognitive component*. This means that at least some ingroup members may have doubts about the correctness of the self-stereotype and its relation to meta-stereotypes. We envision two cases. First, some members are likely to think that their own perception is correct and disagree with a negative meta-stereotype. They will show negative feelings towards the outgroup and maintain a negative outgroup stereotype. The explanation for this is that they may think that the outgroup is unfair. Second, some people may be uncertain as to whether they really have the self-assigned traits or, instead, those that the other group is assigning to them. At least, they may think that they really possess some traits of the meta-stereotype. When people assume that traits assigned to them are negative or undesirable, the result is a threat, the consequence being a decrease of ingroup identification and self-esteem.

What are not Meta-stereotypes? Related Concepts

Several concepts related to meta-stereotypes must be distinguished from these. It seems necessary to make a revision of these terms, to define them and to specify in which way they differ from meta-stereotypes. These concepts are: meta-perceptions, meta-accuracy, self-presentation, self-verification, collective paranoia and social awareness.

Meta-perceptions. They refer to *individual beliefs* about impressions that others have about oneself (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993; Vorauer & Claude, 1998; Vorauer & Miller, 1997; Vorauer & Ross, 1993). The difference with respect to meta-stereotype is that meta-perceptions refer to individual level and are partly based on individuals' beliefs about themselves and on what they say and think (Bem, 1967). How can this process affect intergroup relations? When people think that their results will depend on what others think of them, they will increase their motivation to try to control these impressions. That is why low status people are more likely to be interested in meta-perceptions than high status people. However, a high motivation does not guarantee a convergence between meta-perception and the image that outgroup members have of ingroup members (Kruglansky, 1989). Kenny and DePaulo (1993) made a revision of eight studies dealing with this topic. For example, Curry and Emerson (1970) asked a group of students to what extent they liked the partners with whom they lived and to what extent they thought their partners liked them. Malloy and Albright (1990), using a similar survey, asked participants to assign their partners a percentage of five traits and to consider the percentage of these traits that their partners would assign to them. DePaulo, Kenny, Hoover, Webb, and Oliver (1987) set up a one to one

interaction between women who had to perform several tasks. At the end of each task, each participant was asked about her own ability and about the perception that the person with whom she interacted had about her. They concluded that individuals do not reach a judgment on how others see them based on the feedback they had received, but on their own perceptions of themselves. Another result is that people over-estimate the degree of consistency in others' evaluation of them and that people find it easier to predict how the others see them in general than how they are viewed by individual outgroup members.

Meta-accuracy. It refers to the difference between how one group thinks it is evaluated by another group (meta-stereotype), and how the other group actually evaluates it (outgroup's stereotype of the ingroup). Accuracy will be higher when perception and evaluation coincide. Kenny and Albright (1987) study meta-accuracy processes from the Social Relational Model (SRM, Kenny, 1988; Kenny & La Voie, 1984). The meta-perception of how one individual (A) thinks that other individual (B) sees him or her would depend on three components: the actor's perception (that is, how A thinks others see him or her), the partner's perception (how others think that B views people), and actor's relationship with partner (how A thinks that B views uniquely him or her). This model differentiates between two kinds of meta-accuracy: generalized meta-accuracy (describes people's individual accuracy about how others see them in general), and dyadic meta-accuracy (describes people's ability to understand how they are viewed by different people). This second point has a parallel at the intergroup level, since one of the meta-stereotype's characteristics is that it varies as a function of the relevant outgroup.

Self-presentation. This line of research refers to people's concern about beliefs that others have of them (Baumeister, 1982; DePaulo, 1992; Goffman, 1959; Jones, 1990; Schlenker, 1980). It refers to people's desire that members of other groups see them in a positive way. Sometimes people will even try to modify their own reactions to harmonize their own desires with the needs of people with whom they interact (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). The meta-stereotype they have concerning an outgroup will influence their self-presentation. If one reflects deeply on self-presentation processes, one can ask: "are we as we are, or are we as we like others to see us?"

Self-verification. This line of research shows that people want others to view them as they see themselves (Swann, 1987). That means that people would like outgroup's actual stereotype of the ingroup to coincide with the ingroup self-stereotype, and not with the meta-stereotype (that would be higher accuracy).

Collective Paranoia. Kramer and Messik (1998) define collective paranoia as "collectively held beliefs, either false or exaggerated, that cluster around ideas of being harassed, threatened, harmed, subjugated, accused, mistreated, wronged, tormented, disparaged, or vilified by a malevolent outgroup or outgroups" (p. 239). Paranoia is an ingroup reaction that is more intense when relation with another group is possible. According to these authors, one consequence of collective paranoia is moral aggression, understood as a deep negative affective reaction that members of a group feel when they think that members of an outgroup have been unfair to them. In that case, they will be less tolerant with outgroup members.

Social awareness. Vorauer et al. (2000) made a more extensive reflection on this topic. People are aware that others evaluate them, for the same reason that they evaluate others. The literature about social awareness suggests that people often wonder how others see them. Sheldon and Johnson (1993) found that the

most frequent kind of social awareness experienced by people in their lives during dyadic interactions had to do with how they appeared to the other person. Figursky (1987) showed that the second highest frequency referred to concerns about how they were judged by others. Social awareness may have consequences for intergroup relations when people worry about outgroup evaluations of the ingroup. Vorauer et al. (1998) conducted a study that indirectly represented a first step in the measurement of evaluative concern, and researched it further in a subsequent study (Vorauer et al., 2000). Both studies will be analyzed later in more detail.

A review of meta-stereotype research

Understanding the process involved in discrimination, and searching for strategies to avoid it and/or to improve intergroup relations, has been a special focus of attention in social psychology from different perspectives (e. g.: the contact as personalization, Brewer & Miller, 1984, 1988; reducing the salience of social categories, Doise, 1978; inducing a common ingroup identity, Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; preserving mutual intergroup differentiation, Hewstone & Brown, 1986; studying the affective nature of intergroup contact, Stephan & Stephan, 1985, or presenting counter-stereotypic information in otherwise typical members, Weber & Crocker, 1983, Wilder, 1984, among others). A second associated question is the relation between the activation of the stereotype members of one group hold about other group and the consequences of prejudice. This has been the main interest of many studies (see Devine, 1989, or Lepore & Brown, 1997, as examples). In both cases studies refer to beliefs or behaviors of one group vis-à-vis the other and of the other group vis-à-vis one's own group.

However, there is less research dealing with the relational aspect, that is, the consequences of beliefs about how outgroup members evaluate the ingroup on intergroup relations. The research work described here, either published or under preparation, intends to present this line of work and to stimulate other research.

The consequences of thinking of how others see us: The interpersonal level

The self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948) and the confirmation expectancies (Darley & Fazio, 1980; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978) consider that people have expectancies about members of other groups with whom they interact. As a consequence, they behave in such a way that these expectancies get confirmed. An additional factor is that people usually think that members of other groups evaluate them in a negative way. For example, what would happen if the targets believe that the perceiver has a general image of them that is negative? Ickes, Paterson, Rajecki and Tanford (1982) show that in this case (specially after an interpersonal encounter) it is very difficult for them to believe that it is possible to change the behavior of the other person. As a consequence, there is no escape and people usually confirm these expectancies. Curtis and Miller (1986) designed a research to study this process.

