"MY DATE CAN CALL ME SWEET, BUT MY COLLEAGUE CAN'T" META-STEREOTYPIC BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS AS A FUNCTION OF CONTEXT AND LIKING OF THE OUTGROUP

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In two experiments we examined the influence of meta-stereotypes (beliefs regarding stereotypes that the outgroup has about one's ingroup) in different contexts. In Study 1, we demonstrated that women have the same meta-stereotype about men in dating and work contexts, but experience the meta-stereotype as more positive when dating men, rather than when working together with men. In Study 2, we showed that women intended to behave meta-stereotypically when they liked the man they were going to meet and when the meta-stereotype was experienced as positive (i.e., when women were on a date, rather than at work). Meta-stereotyping mediated this effect, such that liking led to more meta-stereotyping, which in the date context, but not in the work context, increased meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions. Together, these findings show that the valence of a meta-stereotype varies across contexts, which elicits different behavioral intentions as a function of liking of the outgroup.

Think about an instance where you tried to imagine what a member of another group thought about you. You may come up with a job interview, a date, or maybe the first time you met your partner's parents. Although you might imagine what other people think about your personal characteristics, you could also expect them to see you in terms of your group membership. You might expect others to see you as a rock lover, a Muslim, a psychologist, or a woman. People frequently have expectations about how they are perceived by others. Quite often these expectations will be based on the social category or group one belongs to.

The expectations people have about how members of other groups view their group are often referred to as *meta-stereotypes* (Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Many studies have shown that activation of stereotypes can influence people's

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behavior (Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Traditionally, these studies have focused on the stereotypes people have about groups. Recently, however, there is an increasing interest in research with respect to how group members think they are stereotyped by members of the other group (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Vorauer et al., 1998; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000). Studies have shown that people are particularly likely to activate meta-stereotypes when anticipating an evaluation by members of another group (Gordijn, 2010; Vorauer et al., 1998), when the other group is a high-power group, or when people take the perspective of the outgroup (Lammers, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008). As people are more willing to take the perspective of likable rather than dislikable others (Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000), it is particularly likely that meta-stereotypes play a role when people like the other group.

Despite increasing knowledge on when people meta-stereotype, it remains largely unclear how these meta-stereotypes are perceived and how this perception influences behavior. In the current research, we propose that the perceived valence of the meta-stereotype differs between contexts and therefore has different consequences for the behavior of the person who feels stereotyped. More specifically, we aim to show that liking increases meta-stereotyping, but that only contexts in which a meta-stereotype is positive will stimulate people to behave in line with the activated meta-stereotype.

META-STEREOTYPIC BEHAVIOR

Previous research found some evidence that people can behave in line with stereotypes about their group. For example, Zanna and Pack (1975) showed that women adjusted their behavior to the stereotypes men hold about them when anticipating an interaction with a desirable man. However, this study did not examine metastereotypes: Rather than examining female perceptions of the stereotypes men had about women, women were told what desirable men liked about women. After this, they measured whether women behaved in line with men's preferences about female behavior.

Some studies show that meta-stereotypes can also influence behavior (Klein & Azzi, 2001; Kamans, Gordijn, Oldenhuis, & Otten, 2009; Oldenhuis, 2007). Klein and Azzi (2001) showed that Belgian participants confirmed more positive traits and disconfirmed more negative traits belonging to the meta-stereotype when addressing a French outgroup. However, when addressing an ingroup audience no such effect was found. Similarly, Dutch participants who where positively prejudiced against U.S. citizens reacted more tolerantly when this positive Dutch meta-stereotype with regard to U.S. citizens was activated (Oldenhuis, 2007).

Although people usually want to behave positively towards the outgroup, there are instances in which positive behavior is less likely to occur. For instance, if two groups are in conflict, one may not want to behave positively towards the outgroup, or even aspire to being viewed negatively (Klein & Azzi, 2001). Accordingly, people who feel negative about the outgroup can behave in line with negative meta-stereotypes (Kamans et al., 2009; Oldenhuis, 2007; Spears, Gordijn, Dijksterhuis, & Stapel, 2004). This suggests that people will not assimilate to positive meta-stereotypes when they dislike the outgroup.

