

# Resolution of Meta-Accuracy: Should People Trust Their Beliefs About How Others See Them?

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Erika N. Carlson<sup>1</sup> and R. Michael Furr<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

Do people know when they can trust their metaperceptions (i.e., their beliefs about how they are seen)? The current study is the first to examine whether people can recognize which of their metaperceptions are more or less accurate, and it examines the source of this “resolution.” In two samples, we assessed meta-accuracy, or the degree to which people’s beliefs about the impressions they made corresponded to the actual impressions they made, for several close acquaintances (e.g., family, friends). We also assessed people’s confidence in the accuracy of their metaperceptions for each acquaintance. Results showed that people recognized when they were more or less “meta-accurate,” particularly in terms of the ways in which they were perceived as distinctive and unique individuals. This ability was partially driven by relationship quality. In sum, people seem to know when to trust their metaperceptions about individuals from their everyday lives.

## Keywords

metacognition, interpersonal perception, personality, self-knowledge

Trust your hunches. They’re usually based on facts filed away just below the conscious level.

Joyce Brothers

When asked to describe their beliefs about the way others see them, people’s metaperceptions do correspond somewhat to the actual impressions they make (Carlson & Kenny, 2012). However, meta-accuracy is far from perfect (Kenny & DePaulo, 1993). Such findings raise the question: Do people know when to trust their metaperceptions? The current article addresses this important question through a novel and ecologically compelling design. Specifically, we examine whether people’s levels of confidence in their metaperceptions corresponds to their actual levels of meta-accuracy for individuals from their everyday lives, and we explore potential factors that might drive this ability.

This issue is important because it reflects a complex and socially adaptive skill that goes well beyond the “simple” ability to demonstrate insight into the way one is seen by others. Clearly, accurate metaperceptions are important and socially useful (Anderson, Ames, & Gosling, 2008; Carlson & Furr, 2009; Carlson, Vazire, & Furr, 2011; Oltmanns, Gleason, Klonsky, & Turkheimer, 2005; Srivastava & Beer, 2005). However, the ability to recognize when one’s metaperceptions are more or less accurate is perhaps an even more important, though subtle and difficult, skill. In many cases, the potential benefits of having an accurate metaperception might be limited if people fail to recognize when a metaperception is likely to be right or wrong. For instance, people are often asked to

nominate an acquaintance for a letter of recommendation, and they will make the best decision about which person to ask if they know for which individuals their metaperceptions are more or less accurate.

Considering the inter- and intrapersonal importance of this issue, surprisingly little is known about the relationship between confidence and meta-accuracy. Instead, most research has focused on the link between confidence and the accuracy of perceptions about others’ personalities (Ames & Kammrath, 2004; Ames, Kammrath, Suppes, & Bolger, 2010; Biesanz et al., 2011; Patterson, Foster, & Bellmer, 2001; Realo et al., 2003). For example, in an examination of first impressions, Ames and colleagues found some evidence that people know when their snap judgments about others’ personalities are mere guesses. Yet, when it comes to judging close acquaintances’ characteristics, there is often a weak link between confidence and accuracy (e.g., DePaulo, Charlton, Cooper, Lindsay, & Muhlenbruck, 1997; Swann & Gill, 1997). This is because

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, USA

## Corresponding Author:

Erika N. Carlson, Department of Psychology, Washington University, Campus Box 1125, St. Louis, MO 63130, USA.

Email: erikancarlson@go.wustl.edu

people are often very confident in their accuracy, but their actual level of accuracy is not always as strong (Gill, Swann, & Silvera, 1998). Thus, people seem to know when they can trust their perceptions about new acquaintances' personalities but not close others' personalities.

Going beyond the examination of simple personality judgments, is there reason to believe that people know when to trust their metaperceptions? To our knowledge, only one study has examined the relationship between confidence in one's metaperceptions and meta-accuracy (Carlson, Furr, & Vazire, 2010). In two samples, Carlson and colleagues evaluated the link between participants' confidence and meta-accuracy for one, first impression interaction partner. For example, after meeting Joe, Molly guessed how Joe perceived her on a profile of traits and then indicated how confident she was in this metaperception profile. Similarly, after meeting David, Alice guessed how David perceived her (using the same profile of traits) and indicated her confidence in this metaperception. Results revealed that people who were more confident in their metaperceptions were more accurate than those who were less confident, providing support for a between-person association between confidence and meta-accuracy. That is, if Molly was more confident in her metaperception than was Alice, she was likely to have a more accurate metaperception than did Alice. Drawing from the metacognitive literature, the authors called this between-person association between confidence and meta-accuracy "calibration."