At an individual level, Curtis and Miller (1986) showed that if people believed that others liked or disliked them, they tended, correspondingly, to like or dislike these others. In their experiment, the authors resorted to a false feedback procedure, targets being told that others (perceivers, to use authors' term) liked or disliked them. The participants, that is, the targets, were 60 psychology students. An interpersonal encounter was arranged between target and perceiver, and, after having received the (false) feedback, participants who

thought they were liked by others displayed a more positive attitude and tone of voice than those who believed they were disliked.

Curtis and Miller (1986) assume that people are not actively seeking the other's approval. However, they did not check the credibility of the information for participants, though it is clear that, for those who did not believe the information, a rebound effect was likely. In other words, participants convinced that the outgroup had tried to mislead them were expected to develop a deteriorated outgroup image. One point should be made here. The kind of source (group or individual) providing information to participants is to be distinguished from source's membership group (ingroup, outgroup or undefined, Barreto & Gómez, under preparation).

How members of a low status group think they are viewed by members of a high status group: The difference between the meta-stereotype held by Blacks concerning Whites and the real stereotype of Blacks held by Whites

Sigelman and Welch (1994) studied Black Americans' perception of their inequality with respect to White Americans. In their study, they found that 25% of Black people thought that more than a half of White Americans share attitudes similar to the Ku Klux Klan. However, only 5% of White Americans recognize that they share this kind of attitude. So, this particular meta-stereotype shows a low degree of accuracy, the group of lower status believing it is being evaluated more negatively by the outgroup than it really is.

Blacks feel social anxiety when they have to go to districts where Whites are majority. The origin of this anxiety is not Blacks' stereotype of Whites, but rather their beliefs about how Whites see them. Thus, in a more recent study, Sigelman and Tuch (1997) defined meta-stereotypes as "Blacks' perceptions of Whites' stereotype of Blacks" (p. 89). These authors resorted to data of a national survey of Black Americans gathered via telephone by an American company in 1991. The sample of respondents was representative at a national level and consisted of 504 Black adults. To get the meta-stereotype measure, participants were shown the following statement: "most White Americans hold the following perceptions of Black Americans or not". Immediately afterwards, participants were invited to consider 12 different perceptions: "Blacks... "are lazy", "are religious", "are more likely to commit violent crimes", "would rather live off welfare than work", "are less intelligent than Whites", "are better athletes than Whites", "have no self-discipline", "are patriotic", "have low moral standards", "are good parents", "are always whining about racism" and "are more likely to abuse of drugs and alcohol". Four of these perceptions are relational and compare directly Blacks with Whites (more inclined to commit crimes than Whites, less intelligent, better athletes and more likely to be drug addicts). Three of them are negative, and only one is positive (a similar line of research on Black's beliefs about White's opinion and vice versa was conducted by Hagen and Glaser in 1993).

Sigelman and Tuch (1997) proceeded then to compare the results of this survey with those of a General Social Survey about how White Americans really see Black Americans (David & Smith, 1990). They were especially interested in two measures: the percentage of Whites that think Blacks have each of the aforementioned traits (outgroup's stereotype Whites have of Blacks), and Blacks' perception about what percentage of Blacks, estimated by Whites, possess each trait (meta-stereotype). Some of the results are shown in table I.

As can be seen in table I, Black Americans think that they are being worse evaluated by White Americans than they really are. This does not mean that

TABLE I
Comparison between the Stereotype that Whites hold of Blacks and the Meta-stereotype that Blacks hold concerning Whites¹

	Prefer to live of welfare	Violent	Lazy	Unintelligent	Unpatriotic
<i>Stereotype</i> that Whites hold about Blacks	59	54	47	31	18
<i>Meta-stereotype</i> of Blacks concerning Whites	75	82	69	76	44

Each column represent the percentage of people that holds each trait.

Whites' stereotype of Blacks is positive. In fact, Whites believe that approximately half of Blacks prefer to live on welfare, and that they are violent and lazy. But this negative opinion does not apply to other characteristics, like the ones that have to do with ability or competence (e.g., unintelligent), or others related to values (e.g., unpatriotic). In general, the results represent an instance of low accuracy: Whites' stereotype of Blacks is not so negative as Blacks think, Blacks being unaware of this. The gap between both perceptions may help to maintain a relation of antagonism between Black and White Americans and serve to justify why Black American people try to avoid intergroup contacts with White Americans.

An aspect of the methodology used by Sigelman and Tuch (1997) to obtain meta-stereotypes has to be noted: meta-stereotypes held by Blacks are measured differently from Whites' stereotypes about Blacks. The first measure (meta-stereotype) was calculated on the basis of the percentage of people answering "Yes", "No" or "Not sure" to the 12 characteristics described above, while the second one (stereotype) was based on participants' ratings of Blacks in a 7-point (semantic differential) scale, such as (Blacks) "prefer to be self-supporting" - "prefer to live on welfare", (Blacks are) "violence-prone" - "not violence-prone". In other words, both the way the questions were asked and the questions themselves vary and, therefore, they cannot be considered equivalent. Last but not least, the authors did not pay attention to how Whites think Blacks view them, though this information is important, insofar as it may have some effect on Whites' stereotype of Blacks.

In Krueger's research (1996), personal and cultural beliefs of Blacks and Whites were investigated. He found that both groups overestimate the negative views held by the respective outgroup about them. They exaggerate the meta-stereotype in their negative dimension. However, Krueger's research is more focused on the valence than on stereotype traits themselves.

Anyway, in spite of the mentioned methodological problems, Sigelman and Tuch's study may be considered as a first step in the understanding of the consequences of the degree of intergroup accuracy (the gap between how ingroup members think the outgroup sees them and how the outgroup actually evaluates them) on intergroup relations.

The other side of the picture: how members of a high status group think that they are viewed by members of a low status group

Vorauer et al.'s (1998) study is the most representative published so far on meta-stereotypes. It demonstrates that the meta-stereotype held by members of

a dominant group (White Canadians) concerning a low status group (Aboriginal Canadians) has relevant effects on intergroup relations.

Vorauer et al. (1998) focus mainly on two aspects. The first one refers to the meta-stereotype itself. They consider meta-stereotypes have negative implications both for social perception and for affective reactions, and that perception and affective reactions will exert an impact on intergroup contact. In addition, the belief that outgroup members may hold a negative image of the ingroup is likely to contribute to a decrease of self-esteem.

The second aspect refers to the bridge between meta-stereotypes and prejudice. They hypothesized that people's level of prejudice will have an effect on the content of the meta-stereotype, on the expectations of people's own image held by outgroup members, and on meta-perceptions during intergroup interactions.

This research is best illustrated by three studies. In the first one, the participants were 59 psychology students (White Canadians). The authors, taking as their departure point the assumption that people's need to predict and control their life may give rise to a strong interest in knowing how others see them (Vorauer & Ross, 1993) even at the group level, were able to show in this study that Whites have a clear and specific meta-stereotype concerning Aboriginal Canadians and that this meta-stereotype is more negative than the self-stereotype.