META-STEREOTYPE ASSIMILATION AS A FUNCTION OF CONTEXT

Klein and Azzi (2001) suggested that stereotypic behavior can be used strategically to convince other groups of the validity of a specific ingroup representation. The social context triggers a specific representation of the ingroup, but ingroup members only express the specific elements of this representation which fulfill their motivation in the particular context. Thus, acting in line with meta-stereotypes can serve motivations to behave positively, but only when these meta-stereotypes are perceived as positive in the given situation. Consequently, in order to predict whether behavior is influenced by meta-stereotypes, one needs to know the valence of these meta-stereotypes.

It has been argued that (meta-)stereotypes have an evaluative connotation (Brigham, 1971; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Tajfel, 1981), which is shared by members of a group (Haslam, 1997). It seems likely, however, that different contexts elicit different evaluations of the same traits and therefore bring about different behavioral reactions. For instance, the stereotype musically talented often associated with Afro-Americans, may be positive for a music teacher, but irrelevant for a social psychologist. Similarly, the stereotypic trait sweet, that has often been attributed to women, may be positive on a date, but can be perceived as a burden when chairing a heavy discussion at work. Therefore, we suggest that the valence of metastereotypes is context-specific. In the current research, we propose that people will only act in line with the meta-stereotypes which are perceived to be positive in the specific context. However, we believe this will only occur when the outgroup is likable, because we expect more meta-stereotyping in that case.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In the present research we examined the influence of context and liking on metastereotypic behavioral intentions. We hypothesized that people are most likely to behave in line with a meta-stereotype when they present themselves to a likable outgroup member, and when the meta-stereotype is perceived as positive in the given context. We examined this hypothesis in a situation in which women expected to be evaluated by a man. This is a situation in which meta-stereotypes could be relevant. The context in which female participants expected evaluation by a man was either a date context or a work context. Study 1 tested whether women have the same meta-stereotypes (i.e., sensitive, caring, and sweet) in both situations, but experience the female meta-stereotype more positively on a date than at work.

Study 2 examined whether women assimilate more to the meta-stereotypes (i.e., behave more sensitive, caring, and sweet) when expecting to meet a likable outgroup member. Rather than examining the influence of prejudice towards all men, we manipulated liking of a specific man. We expected that women who anticipated meeting a likable man would meta-stereotype more than those who anticipated meeting a dislikable man. However, this meta-stereotyping would only result in meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions if women believed the meta-stereotype was positive, that is, in a date context.

STUDY 1

METHOD

Participants and Design. Sixty females who were undergraduates, or had recently finished their Bachelor degree participated in this study. They were randomly assigned to the conditions of a study in which context (dating context vs. work context) was manipulated.

Materials and Procedure. Participants filled out 2 questionnaires. The first questionnaire assessed whether females believe that men see them as sweet, sensitive, and caring. Participants were asked whether they thought most men in dating contexts (date condition) or work contexts (work condition) would think a specific trait is mainly a characteristic of men (1) or women (5). The valence of the different meta-stereotypes in a dating vs. a work context was assessed with a second questionnaire, in which participants rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very negative, 5 = very positive) how they would experience it, when their male date (dating condition) or their male colleague (work condition) would think women in general are, for instance, *sweet*. Both questions were asked for the three meta-stereotypes (sweet, sensitive, and caring) and 44 filler items.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Meta-Stereotypes. T-tests were conducted in order to examine whether the traits significantly differed from the midpoint of the scale (3); that is, whether women expected men to consider these traits to be particularly characteristic for either men or women. As expected, in both contexts sweet, caring, and sensitive were female meta-stereotypes (all ts > 7.8, all ps < .001). As expected, an ANOVA revealed that the traits did not differ as a function of context in how meta-stereotypical they were perceived, as shown in Table 1.

