Motiv Emot (2018) 42:90–102
DOI 10.1007/s11031-017-9651-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

Harmful fun: Pranks and sadistic motivation

Christopher T. Burris[1] · **Rebecca Leitch**[1]

Published online: 31 October 2017

Abstract Two studies tested whether pranking is a context for observing sadistic motivation, understood as a compensatory/restorative response to insults to the self that manifests as displaced aggression. A disrespect sensitivity/anger rumination (DSAR) index outperformed a measure of dispositional sadism in predicting sadistic thoughts and emotions congruent with sadistic motivation across the span of a recalled prank (Study 1). DSAR also predicted greater sadistic affect/motivation and greater self-elevation/victim derogation among prank viewers when the prospect of significant long-term harm befalling prank victims was salient, but not when harm was minimized (Study 2). Fueled by displaced hostility, enjoyment of others' experienced harm in pranking contexts indeed appears sadistic.

Keywords Prank · Sadism · Displaced aggression

Introduction

Pranks are significant enough social phenomena to have their own unofficial holiday: April Fools' Day (see Dundes 1988). They also have a substantial online presence, with the top YouTube prank channel amassing nearly 2 billion views as of July 2017 (VidStatsX 2017). Moreover, although some online pranksters label their works as "social experiments" in the putative service of noble ends such as triggering dialogue and debate concerning contemporary social issues (Brankhurst-Cuff 2017), others fake pranks with an unapologetic focus on the notoriety and profitability of burgeoning viewership (see Stanek 2014; Weiss 2016).

Given pranks' seeming ubiquity, the dearth of empirical research concerning their motivational origins and psychological appeal is surprising. To date, pranks have mostly captured the attention of scholars in domains such as media/communications and cultural/folklore studies (e.g., Tallman 1974). Some, such as Marsh (2015), position themselves as apologists for pranksters by minimizing the likelihood of malicious motives or negative outcomes with statements such as "[p]lay is fun, and that's all the reason people need to do it" (p. 151). Others are less sanguine. For example, Dundes (1988, p. 7) contended that "[t]here is very often a severe streak of sadism and cruelty in traditional pranks, a fact conveniently overlooked by the prankster and his [sic] associates." Hobbs and Grafe (2015) echoed this commentary, while also noting that viewers' reactions to online pranks often span the entire evaluative continuum (see also Plester 2013; Wiggins 2014). The present research was undertaken to determine the extent to which pranking can indeed be a context in which sadism manifests.

Pranks and sadistic motivation

Although at least one other recent treatment of sadism as a psychological variable (O'Meara and Hammond 2016) pointed in passing to a possible link between sadism and pranking, the most detailed exposition appears in Burris and Leitch (2016). From their perspective, sadism is best conceptualized in motivational terms (cf. Pfattheicher and Schindler 2015), wherein the physical and/or psychological suffering of another is sought as a means to the end of experiencing

Portions of this research were presented at the 2017 Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas.

✉ Christopher T. Burris
cburris@uwaterloo.ca

[1] Department of Psychology, St. Jerome's University, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G3, Canada

positive affect (e.g., pleasure, arousal, excitement, satisfaction). Understood as premeditated acts intended to induce aversive physical and/or psychological states in unsuspecting others, ostensibly for the amusement of the prankster and/or an audience, pranks are arguably a prototypic behavioral outcome of sadistic motivation. Indeed, so-called "failed" pranks are labeled thus when the intended victim's foreknowledge foils the prankster's gotcha plans, thereby allowing the victim to escape the intended aversive states.

Identifying pranking as a possible context for observing sadistic motivation may seem misguided, even scandalous, if one regards pranks as "harmless fun" to be contrasted with "real" harm such as self-reported coercive and violent sexual behavior among men scoring relatively high on a questionnaire measure of sadistic tendencies (Russell and King 2016). Harm-causing behaviors across a broad spectrum of severity—such as traditional bullying and cyber-bullying (van Geel et al. 2017), online trolling (Buckels et al. 2014; Craker and March 2016), and going out of one's way to blast an ostensible fellow study participant with loud noise (Buckels et al. 2013)—are predicted by dispositional measures of sadism, however. Moreover, even bugs (Buckels et al. 2013) and virtual others (Greitemeyer 2015; Greitemeyer and Sagioglou 2017) are sometimes in the crosshairs.