In their second study, Vorauer et al. (1998) arranged an encounter with a member of the other race. The main goal was to investigate the expectancies² of the member of the other group concerning this encounter. Participants were asked to describe any behavioral or emotional reaction that they would anticipate in the case of an interaction with an outgroup member as a consequence of their higher status (ethnic) group membership. The objective was to show that the meta-stereotype affects people's beliefs "about an individual Aboriginal interaction partner's likely expectations about them" (Vorauer et al., 1998, p. 924). It was found that 98% of the traits were unfavorable (i.e. they thought that the Aboriginal expected them to be "racist", "snobby", "selfish", "disliking", "spoiled", "cruel" and "having a sense of superiority"). In addition, 65% of ingroup members' expectancies in relation to the encounter were also negative. These results suggest some of the reasons why participants are trying to avoid contacts with the other group.

The third study tried to demonstrate that the feeling of being stereotyped by an outgroup member constitutes a threat to personal self-concept. This threat will be biggest when the meaning of the assigned trait is negative and, at the same time, inconsistent with self-image. It was found, as expected, that feeling oneself stereotyped has negative consequences for individual self-esteem, the implication being that meta-stereotypes guide individual perceptions about the impressions that an outgroup member has of the ingroup.

To summarize, Vorauer et al.'s research shows that meta-stereotypes influence people's reaction towards an intergroup interaction more than outgroup stereotype does. A relevant conclusion to be drawn has to do with the effect of meta-stereotypes on outgroup stereotypes. The authors suggest that it would be interesting to manipulate experimentally this kind of belief. Connecting their work with intergroup relations in general, they focus specifically on the contact hypothesis and on the conditions needed to achieve attitude change towards the outgroup: "A consideration of the role played by meta-stereotypes might increase our understanding of why some of these

conditions are important and suggest new kinds of information exchange that should be facilitated" (p. 935). Since any sign that we are liked by outgroup members could improve our attitudes towards them, the opportunity of receiving a (positive) feedback from an outgroup member could contribute to the generalization of positive contact effect.

Vorauer et al.'s (1998) procedure to measure meta-stereotypes is based on the diagnostic ratio of McCauley and Stitt (1978), and it is obtained by calculating the percentage of group members holding a characteristic over the percentage of people holding this characteristic in general (the baseline). In their studies, participants were typically asked: "According to the stereotype that exists in Native Indian society, about ____% of White Canadians possess this trait". To obtain the baseline, they presented the following statement: "According to the stereotype that exists in the Native Indian society, about ____% of Native Indians possess this trait" (p. 921). They compare how White Canadians think they are viewed by Aboriginal Canadians with how they think Aboriginal Canadians see themselves (baseline). When the ratio is significantly different from 1, they consider that the trait is part of the meta-stereotype.

It should be noted that, while Vorauer et al. (1998) divided the percentage of White Canadians that possess each trait according to Aboriginal Canadians over the percentage of native Indians that possess each trait (that was used as a baseline). McCauley & Stitt (1978) used the percentage of people in general that possess each trait. Vorauer et al. (1998) consider that meta-stereotype is composed by those traits ingroup members think that outgroup is assigning to them but not to itself. They leave out the traits the ingroup thinks the outgroup is assigning simultaneously to itself and to the ingroup (in the example provided above, the self-stereotype of Aboriginal Canadians). But it so happens that, in our opinion, these traits are part of the meta-stereotype too. Let's consider the following example: members of a given group to assign themselves a certain trait in the same proportion that they think is being assigned to them by the outgroup, but they do it with a different connotation (Gómez et al., submitted for publication). We suggest, therefore, that it would be advisable to undertake studies using both kind of analyses, in order to know whether they are affecting the results.

Our conception of meta-stereotype is very related to the Vorauer et al.'s, but it is not exactly the same (see Gómez, 1998; Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication-b). From our perspective, the meta-stereotype is a more gestaltic image, and it is composed by people's global image about how others perceive them. A trait can be part of the self-stereotype, of the outgroup stereotype and of the meta-stereotype at the same time. It is their connotation which can be different in each case, in the same way as the whole set of traits can be different.

A second aspect to underline is that Vorauer et al.'s work tries to relate people's (high and low) levels of prejudice with the content of their meta-stereotype, the hypothesis being that individual differences in prejudice will have certain implications for the content of the stereotype, and that these implications will differ from the expectancies about outgroup members' evaluation. These authors reach the conclusion that low levels of prejudice are associated with negative judgments about Whites' evaluation by Aborigines. More specifically, less prejudiced people are supposed to believe that outgroup members have a more negative meta-stereotype of them, insofar as they would be more inclined to consider outgroup's point of view. However, this would

depend on the relative social positions of ingroup and outgroup, as Gordijn et al. have shown (submitted for publication). Though existing results do not look very convincing and the conclusions reached do not seem to support the predictions, linking meta-stereotypes with prejudice does open an interesting avenue for research (Gómez, Ros & Huici, under preparation, Gordijn et al., submitted for publication).

Vorauer et al. (1998) only had the measures of White Canadians. They did not replicate the study with Aboriginal Canadians. This explains why they cannot compare the meta-stereotype with the real stereotype of White Canadians held by Aboriginal Canadians. In addition, these authors focus exclusively on the dominant point of view, leaving aside the subordinate perspective (Gordijn et al., submitted for publication). It should be noted that meta-stereotype is a relational process, and a proper understanding of the process requires that the two sides of the picture be borne in mind. Along these lines, Vorauer and Kumhyr (2001) recognize that an unresolved question of this study is the degree to which White people are accurate about personal impressions other people have of them and if the fact that the outgroup member belongs to the same race (White Canadian) or to a different one (Aboriginal Canadian) is going to make a difference.

A last question pointed out by Klein and Azzi (2001) is that Vorauer et al. (1998) do not distinguish between positive and negative aspects of meta-stereotypes. This comment is specially relevant because Vorauer et al. (1998) recommended the possibility of manipulating "positive" meta-stereotype to improve outgroup image. Moreover, it has been found that the manipulation of positive or negative meta-stereotypes has beneficial effects on outgroup evaluation through different processes (Gómez et al., submitted for publication).

The relation between meta-stereotypes and evaluative concern and its consequence to frame intergroup interactions

One part of the literature on social psychology focuses on the tendency of people to be concerned about how other people evaluate them (Devine et al., 1996; Plant & Devine, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Vorauer et al. (2000) conducted six studies to demonstrate "that dominant group members readily frame intergroup interaction in terms of how they are evaluated by an outgroup member" (p. 690).

Thirty psychology students participated in a first experiment. The objective was to differentiate between beliefs and feelings towards outgroup members depending on whether the participants had imagined a possible interaction with an outgroup member or not. Participants had to complete a series of words obtained in a previous study of Vorauer et al. (1998). Those participants who had to imagine an interaction with an outgroup member before the task completed more words referring to the meta-stereotype and the outgroup stereotype than those who did not have to imagine this interaction. This experiment shows that people are concerned about how others evaluate them.

Eighty-one White psychology students participated in a second study. This time, the objective was to search for evidence that the possibility of being evaluated by others is necessary to meta-stereotype activation. This study used the reaction time in a lexical decision-making task as a dependent variable. Those participants believing that they were going to meet another student who appeared in a videotape answered faster meta-stereotype words when this person belonged to the outgroup (Aboriginal Canadian) than when he or she

belonged to the ingroup (White Canadian). These results confirm that, when people anticipate the possibility of interacting with an outgroup member, the meta-stereotype is activated (the possibility of being evaluated is salient).

