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This is the submitted version of a paper published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Hellmer, K., Stenson, T J. (2016)

Contradicting Data and Comments on Oldmeadow and Dixson's (2015) "The Association Between Men's Sexist Attitudes and Facial Hair".

Archives of Sexual Behavior

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0713-7>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

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Title: Contradicting Data and Comments on Oldmeadow & Dixson's (2015) "The Association Between Men's Sexist Attitudes and Facial Hair"

Authors: Kahl Hellmer¹ and T. Johanna Stenson¹

Email: kahl.hellmer@psyk.uu.se

Affiliation: ¹ Department of Psychology, Uppsala University, Box 256, 751 05 Uppsala, Sweden

In their recently published article, Oldmeadow and Dixon (2015) make an invalid inference when they state that men who opt to have facial hair do so in aspiration to reinforce their patriarchal dominance – supposedly because a beard maximizes a man’s sexual distinction from women. Their assertions are drawn from a survey where men in India ($n = 309$) and the USA ($n = 223$) stated the status of their current facial hair and rated eight items measuring Hostile and Benevolent sexism from the Glick and Fiske Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (1996). Primarily, their results showed that nationality was the most significant predictor of sexism, with Indian men admitting to higher levels of sexism than American men. Secondly, their data showed an association between facial hair style and Hostile sexism - with men sporting mustaches, beards, or any other variety of facial hair being more sexist than their clean-shaven peers. In this letter we argue that Oldmeadow and Dixon’s inferences are based on a spurious relationship. To this end, we outline and justify alternative hypotheses in consonance with a corpus of well-established research on this matter – where the beard should be seen in the context of the political orientation, personality traits, and cultural context of its bearer. This is further supported by a replication study in which bearded men of a third nationality were evenly spread along the sexism spectrum.

In their study, Oldmeadow and Dixon controlled for nationality, age, education level, relationship status, and sexual orientation. However, we have major concerns and criticisms regarding predictors they omit. Firstly, Oldmeadow and Dixon fail to acknowledge and account for that sexist attitudes are strongly associated with right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance (SDO; e.g., Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Ekehammar et. al., 2004), Big Five personality factors (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950), racism and prejudice against homosexuals, and the mentally disabled. Secondly, there are numerous potential candidate reasons for engaging in pogonotrophic endeavors (the act of not shaving) and its perpetuation. Oldmeadow and Dixon’s suggestion, that “*maximizing sexual dimorphism and augmenting perceived masculinity and dominance*” (Oldmeadow and Dixon ,2015, pp. 1) may very well be one of them. However, there are many sociocultural, personal, and aesthetic reasons for maintaining

this secondary sex-characteristic that do not reflect social dominance, yet all of such are omitted from their list of covariates. Thirdly, and very importantly, they overlook the possibility that conservative men could be over-represented in facial hair categories compared to progressive men (e.g. for religious or traditional reasons). Lastly, we are critical about how they ascribe reciprocal causality by using the same correlation data to measure sexist attitudes using facial hair as a factor (Analyses 1, 2, and 4) and predicting facial hair presence using sexist attitudes (Analysis 3). Taken together, we believe Oldmeadow and Dixson's reasoning to be inaccurate and that their result is properly explained by an omitted-variable bias, namely the confounding factors of SDO, RWA, and Big Five personality.

To investigate our criticism further we decided to replicate the Oldmeadow and Dixson's study in a Swedish sample. The eight items measuring Hostile and Benevolent sexism used in Oldmeadow and Dixson 's study (2015; Glick & Fiske, 1996) were translated to Swedish and proof-read by a native speaker of both languages. Ratings were on a 1-7 Likert scale with higher ratings denoting higher sexism attitudes. The final sample of males in these analyses consisted of 312 respondents with a mean age of 30.52 years ($SD = 12.68$). Facial hair was coded as a nominal variable with the categories Short full beard ($n = 74$), Long full beard ($n = 12$), Moustache ($n = 19$), Stubble ($n = 82$), Beard around the mouth (including goatee; $n = 14$), and Clean-shaven ($n = 111$). Education was coded as an ordinal variable where 1: High school or less ($n = 149$), 2: Three years or less of university level studies ($n = 97$), 3: More than three years of university level studies ($n = 55$), and 4: A doctorate degree or similar ($n = 11$). Mean ratings of Hostile sexism (2.73, $SD = 1.31$) and Benevolent sexism (2.62, $SD = 1.22$) were notably lower than the levels observed by Oldmeadow and Dixson ($M = 3.86$ and $M = 4.08$, respectively; computed from their reported facial hair subgroup means).