When appraising a sample of victims' online postings concerning pranks performed by close others, Burris and Leitch (2016, p. 93) noted that "[f]our of the five incidents involve simulations of what many would regard as severely traumatic events: burglary, shooting, genital mutilation, and suicide. Three explicitly note the perpetrator's laughter in the aftermath of a 'successful' prank." Because inducing an aversive psychological state in their victims seemed to be a source of positive affect for pranksters, the idea that pranking is a context for observing sadistic motivation seems plausible and worth testing.

From whence does sadism originate? Burris and Leitch (2016, p. 95) proposed that sadism is a "compensatory/restorative motivational response to insults to the self." At its core, theirs is a model of displaced aggression. That is, individuals who feel put down and who are angered by such experiences do not necessarily *strike back*—rather, they *strike forward* by inflicting physical and/or psychological harm on a third party. In so doing, they elevate themselves at the third party's expense, which is accompanied by positive affect.

A number of findings seem broadly consistent with Burris and Leitch's (2016) proposal. For example, van Dijk et al. (2011) demonstrated that schadenfreude—positive affect in response to learning about a stranger's misfortune (which is congruent with sadistic motivation)—was higher among individuals who had just experienced a self-evaluation threat (i.e., negative performance feedback on a valued dimension). Pfattheicher and Schindler (2015) found that (existential) threat to the self resulted in greater antisocial punishment (that is, punishing cooperative, not uncooperative, individuals *at personal cost* in an economic game), especially among individuals with higher sadistic tendencies. Across a series of studies, Chester and DeWall (2017) found that social rejection prompted retaliatory aggression. This was mediated by people's belief that doing so would make them feel better, and appeared to be reinforced by actual mood repair.

Krizan and Zohar (2015) found empirical support for a model wherein vulnerable narcissism leads to angry rumination, which in turn predicts displaced aggression (cf. Reidy et al. 2010). Greitemeyer and Sagioglou (2016) reported hostile thoughts and aggressive tendencies to be more common when subjective socioeconomic status is lower—which arguably increases the likelihood that an individual may feel insulted or disrespected. Balakrishnan et al. (2017) showed that dispositional sadism was positively correlated with endorsement of the respect/control facet of power as a value. Finally, Plouffe et al. (2017) made a case for incorporating endorsement of subjugation and humiliation as interpersonal strategies into their new measure of dispositional sadism.

To be clear, no single line of research summarized above accounts for every element of Burris and Leitch's (2016) model of sadistic motivation. Nevertheless, (vulnerability to) insults to the self, other-directed harm, and the (sought) outcomes of positive affect and self-elevation do seem to appear across the expanse. With that in mind, we turn to the two studies we conducted to test facets of Burris and Leitch's model in a pranking context.

The present research

Because much of the existing literature on subclinical sadism summarized above has demonstrated the importance of individual differences, we incorporated a measure of dispositional sadism in both studies reported below. Moreover, we also sought to tap the "insulted self" component of Burris and Leitch's (2016) model of sadistic motivation from an individual difference perspective by including measures of disrespect sensitivity and anger rumination. Individuals who score high on *both* measures simultaneously are arguably hypervigilant with respect to being insulted *and* have a hard time letting go of such instances. Given that negative feedback on a valued performance dimension increases schadenfreude (van Dijk et al. 2011) and angry rumination predicts displaced aggression (Krizan and Zohar 2015), we hypothesized that the disrespect sensitivity/anger rumination (DSAR) combo would be linked to dispositional sadism in both studies (Hypothesis 1).

In Study 1, undergraduate volunteers were asked whether they had ever pranked someone. Pranksters answered questions about their thoughts and emotions during the planning stage of a specific prank and during/after the prank proper.

Paralleling the savoring of fantasy and the sometimes obsessive planning associated with acts of extreme harm among sadistic serial killers (e.g., Gunn and Caissie 2006; Skrapec 2001), we reasoned that focus, engagement, and positive affect associated with the planning and execution of a prank could be construed as markers of sadistic motivation. We also asked participants to evaluate their prank experience and to rate the applicability of a series of justifications for their ratings. Broadly, we hypothesized that DSAR would predict experiential outcomes congruent with sadistic motivation as part of a pranking experience, possibly better than would a measure of dispositional sadism (Hypothesis 2).

In Study 2, participants watched two prank videos and rated how much positive affect and engagement their viewing generated (cf. Study 1). We also assessed the extent to which they elevated themselves at the prank victims' expense in keeping with Burris and Leitch's (2016) model. Moreover, before answering questions about each video, participants read a comment intended either to amplify or to dampen the prospect of long-term harm befalling the prank victim. Broadly, we hypothesized that DSAR would predict experiential outcomes congruent with sadistic motivation most clearly when a victim was portrayed as experiencing greater harm (Hypothesis 3; see Međedović 2017, and Schumpe and Lafrenière 2016).