Fifty-five psychology students participated in a third study. The main goal was to investigate if there is a relation between meta-stereotype activation and concern with social evaluation. Vorauer et al. (2000) used one of the components of the Feningstein, Scheier and Buss (1975) scale, specifically the public self-consciousness, which reflects the level of concern of people about how other people think of them. Participants high in self-consciousness produced more meta-stereotype words in the experimental condition, when they had to imagine an interaction with an outgroup member, than in the control condition. However, there were no differences between conditions for participants low in self-consciousness.

Fifty-psychology students participated in a fourth study. The aim was to demonstrate that the personal importance of racial attitudes for the members of a group will affect their individual disposition to think about how they are evaluated by an outgroup member. Participants that gave more importance to their racial attitudes (in terms of their answers to the scale of Pomerantz, Chaiken & Tordesillas, 1995) completed more words of the meta-stereotype when they had to imagine an interaction with an outgroup member. No such difference appeared for participants low in this scale. Authors' interpretation is that people high in this scale are more apt to think about the meta-stereotype.

Forty-six psychology students participated in a fifth study to test another indirect strategy for making salient the possibility of being evaluated by outgroup members. Participants in the experimental condition had to summarize some sentences relating to the fact of being observed, evaluated or contacted by outgroup members. Participants' task in the control condition did not bring into focus any experience involving strong relations between ingroup and outgroup members. Those participants in the experimental condition produced more meta-stereotype words than those in the control condition.

Ninety-six psychology students took part in the last study. Vorauer et al. (2000) anticipated that the influence of participants' meta-stereotype on their meta-perceptions (individual beliefs about impressions others have about oneself) would be evident when these participants were themselves the focus of the evaluation. However, it would be different if they had to evaluate others. In this second case, their concern about how they are evaluated would be lower and the influence of meta-stereotypes on their evaluation of the outgroup would decrease. They compared high and low prejudiced people and found that high levels of prejudice were associated with a high feeling of being considered in terms of the meta-stereotype. This may mean that people who have a high level of prejudice may think "if I stereotype others, others stereotype me... and I know", as the title of this paper suggests at the intergroup level.

The six studies, taken together, clearly demonstrate that there are many variables indicating the relevance for people of beliefs about the evaluation that other people have of them: to imagine an interaction with an outgroup member, being evaluated by an outgroup member, the individual level of concern for evaluation, the personal importance of racial attitudes, the access to information related to being evaluated by outgroup members, and focusing more on their own evaluation than on the evaluation of others.

Along with Gómez and Huici's (submitted for publication-b) assumptions, Vorauer et al. (2000) suspect that meta-stereotype is usually negative and relate meta-stereotypes to negative consequences for intergroup relations and to stereotype threat (Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong & Dunn, 1998; Spencer, Steele & Quinn, 1999; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995, 1997). This is probably one of the main reasons why people avoid contact with outgroup members.

In our opinion, study 1 is specially interesting for social psychology, insofar as it suggests that it is possible that sociopsychological literature on the measurement of stereotypes has been influenced by a process (meta-stereotyping) that has not been taken into account (as yet). Participants in this kind of studies would notice that they have an image of other groups (outgroup's stereotype of the ingroup), leading them to the awareness that outgroup members would be influenced by the same process and would have their own image of other groups (outgroups's image of the outgroup). For that reason, the stereotype of other groups may be influenced by the stereotype that ingroup members think the outgroup has of them (meta-stereotype). Though this process is so pervasive, it has been neglected by stereotype literature.

Study 1 and 2 were conducted at an individual level. However, some of the conclusions of Vorauer et al. (2000) refer to the group level, skipping the fact that the processes may be different (e. g. the authors consider that meeting with one outgroup member is an intergroup interaction). It seems quite logical that individual differences in self-consciousness predict meta-stereotype activation when an interaction with an outgroup member is expected. However, it would be interesting to perform a similar study taking into account different outgroups at the same time, since one subject low in self-consciousness concerning a specific outgroup (for example, if their ingroup has a higher status) can be high in self-consciousness concerning another outgroup (for example, if their ingroup has a lower status, or if he or she has to compete with this particular outgroup for resources, or for whatever reason relevant to the comparison with a specific outgroup).

The findings about the relation between the importance of the racial attitudes of people and their tendency to think about how others see them are especially relevant to the comparisons among cultures. It would be interesting, for example, to compare subtle and blatant prejudice to know if it gives rise to differences in the meta-stereotype. It is worth mentioning that Vorauer et al. (2000) did not find any differences depending on the level of prejudice in their study.

Intergroup relations from the perspective of people's thoughts and feelings about themselves

Vorauer and Kumhry (2001) conducted a study to demonstrate that, independently of their status, people frame intergroup interaction and respond to this interaction based on thoughts and beliefs about themselves. Vorauer and Kumhry focused on people's concern about how others see them and their implication in intergroup relations. The authors examined individual's beliefs about how others see him or her (meta-perceptions) and about how others express negative affect towards him or her, specifically in an intergroup interaction. They address the question about the degree of people's meta-perception accuracy as a function of their interaction partner's belongingness to the ingroup or outgroup.

One hundred and twelve psychology students were assorted in different pairs depending on the experimental condition. 28 pairs were formed by

White-Aborigine participants, and 28 were formed by White-White participants. Participants were informed that the objective was to know how people exchange information when they first meet one another. After an initial conversation, participants had to fill out a questionnaire about their impressions, thoughts and feelings. They measured meta-perception (description of the perception that the partner had of him or her on a list of 25 traits, 7 of these traits being relevant to the meta-stereotype), their partner's impression, using the same characteristics, negative feelings about him or herself, and possible feelings of anxiety during an intergroup interaction.

Results show that meta-perceptions of participants high in prejudice were more congruent with the meta-stereotype when the partner was an Aboriginal than when he or she was White. That is, the participants think that they were stereotyped by outgroup members. However, meta-perceptions of participants low in prejudice were less congruent with the meta-stereotype when his or her partner was an Aboriginal than when he or she was White. That means that the contact situation was positive for them and they felt less stereotyped.

The second main result shows that White participants high in prejudice lead Aborigines to feel more uncomfortable and more self-critical than other White participants did. However, this effect does not appear with White participants low in prejudice.

When Vorauer and Kumhyr compared partners' meta-perceptions and actors' impressions they did not find significant evidence that the Aborigines felt stereotyped by Whites or that their meta-perceptions were affected by the level of prejudice of Whites. It is an expected finding, because the Aborigines do not know the level of prejudice of their partners, and their meta-stereotypes depend on the image that they have of the outgroup in general.

Results of this study show that White participants who were high in prejudice expected to be evaluated in a more consistent and stereotypic way by Aborigines than by other Whites.

In a follow-up study, they found that Whites consider that Aborigines will have an image of them less precise than other Whites. These results reflect an effect of differentiation and positive distinctiveness. Participants create a new dimension in which other members similar to themselves are superior to outgroup members. It is obvious that, in the end, all White participants belong to the same team. In the results relative to Aboriginal Canadians, these participants felt more uncomfortable and experimented more self-directed negative affect when they stayed with a White low prejudice partner. Another point to be noted is that Aborigines were perceived in a positive way by low prejudice Whites. This result about the positive perception of Aboriginal Canadians by low prejudice participants is similar to some findings obtained in Spain on the level of prejudice depending on the target group (Gómez & Huici, 1999): people of a different race (in this case, Blacks) appear attractive in Spain because of their racial characteristics. Another reason may be that to have a positive feeling towards this kind of group may help low prejudiced people to appear as less prejudiced, or it may be a sign to demonstrate that they are not really prejudiced.