Meta-Stereotype Valence. Meta-stereotype valence was assessed by t-tests examining whether the traits significantly differed from the neutral midpoint of the scale (3). As expected, in the date context, female participants experienced the meta-stereotypes as positive; sweet, caring, and sensitive, all ts > 8.00, all ps < .001. In the work context, two out of three meta-stereotypes were also perceived as positive: sweet, t (30) = 5.61, p < .001, caring, t (30) = 10.51, p < .001, and sensitive, t (30) = 1.55, ts. However, as expected an ANOVA revealed that all three meta-stereotypes were seen as more positive in the dating context than in the work context (see Table 1).

Together these results showed that women expect men to see them as sweet, caring, and sensitive in both work and dating contexts. Furthermore, women evaluated the meta-stereotypes significantly more positively when dating men rather than when working together with men.

STUDY 2

Study 2 examined if women meta-stereotype more when they like a man who evaluates them, but whether meta-stereotyping only translates into meta-stereotype

4.58 (.50)

3.94(.93)

 $4.03_{b}(.55)$

3.26(.93)

(SDs in brackets)					
Trait	Date (n = 29)	Work (n = 31)			
Meta-Stereotypicality					
Sweet	4.17 _a (.81)	4.29 _a (.53)			
Caring	4.24,(.64)	4.16,(.52)			

4.38 (.72)

4.45 (.57)

4.34, (.61)

3.86, (.58)

TABLE 1. Mean Trait Meta-Stereotypicality and Valence Ratings in Date and Work Contexts in Study 1 (SDs in brackets)

Note. Means in each row with different subscripts differ significantly at p < .05, by ANOVA testing.

assimilation when the meta-stereotypes are experienced as positive (i.e., when in a dating rather than work context). Thus, we expected meta-stereotyping to mediate the influence of liking on meta-stereotype assimilation in a date context, but not in a work context.

METHOD

Sensitive

Caring

Sensitive

Valence Sweet

Participants and Design. One hundred and sixty-eight female undergraduates (M = 19.84, SD = 3.11) who participated for partial course credit, were randomly assigned to one of four conditions of a study in which context (dating context vs. work context) and liking of the target (liking vs. disliking) were manipulated.

Procedure. After signing informed consent forms, participants were seated behind personal computers in individual cubicles. The research took about 25 minutes to complete and all further information and questionnaires were given via the computer. Liking and context were manipulated by telling participants that a man would choose one out of three female participants for a date or to work with. In all 4 conditions, the man participants were going to meet was described by both his colleague and his friend. In the liking conditions, the descriptions by both the colleague and the friend were positive, whereas in the disliking conditions both descriptions were negative. This manipulation was tested in a pilot study.

Dependent Measures. A measure for meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions was designed (Cronbach's $\alpha = .53^2$) in which each of the three meta-stereotypic traits (sensitive, sweet, and caring) was described in a specific situation, which was tested in a pilot study.³ An example of a scenario concerning the meta-stereotype

^{1.} In the liking condition, the colleague reported "during meetings [\dots] often introduces creative ideas and in the coffee breaks he is a good conversation partner", and his friend: "It is always nice to go out with [\dots], he has a good sense of humor and is spontaneous". In the disliking condition, the colleague stated "during meetings [\dots] introduces few creative ideas and during coffee breaks it can be hard to maintain a conversation", whereas his friend said "sometimes when [\dots] and I go out, it annoys me that he doesn't have a good sense of humor and doesn't talk to anyone."

^{2.} Even though Cronbach's alpha is quite low, we combined the traits into one scale because (1) both in Study 1 and in the profile measure Cronbach's alpha for this scale was acceptable (.64 and .68, respectively), and (2) the three traits show similar results, and combining them will therefore not conceal important information.

caring: "Your neighbor broke her leg and will not be able to walk for two weeks. She is reluctant to admit she needs help, how likely is it that you will drop by to help her?" Moreover, eight items that measured behavioral intentions implying nonmeta-stereotypical positive traits (e.g., decisive, curious, and relaxed behavior) were included. These were not expected to measure a single construct, hence scores on these items were analyzed by multivariate testing. Participants indicated the likelihood (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely) that they would act in the proposed manner with respect to each of the situations. Participants were blind to whether the man they were about to meet would see their answers.

