Personality and Individual Differences 122 (2018) 29–37

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

What's (not) underpinning ambivalent sexism?: Revisiting the roles of ideology, religiosity, personality, demographics, and men's facial hair in explaining hostile and benevolent sexism

Kahl Hellmer[a,*], Johanna T. Stenson[a], Kirsti M. Jylhä[a,b]

[a] Department of Psychology, Uppsala University, Box 1225, 751 42 Uppsala, Sweden
[b] School of Social Sciences, Södertörn University, Sweden

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Sexism
Misogyny
Right-wing authoritarianism
Social dominance orientation
Religiosity
Personality
Gender
Facial hair

ABSTRACT

Ambivalent sexism is a two-dimensional framework that assesses sexist and misogynous attitudes. The current corpus of research on such attitudes suggest that they are predicted by numerous variables, including religious beliefs, ideological variables, and men's facial hair. Most studies, however, have treated such predictors as if they are independent – inferring that zero-order correlations between sexism and its predictors are not confounded by omitted third variables. In the current work, we address ambivalent sexism using a large array of known correlates of sexist attitudes in two large and demographically diverse samples. We show that low empathic concern is the primary driver of hostile-, but not benevolent sexism (Study 1); that social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, religiosity, and low Openness and Agreeableness differentially predict ambivalent sexism (Study 2); along with male gender and low education level (Study 1 and 2). Contradicting an earlier finding, men's facial hair was not correlated with hostile sexism in either studies and a short full beard predicted *lower* scores on benevolent sexism in Study 2. Thus, we replicated the main findings from most previous research except for men's facial hair, and we also show the paths through which predictors of sexist attitudes exert their effects.

1. Introduction

Sexism stems from the beliefs that men and women are inherently different and should therefore adhere to gender-specific roles and social norms and behaviors. Such beliefs tend to include misogynous views of women being intrinsically less competent and deserving than men – beliefs which ubiquitously justify and maintain gender inequalities and injustices across the world (e.g., Doob, 2015). A recent study found that men's sexism correlates with having facial hair, suggesting that sexist men may choose to grow facial hair in order to make them appear more masculine and thereby maximize sexual dimorphism (Oldmeadow & Dixson, 2016). However, Hellmer and Stenson (2016) have called these results into question, suggesting that the findings need to be replicated and further scrutinized before any universal conclusions about facial hair status among sexist and non-sexist men can be drawn. The first aim of this paper was to investigate the effects of facial hair on ambivalent sexism (a theoretical framework in which sexism has a hostile and a benevolent constituent), as well as on other variables that have been found to predict sexism in previous research. As a second aim, we tested a comprehensive model of what underpins sexist attitudes, including measures of facial hair, personality, ideology, religiosity, and demographics.

Sexism has been consistently connected with two distinct but correlated ideological variables; right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; adherence to authorities and conventional norms: Altemeyer, 1981, 1998) and social dominance orientation (SDO; promotion of group-based hierarchies: Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Moreover, there are several seemingly distinct predictors of sexist attitudes that have been identified, including religious beliefs (Maltby, Hall, Anderson, & Edwards, 2010), personality traits (Christopher, Zabel, & Miller, 2013) and – as noted above – facial hair (Oldmeadow & Dixson, 2016). However, many previous studies on sexist attitudes have investigated such variables in isolation (e.g., Glick, Sakallı-Uğurlu, Akbaş, Orta, & Ceylan, 2015; Grubbs, Exline, & Twenge, 2014; Oldmeadow & Dixson, 2016) and, in accordance, failed to consider mediating factors – and possibly – incorrectly attributing spurious correlations with sexism to causal relationships (see e.g, Hellmer & Stenson, 2016). In other words, predictors of sexist attitudes have been based on zero-order associations, assuming that a predictor has a direct effect while failing to acknowledge possible confounding or

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: kahl.hellmer@psyk.uu.se (K. Hellmer).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.10.001
Received 12 June 2017; Received in revised form 27 September 2017; Accepted 2 October 2017

intermediary variables such as attitudes, beliefs, social context, or education level. These shortcomings in the current body of sexism research merit further attention, and we argue that such attention should be particularly aimed at the recently found relation between facial hair and sexism (Oldmeadow & Dixson, 2016). In this paper, we report two studies that are based on large and demographically diverse samples, and test individual contributions of such previously documented predictors of sexist attitudes while considering mediating effects of others.

Sexist prejudice is strongly correlated with other forms of prejudice (Allport, 1954). In this paper, we commence from the Dual-Process Motivational Model of prejudice (DPM; Duckitt, 2001, see also Sibley, Robertson, & Wilson, 2006; Asbrock, Sibley, & Duckitt, 2010; Christopher et al., 2013), which suggests that there are two underlying rationales behind prejudice: 1) Prejudice against disadvantaged or subordinate groups; and 2) prejudice against threatening groups. DPM posits that, on the one hand, prejudice against disadvantaged groups correlates with social dominance orientation (SDO) which taps individuals' preference for hierarchical structures within societies, indifference to structural inequalities, and domination of underprivileged groups (Pratto et al., 1994). In line with this, SDO also has a strong correlation with racist beliefs (Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002). On the other hand, prejudice against threatening groups correlates with right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1988). RWA measures willingness to submit to authorities that are seen as legitimate and to adhere to norms and traditions, and coerciveness and aggressiveness against those who are seen as deviant. SDO and RWA correlate moderately too strongly (rs = 0.27 to 0.35; Perry, Sibley, & Duckitt, 2013), but have been shown to be discrete constructs that contribute independently to prejudice attitudes (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007; Wilson & Sibley, 2013).