Study 1

Method

Participants

132 undergraduate psychology students (100 women, 32 men; $M_{age} = 21.67$; $SD = 7.84$) enrolled in a university in southwestern Ontario, Canada completed IRB-approved materials online in exchange for bonus points to be added to their overall course mark. They responded to an invitation posted on the university's research participation website that described the study as intended to "understand people's experience associated with performing pranks (practical jokes)." They were explicitly informed that they could participate whether or not they had performed a prank in the past.

Premeasures

Following a demographic questionnaire, participants completed three individual difference measures. First was the 10-item (0 = *unlike me*; 1 = *like me*; summed) Short Sadistic Impulse Scale (O'Meara et al. 2011), which includes items such as "I have hurt people because I could" and "I enjoy seeing people hurt." The second consisted of 16 items (1 = *strongly disagree*; 10 = *strongly agree*) from McDonald's (2008) Disrespect Sensitivity scale, including items tapping disrespect-related experiences (e.g., "I feel disrespected when people don't listen to what I have to say"), ascribed importance of respect (e.g., "It is important that people show that they respect you"), and hypervigilance for disrespect cues (e.g., "People are always trying to make themselves look like they are better than you"). Third was Sukhodolsky, Golub, and Cromwell's (2001) Anger Rumination scale, which includes items such as "Memories of even minor annoyances bother me for a while" and "I ponder about the injustices that have been done to me" (1 = *almost never*; 4 = *almost always*). Due to a programming error, 1 of the 19 items was omitted.

Prank experience assessment

Next, participants were asked: "Have you ever **pranked** (played a practical joke on) someone?" Those who answered "no" were taken directly to a debriefing page; those who answered "yes" were prompted to bring to mind the "most memorable" prank they had ever played and to respond to a series of items about their experience (see Appendix), based largely on a pilot study of open-ended responses to similar prank-related questions. Specifically, they rated (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *extremely*) how much: (1) each of five reasons contributed to why they decided to play the prank in question; (2) five thoughts went through their mind during the planning stage of the prank; (3) twenty-nine descriptors (mostly emotions) applied to their experience during the planning stage; (4) five (different) thoughts went through their mind during/after the prank proper; and (5) (the same) 29 descriptors were applicable to their experience during/after the prank proper. Finally, they responded to a single item concerning their retrospective overall evaluation of the prank in question (*5 = good; 1 = bad*), and then rated nine justifications (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *extremely*) in terms of how each accounted for their evaluation of the prank.

Results

Data preparation

For dispositional sadism, $M = 0.99$, $SD = 1.49$, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.72. Inspection revealed that scores were highly positively skewed, so they were log-transformed for all reported analyses. Disrespect sensitivity ($M = 6.04$; $SD = 1.39$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.89) and anger rumination ($M = 2.22$; $SD = 0.70$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.94) were moderately positively correlated, $r\,(130) = 0.50$, $p < .001$. Burris and Leitch's (2016) model specifies that sadistic affect/motivation should be most evident among individuals prone both to experience insult *and* to brood over such experiences, so

we standardized these two measures and then averaged them to create a single DSAR index.

Reasons for playing the prank and thoughts both during the planning stage and during/after the prank proper (15 items total) were subjected to an exploratory principal components analysis with orthogonal rotation (which was used in all subsequent data preparation below). The scree plot indicated a two-factor solution. Of the ten items loading above 0.4 on the first factor, the seven highest (labeled 1a in Appendix) captured multiple experiential elements congruent with sadistic motivation, whereas the three lowest (labeled 1b in Appendix) centered on justifications for executing the prank. We therefore computed separate sadistic motivation ($M = 4.57$; $SD = 1.28$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.85) and prank justifications ($M = 3.97$; $SD = 1.34$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.65) scales. The three items that loaded on the second factor (labeled 2 in Appendix) were combined to form a single measure of misgivings ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.62$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.70). Correlations were: sadistic motivation/prank justifications, $r\,(84) = 0.46$, $p < .001$; sadistic motivation/misgivings, $r\,(84) = -0.05$, $p = .676$; prank justifications/misgivings, $r\,(84) = 0.06$, $p = .600$. The boredom and mood repair single items were not significantly related to either of our key predictors (all $ps > 0.26$), and so will not be presented here.