An aspect specially relevant in this study is that, for the first time, Vorauer and Kumhyr gather the results of members of both groups: White Canadians and Aboriginal Canadians. This allows for the analysis of some variables so far neglected, as, for example, the relation of the degree of accuracy with other variables. The authors argue for the existence of a high relation between meta-perceptions and the perception that members of another group have of ingroup

members. Results suggest that individual reactions of Whites towards outgroup members can be linked to the impression that the others really have of them. The authors say specifically that “the tenor of the evaluation they perceive may guide the positivity of their reactions to the outgroup member” (p. 714). This assumption strongly supports the relevance of manipulating meta-stereotype information through the disclosing of the real evaluation that the outgroup has of the ingroup as a possible strategy to improve intergroup relations (Gómez & Barreto, 2001; Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication-b; Gómez et al. submitted for publication).

Vorauer and Kumhyr recognize some limitations of their study. One of them is that they do not have direct evidence that meta-perceptions reflect that people are really focusing on their meta-stereotypes. However, their main limitation is that their data on the low status group are difficult to generalize due to the low representativeness of these participants (only 3% of psychology students are Aboriginal, and probably an Aboriginal studying at the University is not a prototypical one). One interesting question about the methodology of this study is that, in their analysis, they separate the traits relevant for the meta-stereotype from those that are not relevant.

The strategic admission of meta-stereotype as an attempt to try to change the outgroup image of the ingroup

Klein and Azzi (2001) demonstrate the influence that a meta-stereotype concerning a specific outgroup has on the ingroup's selective self-definition. They assume that people can use meta-stereotypes in a strategic way. If members of a group recognize having some traits of their meta-stereotype related to an outgroup, it would probably be easier for them to try to disconfirm those traits of the meta-stereotype more undesirable for the ingroup. Since a negative meta-stereotype has undesirable consequences for the ingroup, people will use the strategy of confirming the positive traits of the meta-stereotype and to reject the negative ones, in order to avoid those undesirable consequences.

The participants were 91 psychology students of the University of Brussels, and French people were the relevant outgroup. Klein and Azzi carried out a three between-subjects factors design: 2 (identification with the ingroup, low vs. high) x 2 (group membership of the audience, ingroup vs. outgroup) x 2 (salience of the meta-stereotype, salient vs. not salient). To manipulate the group membership of the audience (in this case, the experimenters) they varied the nationality of the group of researchers that conducted the experiment. It is important to consider that this audience is a group, not an individual. In Vorauer and Kumhyr's (2001) study, people interact with a single outgroup member. To manipulate the meta-stereotype salience, they made salient nine traits of a list by putting them in bold face characters and indicating that those are the traits that Belgians think that French people assigned to them. Participants had to choose those traits that they would apply to their ingroup, that is, Belgians. A meta-stereotype positivity score was created as a dependent variable which consisted in: “the score on positive traits belonging to the meta-stereotype minus the score on negative traits belonging to the meta-stereotype divided by the total number of positive and negative traits selected” (p. 284).

Results indicated that, if meta-stereotype was salient, participants confirmed a higher amount of positive traits of the meta-stereotype and, at the same time, disconfirmed more the negative traits when the audience belonged

to the outgroup. This strategy was absent when the audience belonged to the ingroup.

In their discussion, Klein and Azzi (2001) made an interesting analysis of status differences. The meta-stereotype in dominant groups can provoke a feeling of guilt if ingroup members think that their position is illegitimate (Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998). Complementarily, the meta-stereotype in dominated groups can produce a threat for the concern of being accepted or not by dominant groups, so that members will worry about access to resources important for them. If the meta-stereotype is negative, but people think that ingroup and outgroup are very different, this negativity can be attributed to this difference. Klein and Azzi argue that, according to Branscome, Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (1999), the negative meta-stereotype poses a threat to the evaluation of the ingroup. However, people could adopt different strategies to avoid this threat, for example choosing other dimensions of comparison, or increasing their level of identification with the ingroup, among others. However, it will not be necessary to resort to these strategies if people can modify in some way those traits of the meta-stereotype that entail any negative consequences.

There are some aspects that Klein and Azzi (2001) did not take into account in their study and probably would be worthy of consideration here. The results about strategic confirmation as a function of the audience appears quite obvious. After all, the meta-stereotype is a relational process and will have greater effects when there is an intergroup relation including people from different groups and not merely in an ingroup – ingroup relation. One aspect to bear in mind is that the characteristics of the meta-stereotype vary depending on the outgroup. That means that people will have to adapt this strategy to the different groups. Following the line of research of Klein and Azzi, it would be interesting to plan future research where the ingroup had to consider different outgroups at the same time to know if the strategy is adaptable.

My main concern with this study is not the experiment itself, but the preliminary analysis. Klein and Azzi followed three steps to build their scale to measure the meta-stereotype. In the first step, 10 undergraduate students generated ten traits associated with the ingroup. As a second step, 40 undergraduate students indicated, in a 9 point-scale, if these traits were more or less typical of the ingroup. As a third step, 37 undergraduate students had to indicate if these traits belonged to the stereotype that the French hold of the Belgians. And as a fourth step, the selected traits were evaluated by 35 undergraduate students as positive or negative. The main problem of this procedure is that the first sample of traits was associated to the ingroup, not to the meta-stereotype. The meta-stereotype is a relational process that involves, for ingroup members, the possibility of being evaluated by other groups, and varies as a function of the specific outgroup that is considered. Moreover, some traits that belong to the meta-stereotype, may not belong to the ingroup stereotype. For that reason, the scale that was used by Klein and Azzi only collects those traits of the meta-stereotype that are present in the ingroup stereotype. This is specially problematic because probably those meta-stereotype traits that are more negative are not present in the ingroup stereotype.

In spite of these comments, the relevant role that Klein and Azzi's (2001) work plays on the research of meta-stereotype processes must be recognized.

The manipulation of Meta-stereotype information as a strategy to improve intergroup relations

Gómez (1998) conducted the first study manipulating meta-stereotype information as part of a doctoral dissertation about strategies that facilitating stereotype change in a situation of intergroup contact. Contact between two basketball teams was videotaped. Later, 212 fans of these same teams (104 of group A and 108 of group B) watched the videotaped contact and subsequently rated the two teams on several dimensions pertinent to the task. Three strategies of stereotype change were examined. They consisted in: (1) providing the opportunity for a positive evaluation of both groups in the same important dimensions (avoiding “social competition”); (2) providing the opportunity for a positive evaluation of each group in different important dimensions (facilitating “social co-operation”); and (3) informing the groups that the other group’s stereotype of them is more positive than they think (positive meta-stereotype information). This manipulation refers to the general image that the outgroup holds of the ingroup, taking into account that people understand global outgroup information better than individual opinions of outgroup members (DePaulo et al. 1987). These strategies were combined in four conditions (i.e., strategies 1 and 2 with and without information about meta-stereotype).