Subsequently, participants described themselves in a profile to the man they were going to meet using continuous scales (1 = I am completely not [trait], 100 = I am completely [trait]) on which they pointed out to what extent the metastereotypic traits sensitive, sweet, and caring (Cronbach's α = .68) and fourteen nonmeta-stereotypic traits (e.g., motivated, active, and creative) described them.

Next, in order to measure meta-stereotyping, participants indicated on 5-point Likert-scales whether they thought that men think that sweet, sensitive, caring, and 17 filler traits are mainly a characteristic of men (1) or women (5). In addition, to measure ingroup-stereotyping participants indicated on 5-point Likert-scales whether they thought sweet, caring, and sensitive, as well as 17 filler traits, especially characterized men (1) or women (5).

Afterwards, to *check* the *liking manipulation* participants rated to what extent they liked the man they were about to meet (1 = strongly disliked, 7 = strongly liked). Then, participants were asked what they thought the research was about. Finally, participants were fully debriefed.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check. A 2 (liking) X 2 (context) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the measure of *liking*, only showed the intended effect of liking, F(1, 164) = 134.91, p < .001, $\eta^2 = .45$ (Mliking = 4.43, SD = .90; Mdisliking = 2.52, SD = 1.22). Other effects were not significant, (F's < 2.02).

Meta-Stereotyping. Replicating Study 1, an ANOVA showed no significant difference in meta-stereotyping between contexts, F(1, 169) = 3.31, $ns.^4$ However, as predicted, a main effect of liking was found, F(1, 169) = 5.94, p = .02, $\eta^2 = .04$, showing that women who expected to meet a likable man meta-stereotyped more (M = 4.20, SD = .51) than women expecting to meet a dislikable man (M = 3.97, SD = .72). No context by liking interaction effect on meta-stereotyping was found (F < 1).

- 3. Twenty participants indicated to what extent the behavior in each of 16 scenarios reflected sweet, sensitive, or caring behavior on three 5-point-scales ranging from 1 (insensitive/not sweet/not caring) to 5 (sensitive/sweet/caring). Scenarios were designed to display either sweet, caring, or sensitive behavior and each trait was displayed in 4 scenarios (there were 4 filler items). The three scenarios that were perceived most typical for the meta-stereotypes were selected as the measure of behavioral intentions in study 2. The chosen scenarios were all perceived significantly more typical for the trait they were intended to reflect than for both other traits, and their mean typicality scores on the intended traits were all higher than 4.57.
- 4. In a regression of meta-stereotypes and ingroup-stereotypes on meta-stereotypic behavior in the scenarios, we found, as expected, that meta-stereotypes predicted behavior (b = .45, p < .001, R2 = .10), whereas ingroup-stereotypes failed to predict behavior (b = .23, p = ns). The results supported the hypothesis that meta-stereotyping, rather than ingroup-stereotyping accounted for the effects on stereotypic behavior.

TABLE 2. Means for Meta-Stereotypic Behavioral Intentions in Scenarios and Profiles for Each Context as a Function of Liking for a Specific Outgroup Member in Study 2 (SDs in brackets)

	Da	Date		Work	
Measure	Liking	Disliking	Liking	Disliking	
Scenarios	5.41 _a (.66)	5.08 _b (.59)	5.13 _b (.66)	5.22 _b (.54)	
Profiles	80.73 (10.87)	74.83 _b (10.77)	76.04 _b (1.67)	76.93 _b (1.62)	

Note. Means in each row with different subscripts differ significantly at p < .05 in ANOVA testing.