The current research extends the evidence for calibration by examining whether people know when to trust their metaperceptions for close acquaintances as well as whether people can recognize which of their metaperceptions are relatively accurate and which are not. To reveal whether people know when to trust their metaperceptions, we adopt a within-person approach by obtaining multiple measures of confidence and meta-accuracy for each participant (e.g., Biesanz et al., 2011). In the metacognitive literature, this within-person approach is often called *resolution* (e.g., Dunlosky & Metcalf, 2009). "Resolution" of meta-accuracy reflects the extent to which a single individual's confidence ratings across several close others correspond to his or her meta-accuracy for those people. For example, Molly would demonstrate strong resolution if she is more confident in the accuracy of her metaperception for her boyfriend than for her friend and roommate and if her meta-accuracy for her boyfriend is in fact stronger than her meta-accuracy for her friend and roommate.

We examine resolution of meta-accuracy in the context of participants' real relationships with important people from a variety of social contexts (e.g., family, friends, and romantic partner). Similar to Carlson and colleagues (2010), we index meta-accuracy using a profile-based approach. Profile-based meta-accuracy reflects whether people can detect which traits an acquaintance perceives as more or less characteristic of their personality. For example, Molly's profile-based meta-accuracy is strong if she believes that her friend Jane sees her as more kind than tidy and more talkative than anxious, and Jane actually does see her in this way. Thus, we examine resolution by

measuring the within-person relationship between people's level of confidence and their profile-based meta-accuracy across several acquaintances.

We also examine three factors that might affect the relationship between people's level of confidence and their meta-accuracy for acquaintances: social context (i.e., whether the association between confidence and meta-accuracy is stronger or weaker for a particular relationship type), the length of time people have known each acquaintance, and the quality of their relationship with each acquaintance. Although no research has directly addressed these factors in the context of metaperceptions, previous work has examined their role in simple personality judgments. For example, confidence about personality judgments seems to be largely driven by the quantity (e.g., length of acquaintanceship) and quality (e.g., relationship involvement) of information one has about that person (Gill et al., 1998). Moreover, length of acquaintanceship and relationship closeness also increases the accuracy of personality judgments (Funder, 1995; Funder, & Colvin, 1988; Letzring, Wells, & Funder, 2006).

There is some evidence that meta-accuracy is also positively associated with social context as well as quantity and quality of information. With respect to context, one study found that meta-accuracy of the Big Five traits is stronger among family members than among friends and coworkers (Malloy, Albright, Kenny, Agatstein, & Winquist, 1997). With respect to information quantity, a recent review of meta-accuracy research found that meta-accuracy of the Big Five traits for acquaintances was generally stronger than meta-accuracy for new acquaintances (Carlson & Kenny, 2012). Finally, with respect to quality, meta-accuracy in a first impression appears to be stronger when partners like one another (Ohtsubo, Takezawa, & Fukuno, 2009). Given that length of acquaintanceship and perceptions of relationship quality (i.e., liking) seem to be positively associated with confidence for simple personality judgments about others as well as with meta-accuracy, it is possible that people are also more confident in metaperceptions for individuals they have known longer, for individuals they feel closer to, or for individuals from social contexts that facilitate both quantity and quality (e.g., family). Thus, we explore the extent to which meta-accuracy, confidence in one's meta-accuracy, and resolution for meta-accuracy are driven by these three factors.

In sum, the current research will reveal whether people can trust their metaperceptions for close others in their daily lives. In two samples, we provide an ecologically valid test of whether people have a sense of when their beliefs about the impressions they make with specific close others are likely to be accurate, and we examine potential factors that might influence this ability.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were undergraduates at a private, Midwestern university. Sample 1 ( $N = 220$ ; 37% males;  $M_{age} = 19.55$  years)

received course credit for participation. Sample 2 ( $N = 294$ ; 40% males;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.77$  years) received course credit or \$20.<sup>1</sup> Sample 1 participants nominated up to three close others ( $N = 503$ , 73% response rate), and Sample 2 participants nominated up to six close others, specifically a parent, two hometown friends, two college friends, and a romantic partner ( $N = 956$ , 54% response rate). Informants were not compensated for their participation (Vazire, 2006).