Results support that contact between members of different social groups with the addition of a positive meta-stereotype information reduces specifically the differentiation in the negative traits, eliminating outgroup derogation and improving the evaluation of the outgroup (Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication-b). One of the advantages of having data of the two groups is that it makes it possible to have a measure of meta-accuracy. Study 1 of Gómez and Huici (submitted for publication) shows the relation of meta-accuracy with other measures. A high meta-accuracy (the meta-stereotype of one group respecting a specific outgroup coincides with the stereotype that this outgroup really holds) is related to a decrease of discrimination and to a positive image of the outgroup. A low meta-accuracy may occur because the real stereotype the outgroup holds of the ingroup is either more positive or more negative than the meta-stereotype. In each case, consequences for intergroup relations will be completely different. Gómez and Huici (submitted for publication-b) show that when the ingroup is pessimistic (it has a more negative meta-stereotype than the stereotype that the outgroup holds of it), it evaluates the outgroup negatively. However, when the ingroup is optimistic (and it has a more positive meta-stereotype than the stereotype that the outgroup holds of them), it evaluates the outgroup positively. In both cases, to evaluate the outgroup, the ingroup adopts its own perception about the image that it thinks the outgroup holds of it instead of the image that the outgroup really holds. This point may be interpreted as showing the power of meta-stereotypes on intergroup evaluations.

In another study (Gómez et al., submitted for publication), a factorial design was used. Two variables with three levels each were manipulated and crossed between participants: (1) information about the meta-stereotype (positive, negative, or no information); and (2) information about value similarity between the ingroup and the outgroup (high similarity, low similarity and no information about similarity). 248 Andalusians, undergraduate students from the University of Granada, in Andalusia, were recruited and randomly assigned to each experimental condition. A relevant

identified (and salient for the ingroup) regional group in Spain was selected as outgroup: the Catalans.

The study shows how meta-stereotype information and value similarity congruence operate in a different but multiplicative way. A positive meta-stereotype information without value similarity information improves the evaluation of the outgroup image. Value similarity information without meta-stereotype information deteriorates the evaluation of the outgroup (Brown & Abrams, 1986; Brown & Wade, 1987). However, taking positive meta-stereotype information and value similarity information together, the biggest change was obtained in the improvement of the image of the outgroup and in the reduction of the differentiation.

Gómez and Barreto (2001) conducted an experimental study to examine people's reactions to the interplay between meta-stereotype information (negative vs. positive) and social fairness (unfair vs. fair resource allocation by the outgroup). 286 psychology students were randomly assigned to each experimental condition. Positive meta-stereotype information increased the competence traits assigned to the outgroup. Additionally, while meta-stereotype information did not have an impact on allocation of resources, negative meta-stereotype information did produce the highest intention of contact with the outgroup, probably to check if the outgroup stereotype of the ingroup is really negative, and to try to change it if such was the case.

Other Research in progress or Related to Meta-stereotypes

Some other published or in progress research related to meta-stereotypes, will be briefly summarized here, after having obtained explicit permission from the authors.

At an individual level and as a strategy of self-assistance, Weinberg and Rowe (1988, 1996) analyzed the relation between how we are and how others see us. Their idea is that our success in an interpersonal relation depends on how others see us. The question is that others do not see us as we are, but as they think we are. The main idea of Weinberg and Rowe is that people *project* an image about us, and we need to learn how to cope with these projections. If we succeed in doing this, we will be able to control how others see us. Some questions they analyze are how to know when others project about us, how to get others to see the best of us, how we can modify the projection of others, and so on.

How women think about the image that men have of them may be a barrier to develop their future and their career. This was analyzed by Tobias (1994). Tobias speaks about "meta-stereotypes" to refer to the fact that women think that there are some stereotypes confirming that science is only for White males, but not for females or for non-White males. To demystify this idea is a duty of the culture of science, showing young women that there are women scientists and that men are not an elite nor predestined to do science. Tobias' contribution can help us to think how meta-stereotypes concerning a specific group and in a specific context may influence people's mind and behavior.

Boen and Vanbeselare (under preparation) carried a study in Belgium with 374 freshmen in psychology of Flemish origin to determine how Flemish students perceived the general image that Walloons had of Flemish (that is, how is their meta-stereotype related to Walloons). They asked their participants to rate the degree of positivity or negativity of this image on a scale ranging from -3 to 3. Results showed that 68,7 % of the students perceived that the Walloon image of Flemish was negative, 19,1% thought it

was neutral, and only 12,1% thought that it was positive. Another important finding is that Flemish believe that the image that Walloons have of them is unjustified (illegitimate) and quite permanent (stable). If we take into account all these results together, we can consider, first, that the stereotype that Flemish will have of Walloons will be quite negative, and second, that they will try to avoid contact with members of the outgroup. This behavioral consequence will be even more intense because they think that this negative meta-stereotype is permanent, which will lead them to think as well that this negative image will be more difficult to change.

Another research about meta-stereotypes of special interest is being conducted in South Africa by Finchilescu, Hunt, Mankge and Nuñez (under preparation). The first objective is to establish the meta-stereotype that White and Black South African people have concerning the outgroup and to compare it with the stereotype that the other group really holds. 267 university students (134 Blacks and 133 Whites) of the University of Cape Town participated in the study. Finchilescu et al. used a scale with 80 traits that members of each group had to assign (estimating a percentage) to the outgroup and to the meta-stereotype. They resorted to the methodology used by Vorauer et al. (1998) to determine what traits compound the meta-stereotype for Blacks and for Whites, obtaining ten traits for each group to be used in future research. This is a valuable first step, and a basis for a series of studies like the one developed by Vorauer's team. After having collected meta-stereotypes and outgroup stereotypes of both groups, whose next studies will be able to conclude if meta-accuracy has any relation with other variables relevant for intergroup relations.

Following their studies about meta-stereotypes, Vorauer (submitted for publication) conducted a study with 152 psychology students to explore how high and low-prejudice people think that they are seen by outgroup members with whom they interact, depending on the type of interaction, if it is a dyadic or a group interaction, and if the other participant or participants belong to the ingroup or to the outgroup. Some results show that low prejudiced people thought that they were considered more negatively by an outgroup member in the group than in the individual condition. A probable explanation is that they perhaps thought that some ingroup members may be high in prejudice and that outgroup members would generalize this negative aspect. High prejudiced people, on the contrary, expected to be considered more positively probably because of the operation of the opposite process.

At the same time, Gordijn et al. (submitted for publication) conducted a study that supports these findings. In addition, their research has some important contributions to the research on meta-stereotypes which merit a more detailed discussion. Gordijn et al. (submitted for publication) studied the level of prejudice and the meta-stereotype of one group related to an outgroup. They were interested in the effect of these two variables on feelings towards an imagined and ambiguous interaction with an outgroup member. We will focus here on the results related with meta-stereotypes. 254 university students participated in their study (147 were Black South Africans and 107 were White South Africans). Participants had to fill in a questionnaire with different scales of cultural stereotypes, meta-stereotypes and prejudice. To build the meta-stereotype measure, they formed several focus groups, in which participants had to determine which traits Blacks attribute to Whites and which ones Whites attribute to Blacks (positive and negative). As a consequence, a list of traits was formed to be answered

on a 7-point Likert scale: “in general Black (White) South Africans think White (Black) South Africans are...” (in brackets for the meta-stereotype that Blacks hold related to Whites). Later, a story was presented to participants where these were asked to imagine an interaction with an outgroup member and to indicate their feelings (positive and negative) related with this possible interaction. Results replicated Vorauer et al.’s (1998) study, with high-prejudice participants holding a less negative meta-stereotype than low prejudiced ones. However, this effect appeared only for negative meta-stereotypes (not for positive ones) and only for the dominant group, that is, White South Africans (not for Black South Africans). Their second result related with meta-stereotypes had to do with the valence of the stereotypic traits. They found that low-prejudice participants thought that outgroup members attributed them two kinds of negative traits: those stereotypical for the ingroup and those stereotypical for the outgroup. These results are only found for White South African participants. And their third result indicated that, for Black South African participants, more negative meta-stereotypes were related with less feelings of happiness before an interaction. To explain their results, the authors appealed to the relative social position of both groups in South Africa.