Relatedly, there is support for sexism, too, being underpinned by two separate motivations, leading to either hostile sexism or benevolent sexism, or their aggregate ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick & Fiske, 2001). These are closely connected to SDO and RWA respectively. On the one hand, hostile sexism taps the notion of a general resentment against women and those who challenge patriarchal structures, and is predicted by SDO (Sibley et al., 2007). An example item of this subcategory is *Women are too easily offended*. Men who score high on hostile sexism are more likely to accept sexual harassment of women, partner violence, and rape (Begany & Milburn, 2002). On the other hand, benevolent sexism reflects the patronizing view of women as being more moral and delicate creatures who need protection and provision from men, and is predicted by RWA (Sibley et al., 2007). An example item from the subcategory is *Women should be cherished and protected by men.* This relates to how men who score high on benevolent sexism are more likely to depreciate professional evaluations based on gender (Masser & Abrams, 2004) and accept rape victim-blaming (Viki & Abrams, 2002).

Importantly, although there is a considerable group-level difference in sexism between sexes, high ratings of benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are not limited to men (e.g., Glick et al., 2015), but primarily associated with individuals' personality traits and ideology (Christopher & Mull, 2006; Roets, Van Hiel, & Dhont, 2012). In practice, this means that RWA and SDO are stronger predictors of sexist attitudes than solely identifying as male.

Additional predictors of sexist attitudes that have been reported are religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967; Maltby et al., 2010), empathic traits (Sakallı-Uğurlu, Yalçın, & Glick, 2007), and Openness and Agreeableness from the Five-Factor model of personality (Christopher et al., 2013; Ekehammar & Akrami, 2012). Religiosity exclusively predicts benevolent – and not hostile – sexism (Mikołajczak & Pietrzak, 2014), whereas empathic traits, openness, and agreeableness are negatively correlated with both hostile and benevolent sexism, as well as with SDO and/or RWA (Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004). Finally, facial hair has been suggested to predict sexist attitudes too (Oldmeadow & Dixson, 2015; but see Hellmer & Stenson, 2016).

To our knowledge, there are no reports that have included facial hair, personality variables, ideological variables, religiosity, and demographics in the same model, to control for mediation and potential confounding effects among the above presented predictors of ambivalent sexism (also noted by McFarland, 2010). In the current work we present an extensive model of ambivalent sexism in an attempt to shed light on the underpinning structures of sexist attitudes and if predictors differentially contribute to either, or both, types of sexism. The *first aim* of the current work is to test the replicability of a recently found correlation between men's facial hair and ambivalent sexism, as well as the correlations between facial hair and the other variables that have been connected with sexism in previous research. With this approach, it could be investigated if facial hair style either directly or indirectly predicts benevolent and/or hostile sexism. The *second aim* is to test a comprehensive model (including both men and women) including facial hair, personality variables, ideological variables, religiosity, and demographics in predicting hostile and benevolent sexism. To this end, we first conducted further analyses of the data reported by Hellmer and Stenson (2016; which included only men). The study included measures for ambivalent sexism, men's facial hair, empathy, as well as gender and education level (Study 1). We reasoned that (a) the proposed association between men's facial hair and sexist attitudes (Oldmeadow & Dixson, 2015) warranted replication (see Hellmer & Stenson, 2016); (b) sexist attitudes may decrease in higher-level education since sexism is more likely to be problematized and discussed at universities compared to in earlier education and work-places not requiring higher education; and (c) low empathetic traits potentially predict sexist attitudes (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). We then conducted a second study in which we included measures for ambivalent sexism, men's facial hair, Five-Factor personality dimensions, SDO, RWA, religiosity, as well as gender and education level. Here, our primary aim was to measure individual contributions of SDO and RWA, but also effects of religiosity, Five-Factor personality dimensions, men's facial hair, gender, and education level on ambivalent sexism while controlling for SDO and RWA. The two constituents of ambivalent sexism; benevolent and hostile sexism, are kept separate throughout all analyses. Based on previous research, we expected SDO to be strongest predictor of hostile sexism, and RWA to be the strongest predictor of benevolent sexism (Sibley et al., 2007).

2. Study 1

2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants

Data were part of a larger online questionnaire designed for an undergraduate course in personality psychology at Uppsala University, Sweden, during December 2015. Respondents were recruited by course supervisors and students via online social networks. The final sample included 992 participants (M_{age} = 30.4 years, SD_{age} = 13.1, $range_{age}$ [18–83]; 661 women). An additional 16 respondents' data that was collected was removed after inspection due to being < 21 years old with a doctorate degree or similar (N = 5; a very implausible feat in the Swedish education system); age reported to be > 110 years (N = 7); no variability in ratings across entire questionnaire (N = 1); or not responding on > 10 items (N = 3).

2.1.2. Measures

The questionnaire included the ambivalent sexism instrument (Glick & Fiske, 1996) which assesses both hostile and benevolent sexism; empathetic concern and perspective-taking subscales from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983); education level (Table 1); and male respondents' facial hair status (Table 2). The questionnaire also included additional scales that are not relevant for the present study and were not analyzed here. The order of all items measuring attitudes and personality were randomized to ensure that