## Measures

**Metaperceptions and actual perceptions.** Participants described how they believed each informant perceived their personality (i.e., metaperceptions), and informants described their actual impressions of participants using items from the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI; John & Srivastava, 1999). These responses were used to create indices of meta-accuracy for each participant–informant pair.

**Confidence.** Sample 1 participants rated how confident they were in their metaperceptions for each informant using two items on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) scale: *How confident are you in your estimation of how Person X sees your personality* and *How accurate was your estimation of how Person X sees your personality* ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = .90$ ;  $\alpha = .78$ ). Sample 2 participants rated their confidence for each informant using a 1–100% scale: *How confident are you in your estimate of how each person views your personality?* ( $M = 73.08$ ,  $SD = 20.35$ ).

**Length of Acquaintanceship.** Participants reported how many years they had known each informant (Sample<sub>1</sub>:  $M = 8.28$ ,  $SD = 8.00$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>:  $M = 7.77$ ,  $SD = 7.29$ ).

**Relationship Quality.** Sample 2 participants described their relationship quality with each informant using five items that included perceptions of relationship closeness, relationship quality, importance of the relationship, and how well participants knew and liked the informant. Items were rated on a 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) scale ( $M = 6.08$ ,  $SD = .80$ ;  $\alpha = .88$ ).

## Procedures

Targets provided ratings (i.e., metaperceptions and confidence) and an e-mail address for each informant. Potential informants received an e-mail explaining that the participant nominated them as someone who could describe the participant's personality. The e-mail requested that informants describe the participant's personality using an online personality measure (i.e., actual impressions).<sup>2</sup>

## Results

### Meta-Accuracy

Using the 44-item metaperception and actual impression profiles from the BFI personality ratings, we computed two profile-based meta-accuracy scores for each participant–

informant pair (e.g., Carlson et al., 2010; Furr, 2008, 2010). Overall meta-accuracy (OMA) was the Pearson correlation between a metaperception and actual impression profile, with higher values reflecting greater meta-accuracy. Distinctive meta-accuracy (DMA) was the Pearson correlation between a metaperception and actual impression profile once the mean metaperception profile and mean actual impression profile for a given informant (e.g., a parent) across the entire sample have been removed. DMA controls for normativeness, or potentially inflated accuracy arising from agreement about what the typical person is like and reflects the degree to which people can detect the impression they make, as unique from the impression the typical person makes. Meta-accuracy scores were transformed using Fisher's  $r$ -to- $z$  formula for analyses and transformed back into correlations for presentation.

On average, participants exhibited robust meta-accuracy. An unconditional multilevel model revealed that the typical person's OMA scores were strong, meaning people were aware of the ways in which close acquaintances perceived their pattern of traits (Sample<sub>1</sub>  $\gamma = .54$ ,  $SD = .15$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $\gamma = .55$ ,  $SD = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The more conservative DMA scores were also strong suggesting that people were aware of how they were seen, as unique from how the typical person is seen (Sample<sub>1</sub>  $\gamma = .36$ ,  $SD = .20$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $\gamma = .34$ ,  $SD = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>3</sup> These results parallel and extend those reported by Carlson, Furr, and Vazire, (2010) by demonstrating significant OMA and DMA for close acquaintances.