We consider that this study has at least three relevant contributions to the study of meta-stereotypes in social psychology. First, Gordijn et al.’s meta-stereotypes study focuses on two groups with different status: a dominant and a dominated group. Second, they distinguish between the positive and the negative face of meta-stereotype. Third, in their discussion of the differences of stereotype processes, they include the content and the valence of the traits.

Other lines of research in “The others’ perspective” area: Social Stigma, Stereotype Threat and Empathy

The awareness of the presence of different outgroups and the fact that these outgroups have the possibility to evaluate individuals, as well as members of groups, is the main aspect of those processes that compound the so called “others’ perspective”. After having analyzed meta-stereotypes, other processes that emerge from similar origins are considered here.

On the one hand, beliefs and feelings of being stereotyped by outgroup members because of some kind of handicap seem to be a central aspect of social stigma, defined as a “function of having an attribute that conveys a devalued social identity in a particular context” (Crocker et al., 1998, p. 506). Specifically, stigmas mark the persons as “deviant, flawed, limited, spoiled or generally undesirable” (Jones et al., 1984, p. 8). This recent line of research has been receiving increasing attention in social psychology specially in the 90’ s (e.g. Crocker, Cornwell & Major, 1993; Crocker & Major, 1994; Crocker et al. 1998; Crocker, Voelk, Testa & Major, 1991; Major & Crocker, 1993; Major & Schmader, 1998; Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe & Crocker, 1998; Miller, Rothblum, Felicio & Brand, 1995; Quinn & Crocker, 1998). The main goal of these studies is to examine how persons, who are targets of a negative stereotype, prejudice and discrimination for different reasons, explain their experience as forming part of members of a disadvantaged group. These studies are related to meta-stereotypes, because they assume that members of a stigmatized group think that members of non stigmatized groups have a negative image of them, that is, the stigmatized have a negative meta-stereotype. However, the stigmatized usually do not know if the non stigmatized actually have a negative image of them. Social stigma will not be

the focus of attention of this paper. However, readers interested in this line of research are referred to a special number of the *Journal of Social Issues* (Vol. 57, n° 1, Spring, 2001) dedicated expressly to this topic, and specially worthy of attention since the reported research adopts an insider's perspective, showing that the "stigmatized are not simply victims or passive recipients of stereotyping but rather actively attempt to construct a buffering life space" (Oyserman & Swin, 2001, p. 1). A second reference, also highly commendable, is the one edited by Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl and Hull (2000), which shows a very interesting collection of articles that show the relevance of social stigma for social psychology. However, so far, no research about social stigma has tried to manipulate the processes related with this phenomena to improve intergroup relations.

Furthermore, "the others' perspective" is also involved in stereotype threat (Spencer et al. 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995, 1997). Stereotype threat "is a situational threat that can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists" (Steele, 1997, p. 627). Stereotype threat has been studied in the area of intellectual performance (e. g.: in women, Spencer et al. 1998; in African Americans, Steele & Aronson, 1995). Results show how, when the negative stereotype that the outgroup holds about the ingroup is made salient, performance is impaired. However, when the threat is alleviated, performance improves. Leyens, Désert, Croizet and Darcis (2000) extend stereotype threat effects outside of the academic domain, to a nonstigmatized group. Leyens et al. show that a group without stigmas can be stigmatized in negative stereotypic terms. Their results reveal that in an affective task, threatened men (who received information telling them that men are poorer than women in affective processing task) made more errors than did men in non threatened condition. In the same terms, but from another area of psychology, Clarck, Anderson, Clarck and Williams, (1999) study the role that racism can play as a stressor, or more specifically, they pay attention to the biological consequences, for a specific individual, of belonging to a group that is a target of racism. The authors present a model to systematize the research on the biopsychological effect produced on Afro-Americans by racism prevailing in American society. Perceived racism represents a subjective experience of racism and prejudice, and, for that reason, these beliefs are expected to be present in more situations than just those sensitive to racism. Clarck et al. paper points out the necessity of carrying out new research to determine what are the factors involved in people's perception of feeling stereotyped and victims of racism.

Those individuals belonging to a stereotyped group whatever the reason are often specially careful to avoid engaging in stereotype confirming behaviors. Otherwise, they could legitimate this stereotype to other people or even to themselves. Members of a stigmatized group may feel pressure in circumstances where their behavior can confirm the negative face of their stereotypes. Some groups think, or know specifically, that other groups have a negative stereotype of them for some particular reason (Casas, Ponderotto & Sweeney, 1987; Harris, Wuschull & Walters, 1990; Lee, 1994; Leiberson, 1995). The difference between thinking and knowing is that, in the second case, people have this information, and knowing the reality is a first step to try to change it. The problem is that when people do not really know it, the resulting uncertainty can produce a paranoid response towards the outgroup. Some particular actions performed by people belonging to a stigmatized group may be interpreted by the rest of the dominant groups in terms of

categorization, that is, as a consequence of belonging to that group. However, it may also be interpreted in the same way by members belonging to the group who may really consider that the stereotype that others hold about them is true (Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication-b; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Vorauer et al. 1998). In this area of research, the possibility of manipulating stereotype threat in a positive way has not been studied. Most of the studies have limited themselves to make salient the negative stereotype and to demonstrate that being conscious of it decreases the performance in a given task, or produces negative consequences. However, no studies have tried to manipulate this kind of information to improve intergroup relations.

A third area of research related with the "others' perspective" is empathy. Stephan and Finley (1999) describe an agreement in the literature in that there are two basic types of empathy: cognitive and emotional (see Davis, 1994; Duan & Hill, 1996). Cognitive empathy is simply to take the perspective of another person. In the literature, this kind of empathy is called "perspective taking" and "role taking". Emotional empathy refers to emotional responses to another person similar to the emotions that the other person is experiencing (parallel empathy), or a reaction to the emotional experiences of the other person (reactive empathy). In the literature, this kind of empathy is called "sympathy", "affective empathy", "affective perspective taking" or "emotional responsiveness". Unlike research conducted on social stigma and stereotype threat, research in the area of empathy has used this process to improve feelings and attitudes towards outgroup members. For example, Batson et al. (1997) conducted three studies inducing empathy towards a young woman with AIDS, a homeless man or a convicted murderer, respectively. Their study shows that inducing empathy towards the woman with AIDS or the homeless man improved the attitudes of the participants towards the group as a whole. In the case of the convicted murder, there was not a substantial change immediately, but the attitudes improved in a second measure 1-2 weeks later. The advantage of empathy is that people can be taught to feel it (e. g. Barak, 1990, Erera, 1997), usually using role-playing exercises as a strategy. As a closing comment, the study of Stephan and Finley (1999), performed some recommendations for the use of empathy in intergroup relation programs. However, before conducting a research with the aim of manipulating empathy as a strategy to improve intergroup relations, a warning is in order: some studies demonstrate that trying to adopt the perspective of other people demands a strong effort (Higgins, 1981; Hodges & Wegner, 1997).