Our analyses do not support Oldmeadow and Dixson's interpretations. A general linear model with *Hostile sexism* as dependent variable, Beard type as a categorical factor, and Age as a continuous

covariate, showed no significant main effect of Beard type, $F(5, 304) = .49, p = .79, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$, no significant effect of Age $F(1, 304) = 1.09, p = .30, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .01$, and no significant effect of Education $F(1, 304) = 1.40, p = .24, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .01$. Additionally, all varieties of facial hair were collapsed into one group and their sexist attitudes tested versus clean-shaven men's. No elevated Hostile sexism attitudes among the men with facial hair were found, $t(310) = 0.06, p = .951$. An identical general linear model with *Benevolent sexism* as the dependent variable showed no significant main effect of Beard type, $F(5, 304) = .50, p = .78, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .01$, and no significant effect of Age, $F(1, 304) = .45, p = .50, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .01$. In contrast, this model showed a significant effect of Education, $F(1, 323) = 4.70, p = .03, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .015$, with Benevolent sexism correlating negatively with Education. Again, we tested the sexist attitudes of men with facial hair versus those of clean-shaven men and found no elevated attitudes of benevolent sexism among the bearded brutes, $t(310) = -1.11, p = .27$.

Our data do not indicate that beardedness is tied directly to sexist attitudes, as we found no causally reciprocal link (or any association at all, for that matter) between facial hair and sexist attitudes. Since Oldmeadow and Dixson's explanations of this phenomenon were presented as generally applicable, and not limited to their samples or populations within which they collected respondents, our data strongly contradicts their inferences.

In addition, we observed a markedly lower level of both Hostile and Benevolent sexist attitudes in our sample compared to what Oldmeadow and Dixson report. This difference in levels likely reflects cultural differences in sexist attitudes between countries. Sweden is a politically progressive and secular welfare-state. For that reason we suspect that its population differs from that of India and USA from which Oldmeadow and Dixson sampled, with regards to both social climate and overall prevalence of traditional and conservative values. Considering the large variability found in the ratings for Hostile

sexism ($SD = 1.31$) and Benevolent sexism ($SD = 1.22$) it is very unlikely that a floor effect would explain why facial hair has no association with sexist attitudes in the Swedish sample.

Consequently, and in line with the alternative explanations outlined previously, we suggest that Oldmeadow and Dixson's inference "[...] *these studies suggest that sexually dimorphic masculine traits are a means by which men can differentiate themselves from women and potentially reinforce their feelings of masculinity and social dominance*" (Oldmeadow and Dixson, 2015, pp. 6) is mistaken. We offer an alternative explanation to these results in line with previous research – that sexism is chiefly associated with RWA, SDO, and Big Five personality. Additionally, we would like to offer a theoretical explanation as to why Oldmeadow and Dixson found an effect while we did not: As outlined above, there are numerous distinct reasons for growing different varieties of facial hair styles. We suggest that facial hair is, to some extent, used by men as a sociocultural symbol that, depending on the cultural environment, signals qualitatively distinct group memberships. A full beard, a set of sideburns, or a moustache, are sociocultural constructs that signal affiliation with a tradition or subculture, each of which may be specific to the nation's contemporary culture. Consequently, men in different cultures and traditions cease shaving to pursue different social group memberships, some of which may – or may not – be tied to more traditional or conservative values.

Finally, we would like to add that research on sexist attitudes is an important field of personality and social psychology that does not receive enough attention. We do not argue against the finding that men with facial hair had higher sexist attitude ratings in their sample. Moreover, we are in full support of bold predictions since these sometimes make influential contributions to knowledge. However, novel findings based on what could be considered equivocal predictions should be well-grounded in all existing theoretical frameworks.

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