### Resolution

Do people know when to trust their beliefs about how they are seen by specific individuals? To examine resolution, we adopted a two-level multilevel model using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) software (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2000):

$$\text{Level 1: } Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{meta-accuracy})_{ij} + e_{ij}$$

$$\text{Level 2: } \beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + r_{0j}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + r_{1j}$$

At Level 1, a participant's confidence ratings for each informant ( $Y_{ij}$ ) were predicted by his or her meta-accuracy scores (i.e., either OMA or DMA) for each informant. Meta-accuracy scores were group-centered (i.e., centered within each participant), reflecting the deviation, if any, from the participant's average meta-accuracy across informants. The intercept from this equation ( $\beta_{0j}$ ) represents the participant's average level of confidence in his or her metaperceptions, across all informants. Averaged across all participants, Level 2's  $\gamma_{00}$  parameter reflects the mean confidence in the sample. More crucially, the slope from the within-person equation ( $\beta_{1j}$ ) represents the participant's resolution—the degree to which his or her confidence in meta-accuracy covaries with his or her meta-accuracy across informants. Of primary interest is the mean “resolution” slope across all participants, or  $\gamma_{10}$ , which is estimated at Level 2. The direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the mean slope reflect the degree to which the average target achieves resolution

**Table 1.** Resolution of Meta-Accuracy.

		Predictor(s)						
		Meta-Accuracy (Resolution Effect)			Length of Acquaintance		Relationship Quality	
		$\gamma$	$t$	Estimated $r$	$\gamma$	$t$	$\gamma$	$t$
Overall meta-accuracy								
Model	Sample							
I	1	.45*	2.08	.14	—	—	—	—
	2	6.19*	2.01	.12	—	—	—	—
II	1	.41 <sup>†</sup>	1.71	.12	.003***	5.04	—	—
	2	6.21*	1.95	.12	.039***	5.37	—	—
III	2	3.08	1.31	.08	—	—	14.46***	16.98
IV	2	2.68	1.15	.07	.001	.21	14.91***	16.48
Distinctive meta-accuracy		$\gamma$	$t$	Estimated $r$	$\gamma$	$t$	$\gamma$	$t$
I	1	.67**	3.68	.24	—	—	—	—
	2	8.92**	2.93	.17	—	—	—	—
II	1	.58**	2.59	.17	.003***	4.84	—	—
	2	9.83**	3.14	.19	.04***	5.13	—	—
III	2	4.67*	2.09	.12	—	—	14.33***	16.73
IV	2	5.54*	2.45	.15	.0007	.10	14.68***	16.28

Note. Outcome = Participants' confidence ratings for each informant (measured on a 1–7 scale in Sample<sub>1</sub> and on a 1–100 scale in Sample<sub>2</sub>). Estimated  $r = \sqrt{(t^2/t^2 + df)}$ , see Kashdan and Steger (2006). Estimated  $r$ s for Models II–IV are partialled effects. Sample<sub>1</sub> intercept was fixed for Model II.  $d$ f's ranged from 213 to 219 for Sample<sub>1</sub> and from 256 to 276 for Sample<sub>2</sub>.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

( $\gamma_{\text{resolution effect}}$  in Table 1). A positive slope indicates that when the typical participant is more confident about his or her meta-perception for a particular informant, he or she actually is more meta-accurate about that informant than for other informants.

Across both samples, the typical participant achieved significant resolution. As shown in Table 1 (see Model I), the typical participant's confidence ratings were positively and significantly associated with his or her OMA scores (Sample<sub>1</sub> estimated  $r = .14$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub> estimated  $r = .12$ ). Importantly, analyses reveal the same associations with the more conservative DMA scores (Sample<sub>1</sub> estimated  $r = .24$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub> estimated  $r = .17$ ) across informants.<sup>4</sup> Thus, across both samples and both operationalizations of meta-accuracy, results indicated that people knew which of their metaperceptions were relatively accurate and which were relatively inaccurate.

### Sources of Resolution: Social Context

To what degree was resolution driven by social context (i.e., relationship type)? Sample 2 participants nominated three types of informants: a parent, two hometown friends, two college friends, and a romantic partner. Using these three categories (parent, friends, and romantic partner), we first tested whether the relationship between confidence and meta-accuracy was stronger in one context than in another. Given that some participants nominated informants that were not from these categories (e.g., siblings), we limited analyses to participant–informant pairs that included a parent ( $n = 208$ ), friend ( $n = 635$ ), or romantic partner ( $n = 74$ ). We predicted meta-accuracy (or confidence) from two orthogonal contrasts that compared friends to parents and romantic partners ( $\gamma_{10}$ )