Future lines of research: plenty of things to do

Throughout this paper I have tried to show the relevant role played by meta-stereotypes on intergroup relations. Evidence has been presented to prove that confronting a relation with members of different outgroups not only depends on the image that the ingroup holds of these outgroups, but also the necessity to take into account how ingroup members think members of each outgroup evaluate them. From this perspective, a host of possibilities arises to analyze different processes that have been studied in social psychology from other lines of study, or to investigate brand new ones. The summary of research reviewed so far suggests some interesting points to pursue in future research.

To begin with, meta-stereotype studies can complement other work where usually this kind of perception is not attended to. For example, Judd, Park,

Ryan, Brauer and Kraus (1995) studied ethnocentrism and stereotyping in Black and White Americans. However, they did not study how members of one group thought they were viewed by the other. Later, Krueger (1996) suggested that Blacks and Whites over-estimate the degree of negativity of the image that the other group has of them, but he refers more to the valence than to the traits themselves.

In addition, meta-stereotypes in and by themselves can be a source of new lines of research. For example, one of the results of Gómez and Huici (submitted for publication "b") showed that participants were less likely to assign negative than positive traits according to the positive-negative asymmetry (Blanz, Mummendey & Otten, 1995; Gardham & Brown, 2001; Mummendey & Otten, 1998; Mummendey, Otten & Blanz, 1994; Otten, Mummendey & Blanz, 1996). However, negative traits are more stable and difficult to change than positive ones. Their study shows that manipulating meta-stereotype information has a different impact on the negative than on the positive dimension of stereotypes. In line with this distinction, one interesting question would be to go deeply into the suggestion made by Klein and Azzi (2001) and analyze meta-stereotype processes from the perspective of positive-negative asymmetry.

The manipulation of information on what outgroup members think about the ingroup has been successful at an individual level (Curtis & Miller, 1986), and also at intergroup level (Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication "b"; Gómez et al. submitted for publication), suggesting that it would be helpful to investigate everything that could influence that information, such as the source that provides it (Barreto & Gómez, under preparation), the processes related to it (e. g. the credibility, the legitimacy or the representativity of the source, Yzerbyt, personal comment), the information provided about the meta-stereotype (e. g. if it is positive or negative, similar to or different from of ingroup evaluation), among others.

A final aspect, specific of the characteristics of meta-stereotypes themselves, is that they are different depending on the outgroup that is being considered. As Vorauer et al. (2000) and Vorauer and Kumhyr (2001) show, there is a strong connection between meta-stereotypes and evaluative concern. For that reason, it might be interesting to investigate the meta-stereotypes and the evaluation of a group considering different groups at the same time. Possibly, for example, evaluative concern could be different if the outgroup had a higher or a lower status than the ingroup.

These are only some of the possibilities to further the investigation of meta-stereotype processes. To focus on what people think about how others see them means an opportunity to open a new perspective to study intergroup relations as well as new windows in an attempt to understand old and/or new phenomena from a brand new perspective.

Conclusions

An aspect that has not been analyzed here is that, much like stereotypes, meta-stereotypes are not fixed in time. It could happen that, at different times of history, they undergo changes contingent on events. For example, no one will ever forget the 11th of September, and the terrorist crash of two airplanes against the Twin Towers. The day after, the CNN showed an interview where a journalist asked a Muslim taxi-driver about the consequences of this event for Muslims at large, given that the terrorists had been identified as belonging to this ethnic group (at least, from the journalist point of view). The answer was

that, from now on, all American people would think that all Muslims are terrorists. It is a clear example that stereotypes may undergo change (in other countries, lots of people are recognizing that, when they see a man with Muslim features, their anxiety increases), and meta-stereotypes too (people with Muslim features feel negatively stereotyped and blamed for the event). These events can be analyzed from the vantage of meta-stereotypes, since people are conscious that these social incidents can modify intergroup relations, and people anticipate some behaviors that are the cause of anticipated meta-stereotypes.

The example mentioned above refers to a clear, identified, and possibly justified negative meta-stereotype. However, perhaps for people the paranoid idea of knowing that others evaluate them was more important than to knowing the positivity or negativity of such evaluation. Let me emphasize that more important than considering that the meta-stereotype is negative, the really intriguing thing for people is simply not to know its content. People can figure out the behavior of the ingroup members, but it is more difficult to try to understand how outgroup members think and behave. Krueger (1998) assumes that people can infer that ingroup characteristics are a projection of self, and that for this reason ingroup members will behave in a similar way to oneself. This egocentric projection is producing a recent line of research (e. g., Krueger & Stanke, 2001) and is more extensively analyzed by Otten (submitted for publication). That is why communicating people the real stereotype that an outgroup has of them, either positive or negative, could make them change their disposition to enter into contact with it for different processes depending on the valence of the meta-stereotype (Gómez & Huici, submitted for publication-b; Gómez et al. submitted for publication; Gómez & Barreto, 2001): it would decrease the bad feeling of people about not knowing how others evaluate them.

Probably, many people would like to be a wizard to know how others see them or how they see their group. This is relevant not only for social psychology and it would be easy to provide a lot of extravagant examples like a theme of a film ("What women think" could be a recent example), or the nightmare of a basketball team trainer, when he or she is thinking of the possibility of knowing the strategy chosen by his or her opponent (i.e., the rival team trainer) to counter-work his or her own strategy (as anticipated by the other trainer).

Unfortunately, social psychologists do not have the power of knowing what other people think of them, but at least we have the possibility of investigating it, and this may be hard, but it may also be a wonderful experience.

Notes

¹ Table I has been constructed from the data presented by Sigelman and Tuch (1997).

² Meta-stereotypes and expectations are not the same process. There are at least three main differences between these two processes: a) expectations are a subjective notion of probability derived from the occurrence of earlier events (Stukas & Snyder, 2002). However, meta-stereotypes can be formed without an earlier direct experience between ingroup and outgroup members; b) Stukas & Snyder (2002) argue that "there are several reasons why targets might not want to try to disconfirm an undesirable expectation" (p. 32). For instance, people might think negative consequences may follow if they try to disconfirm negatives expectations. But in spite of meta-stereotypes usually being negative (Vorauer et al., 2000), people are open to inconsistent information; c) expectations refer to a general anticipation of coming events and refer directly to specific or global behavior. Meta-stereotyping is a cognitive process that affects behavior rather indirectly (Vorauer et al., 2000). Nevertheless, there are also some important similarities between expectations and meta-stereotypes. The following assumption about expectations could also apply to meta-stereotypes: "Often, early expectations will guide interpretations of later behavior... an individual who treats others in line with his or her expectations for them may play a role in determining the actual behavior of those being perceived" (Stukas & Snyder, 2002, p. 31).

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