Meta-Stereotypic Behavioral Intentions. A 2 (liking) X 2 (context) ANOVA with respect to meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions revealed neither a significant main effect of context, F < 1, nor a significant main effect of liking, F(1, 164) = 1.53, ns. However, the expected interaction between context and liking on positive female meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions was found, F(1, 164) = 5.02, p = .03, $\eta^2 = .03$ (see Table 2). Simple main effects analyses with respect to the dating context showed that participants displayed more positive female meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions when anticipating an interaction with a likable man, rather than a dislikable man, F(1, 164) = 6.05, p = .02. However, no such effect was found in the work context, F < 1.

An ANOVA on the profile measures of meta-stereotypes yielded similar results. No significant main effects of liking, F(1, 164) = 2.34, ns, and context, F < 1, were found. However, the expected interaction of context and liking was obtained, F(1, 164) = 4.27, p = .04, $\eta^2 = .03$ (see Table 2). Simple main effects analyses showed that participants in the date condition described themselves more in line with the meta-stereotypes when anticipating an interaction with a likable man than with a dislikable man, F(1, 164) = 6.47, p = .01, whereas in the work context no effect of liking was found, F < 1.

Indirect Effects. We used the recommendations of Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) for moderated mediation to estimate the conditional indirect effects of liking through meta-stereotyping on meta-stereotype assimilation, for the different conditions of context. All variables were standardized prior to the analysis. The scores on the scenarios and profiles where combined into one meta-stereotype assimilation measure (r = .32, p < .001). We expected that liking directly affects metastereotyping, and that the effect of meta-stereotyping on assimilation is moderated by context (see Figure 1). First, as expected, regression analysis showed that liking significantly influenced meta-stereotyping, b = .37, p = .02. Secondly, a regression analysis was performed with meta-stereotype assimilation as a dependent variable and with the predictors liking of the target (disliking = 0, liking = 1), context (date = 0, work = 1), liking by context interaction, meta-stereotyping and the metastereotyping by context interaction. The meta-stereotyping by context interaction was significant, b = -.34, p < .01. Given the interaction, it makes sense to probe the indirect effect by estimating conditional indirect effects in the different conditions of context. In the date context, the conditional indirect effect was estimated at b =.19, Sobel z = 2.22, p = .03, whereas in the work context no conditional indirect effect was found, b = .06, Sobel z = 1.48, ns. Thus, liking increases meta-stereotyping, which in a date context, but not in the work context, is translated into meta-stereotype assimilation.

According our theorizing, there should not be reverse mediation, in which metastereotype assimilation mediates the relation between liking and meta-stereotyping

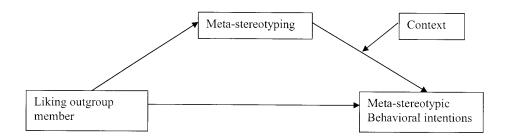


FIGURE 1. The mediating role of meta-stereotyping on the effect of liking of the outgroup member on meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions, for the different conditions of context, Study 2.

differently for different contexts. We tested such reverse mediation using the method of Preacher et al. (2007). In step 2, a regression analysis was performed with metastereotyping as a dependent variable and with the predictors liking of the target (disliking = 0, liking = 1), context (date = 0, work = 1), liking by context interaction, meta-stereotype assimilation and the meta-stereotype assimilation by context interaction. The meta-stereotype assimilation by context interaction was not significant, b = -.21, p = .25. Thus reverse mediation is not found, which supports our hypothesis that liking increases meta-stereotyping, which in turn, depending on context, influences meta-stereotype assimilation.

Non-Meta-Stereotypic Behavioral Intentions. A 2 (liking) X 2 (context) MANOVA with respect to nonmeta-stereotypic behavioral intentions did not reveal any significant effects (all F's < 1.42). Similarly, a MANOVA on the nonmeta-stereotypical profile ratings revealed no significant effects (all F's < 1.28). Thus, liking does not simply increase assimilation to all positive traits, it only increases assimilation to positive meta-stereotypic traits as a function of the context.