and parents to romantic partners ( $\gamma_{20}$ ). Results revealed no differences among contexts in OMA ( $\gamma_{10} = -.001$ ,  $p = .66$ ;  $\gamma_{20} = -.007$ ,  $p = .06$ ), although OMA for romantic partners was descriptively stronger than the other two contexts ( $M_{\text{parent}} = .55$ ,  $SD = .21$ ;  $M_{\text{friend}} = .55$ ,  $SD = .22$ ;  $M_{\text{romantic partner}} = .61$ ,  $SD = .18$ ). However, DMA did differ across contexts ( $\gamma_{10} = -.006$ ,  $p = .04$ ;  $\gamma_{20} = -.01$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Specifically, DMA for a romantic partner was stronger than DMA for parents and friends ( $M_{\text{parent}} = .33$ ,  $SD = .25$ ;  $M_{\text{friend}} = .34$ ,  $SD = .24$ ;  $M_{\text{romantic partner}} = .41$ ,  $SD = .23$ ). Finally, confidence was stronger among parents and romantic partners than among friends ( $\gamma_{10} = -1.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but confidence for parents and romantic partners did not differ ( $\gamma_{20} = .20$ ,  $p = .15$ ;  $M_{\text{parent}} = 81.20$ ,  $SD = 17.35$ ;  $M_{\text{friend}} = 70.12$ ,  $SD = 20.52$ ;  $M_{\text{romantic partner}} = 79.15$ ,  $SD = 18.01$ ).

Next, we examined whether resolution was higher or lower in specific contexts by creating an interaction term between meta-accuracy scores and the contrast of interest (described above). The interaction term ( $\gamma_{30}$ ) reveals whether the association between confidence and meta-accuracy depended on the context. Overall, resolution did not differ between friends and a parent or romantic partner (OMA $\gamma_{30} = -.57$ ,  $p > .53$ ; DMA $\gamma_{30} = .79$ ,  $p > .39$ ) or between a parent and romantic partner (OMA $\gamma_{30} = .23$ ,  $p > .81$ ; DMA $\gamma_{30} = -1.08$ ,  $p > .28$ ). These results suggest that social context does not drive resolution.

### Sources of Resolution: Length of Acquaintance and Relationship Quality

To examine the degree to which resolution was driven by information quantity and quality, we conducted a series of

analyses, first examining the degree to which meta-accuracy and confidence were linked to quantity and quality, and then examining whether resolution was reduced after including both variables as predictors of confidence. Note that we can examine quantity in both samples, but quality is available only for Sample 2.

To examine the degree to which meta-accuracy was associated with quantity and quality of information, we examined a set of multilevel models in which we predicted OMA (or DMA) scores from either group-centered length of acquaintanceship or relationship quality. Results revealed that the typical person in both samples was not more meta-accurate about informants he or she knew longer (Sample<sub>1</sub>  $OMA\gamma = .0002, p = .20$ , estimated  $r = .09$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $OMA\gamma = -0.0001, p = .42$ , estimated  $r = .05$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $DMA\gamma = -0.0001, p = .50$ , estimated  $r = .04$ ), although there was a relationship between DMA and length of acquaintanceship in Sample 1 ( $\gamma = .0004, p = .03$ , estimated  $r = .15$ ). With respect to relationship quality, the typical person was more meta-accurate about informants he or she felt closer to, but only for DMA ( $OMA\gamma = .02, p = .16$ , estimated  $r = .08$ ;  $DMA\gamma = .03, p = .02$ , estimated  $r = .14$ ). We examined the degree to which confidence was associated with quantity and quality of information using a similar set of multilevel models. Results suggested that the typical person in both samples was more confident in metaperceptions for informants he or she knew longer (Sample<sub>1</sub>  $\gamma = .003, p < .001$ , estimated  $r = .41$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $\gamma = .05, p < .001$ , estimated  $r = .46$ ) and for informants they felt closer to (Sample<sub>2</sub>  $\gamma = 13.49, p < .001$ ; estimated  $r = .78$ ).