DISCUSSION

In Study 2, we showed that women assimilate more to meta-stereotypes, thus intended to behave more sweet, sensitive, and caring, when they liked the man who was going to evaluate them, but only when these meta-stereotypes were experienced as positive (that is, when women were on a date, rather than at work). This result occurs when women were aware that a man would observe their behavior (when they described themselves in a profile), and subsists when no outgroup observance was expected (i.e., in the scenarios). The context-dependent change in behavioral intentions and profile ratings only occurred for female meta-stereotypic behavior, but not for behavior reflecting traits that were not part of the meta-stereotype (e.g., curious). As a process behind this meta-stereotype assimilation in behavior and profiling, we showed that in both contexts women meta-stereotyped more when anticipating an evaluation by a likable man, but only assimilated to these meta-stereotypes when they were in a dating context, in which the meta-stereotypes were perceived as more positive than in a work context.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Two experiments revealed that the extent to which women assimilate to metastereotypes is predicted by the valence of the meta-stereotype in a specific context and the likability of a specific outgroup member. This research extends previous research by Spears et al. (2004), Kamans et al. (2009), and Oldenhuis (2007), by showing that different contexts elicit different evaluations of meta-stereotypes. More specifically, women experience meta-stereotypes like sweet, caring, and sensitive more positively on a date than at work. This difference in evaluation of meta-stereotypes has important implications for how people react to the meta-stereotype. Therefore, the behavioral intentions instigated by meta-stereotyping vary over contexts.

Previous research demonstrated that motivation to take the perspective of the other group increases meta-stereotype activation. More specifically, people who expect to be evaluated (Gordijn, 2010; Vorauer et al., 1998), or are interacting with an high-power outgroup (Lammers et al., 2008) activate more meta-stereotypes than people in high-power groups or those who have no evaluation expectations. We hypothesized that, as people are more willing to take the perspective of likable others (Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000), liking would also predict meta-stereotyping. Our results confirmed this hypothesis, as participants meta-stereotyped more when they expected to meet a likable outgroup member, rather than a dislikable outgroup member. However, it may not be concluded that those who meta-stereotype more also intend to behave more meta-stereotypically. We showed that only in contexts where meta-stereotypes have a positive connotation, anticipating an interaction with a likable outgroup member increases meta-stereotypic behavioral intentions. Thus, although liking increases meta-stereotyping, context determines whether this meta-stereotyping will actually be translated into action.

Although Vorauer et al. (1998) suggest that outgroup observance increases metastereotype activation, they do not specify whether the behavior instigated by these meta-stereotypes also needs to be observed by the outgroup in order to be performed. In the present study we measured assimilation to meta-stereotypes on two levels. One in which the participants were explicitly aware of outgroup evaluation. That is, participants completed a profile about themselves to be sent to the outgroup member in order for him to decide on whether or not to date or work with the participant. In the second measure it was unclear whether behavioral intentions of the participant would be observed by the outgroup member. Both measures showed similar patterns regarding meta-stereotype assimilation, suggesting that outgroup observance may not be necessary for meta-stereotype assimilation to occur.

CONCLUSION

Expectations people have about how their group is perceived by likable others, guide behavior, such that they act in line with expectations when these are perceived as positive. However, because meta-stereotype valence can differ over contexts, behavioral reactions to meta-stereotypes also differ. We showed that people meta-stereotype more when anticipating an interaction with a likable outgroup member, but only intend to behave in line with this meta-stereotype when it is experienced as positive in the specific context.

The downside of confirming a stereotype in one context is that people might also expect you to act in that way in situations in which you do not think the metastereotype is positive. In other words, women's sweet behavior during dates may lead their male colleagues to expect similar behavior in work contexts, even when women do not like this. On the other hand, assimilation to positive meta-stereotypes is suggested to enhance people's social identities (Klein & Azzi, 2001), and enhance positive relations between groups (Oldenhuis, 2007). Therefore, taking into account the context in which meta-stereotyping takes place could be fruitful in order to improve intergroup relations.

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