After finding some evidence that length of acquaintanceship and relationship quality were associated with both meta-accuracy and confidence, we examined the degree to which resolution itself was driven by these factors. We added length of acquaintanceship and/or relationship quality to our original resolution model described above (i.e., Model I) as group-centered Level 1 predictors of confidence ratings. To the degree that resolution arises because of increased length of acquaintance and/or relationship quality, we should find that resolution (i.e., the slope for meta-accuracy) will decrease in magnitude when one or both of these variables are included in Model I. Table 1 shows that in both samples and for both types of meta-accuracy, resolution was little changed when length of acquaintance was added as a predictor (i.e., resolution was not affected by length of acquaintance; see Model II). However, for both types of meta-accuracy, resolution was reduced when relationship quality was added (i.e., resolution was affected by relationship quality; see Model III). In fact, for OMA, resolution was reduced by approximately 40% and became nonsignificant. Controlling for both time and quality (see Model IV) results were consistent with the effect of relationship quality alone. Thus, resolution seems to be driven partially by relationship quality, but not by length of acquaintance. Finally, we examined Model IV among friends only but found that results were similar to those obtained from the full sample.<sup>5</sup> This finding provides more evidence that social context is not a major factor in achieving resolution.

## Discussion

Should people trust their beliefs about the impressions they make? Our central finding reveals that the typical person knows which individuals he or she is more or less meta-accurate about among a variety of close acquaintances. How were people able to understand when they were more or less meta-accurate? While people were more confident about their metaperceptions for informants they knew longer and for who they were closer to, a direct analysis of these relationship variables revealed that only relationship quality played a major role in achieving resolution.

Although resolution was present for both conceptualizations of meta-accuracy, it was more robust for DMA than for OMA. This suggests that meta-accuracy resolution is strongly connected to the ways in which people are perceived as being distinctive. That is, when gauging the confidence in their metaperceptions, targets are particularly confident if they believe that an informant understands the ways in which they are unique and unlike the average person. As discussed earlier, OMA is affected by *normativeness* (Furr, 2008), which in this context, included “metaperception normativeness,” or the degree to which a target believes that an informant views him or her as being like the typical target and “actual impression normativeness,” or the degree to which an informant views a target as being like the typical target. For a more complete understanding of this issue, we explored the possibility that confidence or relationship quality was associated with either type of normativeness but found nonsignificant associations.<sup>6</sup> This finding, in conjunction with the fact that resolution for OMA and DMA were reduced by about the same amount (i.e., 40 and 35% respectively; Model III), suggests that DMA resolution, but not OMA resolution, remained significant when examining the role of relationship quality because DMA was greater than OMA to begin with.

Taken together, these results have important implications. First, they provide evidence of a potentially important social-cognitive skill—the average person has significant insight into the accuracy of his or her metaperceptions. This finding broadens the field’s knowledge of the types of interpersonal skills and abilities that people tend to possess. Second, the fact that people seem to know when to trust their metaperceptions for close acquaintances has an interesting implication for self-knowledge. Others, especially close others, often know more about aspects of our personality than we know, suggesting that one path to self-knowledge may be to learn more about how others perceive us (Vazire, 2010; Vazire & Carlson, 2010, 2011; Wilson & Dunn, 2004). Our results suggest that people know when they can trust their metaperceptions. Thus, a promising strategy for improving self-knowledge may be to incorporate confidently held metaperceptions into one’s self-perceptions. Third, results provide new insights into the sources of confidence and resolution. Specifically, peoples’ confidence in their metaperceptions seems to be linked to their belief that their acquaintances understand their unique, distinctive attributes. The fact that this confidence turns out to be well-founded underscores the nature and sophistication of

resolution. Finally, our results suggest that relationship quality partly accounts for resolution. That is, people used their subjective sense of closeness with others in valid ways when identifying who they were more or less meta-accurate about. One interesting avenue for future study is to examine the possibility that relationship quality is a consequence of being and feeling understood.

## Future Directions

Our results contribute to the growing literature regarding people's awareness of their interpersonal perception abilities, and they reveal important opportunities for future research. First, our assessment of resolution focused on close acquaintances. Future research might investigate resolution for well-known but less close, acquaintances (e.g., coworkers) or less well-liked acquaintances (e.g., Leising, Erbs, & Fritz, 2010). Second, we examined resolution among the Big Five traits, but future work might explore resolution for other characteristics such as likeability, intelligence, or pathological traits (e.g., narcissism). In fact, an important but unanswered question is whether people know when they can trust their metaperceptions for specific traits. Carlson and Furr (2009) found that people can detect the unique impression they make on close others for specific traits (e.g., which informant sees them as more or less agreeable), but an unanswered question is whether people know when their metaperceptions for specific traits are accurate. Third, we focused on meta-accuracy for specific participant–informant pairs; however, meta-accuracy can also be indexed as the degree to which people know their reputation, or how others generally see them (i.e., generalized meta-accuracy; Carlson & Kenny, 2012; Kenny & DePaulo, 1993). Thus, future work might investigate whether people know when their beliefs about their reputation for specific traits are accurate. Interestingly, we were able to examine a profile-based form of generalized meta-accuracy as well as whether people's average confidence level was associated with their meta-accuracy.<sup>7</sup> Our results suggested that people's beliefs about which traits others generally perceived as higher or lower were fairly accurate (generalized meta-accuracy:  $\gamma_{10} = .62, p < .001$ ), and individuals who were more confident in their generalized meta-accuracy were indeed more meta-accurate (estimated  $r = .23, p < .01$ ). Future work might examine whether these findings replicate for specific traits as well.

## Conclusion

In sum, the current research provided an ecologically valid test of people's ability to guess the impressions they make and whether they realize their level of accuracy. We found that people seem to know when they can trust their metaperceptions about individuals from their everyday life. These results, in conjunction with findings that people know whether their first impression metaperceptions are accurate (Carlson et al., 2010), suggest that people can "trust their hunches" about how likely they are to be right when trying to understand how others see them.

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## Notes

1. Sample<sub>1</sub> data are reported in Carlson et al. (2010), Carlson, Vazire, and Oltmanns (2011).
2. Participants also engaged in unrelated study activities.
3. Between-person means were similar for OMA (Sample<sub>1</sub>  $M = .55, SD = .21$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $M = .56, SD = .22$ ) and DMA (Sample<sub>1</sub>  $M = .37, SD = .24$ ; Sample<sub>2</sub>  $M = .34, SD = .24$ ).
4. Results were similar when meta-accuracy was computed as the 5-item profile correlation of Big Five scale scores. Results were also similar when we examined resolution for "meta-insight," a form of meta-accuracy that statistically controls for self-perceptions. Conceptually, meta-insight reflects whether people know how others see them as unique from how they see themselves (Carlson et al., 2011). Similar to Carlson et al., we found that participants achieved meta-insight for close others; however, meta-insight here was indexed as profile meta-accuracy scores for participant–informant pairs after controlling for each participant's self-perception profile. Using this extremely conservative index of meta-insight, we also found that participants demonstrated "meta-insight" resolution for DMA: (OMA  $\gamma = 3.66, p = .14$ ; DMA  $\gamma = 4.55, p = .07$ ).
5. We ran the full model (Model IV) after removing all "non-friends" from Sample<sub>2</sub>. Similar to results from the full sample, the typical participant's confidence ratings were still positively associated with his or her DMA scores ( $\gamma = 5.64, p = .06$ ; approximate  $r = .12$ ) among friends, although resolution for OMA ( $\gamma = 1.85, p = .52$ ; approximate  $r = .04$ ) was not significant.
6. We created metaperception and actual impression normativeness scores by computing profile correlations between each raw profile and the respective mean profile (average across participants or informants). We then predicted participants' confidence ratings (or perceptions of quality) from either metaperception normativeness or actual impression normativeness scores.
7. We computed each individual's average metaperception and average actual impression profile from the six 44-item profiles (one for each informant) in Sample<sub>2</sub>. We entered these average scores in a multilevel model where the Level 1 predictor was the mean actual impression items and the outcome was the mean metaperception items. The Level 2 slope of this model, or  $\gamma_{10}$ , reflects generalized profile meta-accuracy, or the extent to which the typical individual knew which traits his or her informants generally perceived as higher or lower. We then examined whether confidence (i.e., mean confidence rating across informants) was associated with the generalized meta-accuracy index.

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### **Author Biographies**

**Erika N. Carlson** is a graduate student in the Psychology Department at Washington University in St. Louis.

**R. Michael Furr** is a professor in the Psychology Department at Wake Forest University.