A scree plot of the 29 planning-stage experience descriptors indicated two factors corresponding to positive and negative valence, respectively (see Appendix). Consequently, we computed a positive (sadistic) "emotion" scale by averaging the 13 items that loaded 0.5 or higher on the positive factor ($M = 4.77$; $SD = 1.10$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.89; cf. Trémolière and Djeriouat 2016). We also computed a negative "emotion" scale based on the 12 items loading 0.5 or higher on the negative factor ($M = 2.27$; $SD = 1.10$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.91). The four remaining items—relief, caution, relaxation, and patience—failed to load at 0.4 or higher on either factor and were omitted from scale computation.

The factor solution for during/after the prank proper was nearly identical (save that caution loaded above 0.5 on the negative emotion factor), and so two scales were computed using the same item groupings as above: positive (sadistic) emotion ($M = 4.09$; $SD = 1.33$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.91) and negative emotion ($M = 2.30$; $SD = 1.43$; Cronbach's alpha = 0.96).

Finally, a scree plot of the nine justifications for overall pranking evaluations indicated a two-factor solution that roughly corresponded to benign or adverse outcomes. In order to create conceptually pure measures, the two items that affirmed negative outcomes but loaded negatively and primarily on the benign outcomes factor were instead combined with the other two adverse outcomes items (see Appendix). For the 5-item benign index, $M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.39$, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.79. For the 4-item adverse index, $M = 1.64$, $SD = 0.99$, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.63. Because the two scales were significantly negatively correlated, $r\,(84) = -0.47$, $p < .001$, we created "pure benign" and "pure adverse" scores by alternatively entering one into a regression to predict the other and saving the residuals.

Hypothesis testing

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the DSAR index and dispositional sadism were moderately positively correlated, $r\,(130) = 0.35$, $p < .001$. Thus, individuals who concurrently are sensitized to disrespect and have a hard time letting go of anger-evoking incidents are more likely to respond positively to the suffering of others.[1]

Eighty-six of 132 participants (65.2%) admitted having pranked someone in the past. Dispositional sadism was a significant positive predictor of this admission, $Wald = 4.92$, $df = 1$, $p = .027$. DSAR was not a significant predictor, $Wald = 1.67$, $df = 1$, $p = .196$.

Results related to pranksters' experiences (see Hypothesis 2) are shown in Table 1. At the zero-order level, both DSAR and dispositional sadism were significant, positive predictors of thoughts congruent with sadistic motivation across the prank sequence; when controlling for overlap between the two predictors, only DSAR remained significant, however. Likewise, DSAR and dispositional sadism were significant, positive zero-order predictors of both justifications

[1] In preliminary analyses, gender did not alter the pattern of reported results in either study whether considered as a covariate or as a moderator, so it will not be discussed.Study 1 participants completed two other measures that were not of central importance to the present research: (1) Jonason and Webster's (2010) 12-item "Dirty Dozen" scale, which assesses individual differences in psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism; and (2) Gross and John's (2003) 10-item Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), which includes subscales measuring individual differences in reliance on two distinct emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal (changing how one feels by changing one's thinking) and expressive suppression (restricting overt displays of emotion).Consistent with previous research (e.g., Buckels et al. 2013), dispositional sadism was moderately positively correlated with all three Dark Triad components (rs = 0.35–0.44). Correlations between DSAR and the Dark Triad were somewhat higher (rs = 0.51–0.56).Expressive suppression was significantly positively correlated with both DSAR, $r\,(130) = 0.25$, $p = .004$, and dispositional sadism, $r\,(130) = 0.17$, $p = .047$. In contrast, cognitive reappraisal was negatively correlated with DSAR (due wholly to the anger rumination component), $r\,(130) = -0.19$, $p = .032$, and not significantly correlated with dispositional sadism, $r\,(130) = -0.07$, $p = .409$. Thus, both DSAR and dispositional sadism were linked to an emotion regulation style that is arguably congruent with voluntary inhibition of overt negative reactions to an experience of insult. Speculatively, because ES tends to be rather ineffective at reducing the underlying arousal associated with such aversive experiences (see Gross 2014), this may contribute to the amplification of (displaced) sadistic motivation.

Table 1 Prank-related thoughts and emotions as a function of DSAR and dispositional sadism, Study 1

	DSAR	Dispositional sadism
Thoughts while planning prank and during/after		
Sadistic motivation	0.29**	0.24*
	[0.23*	0.16]
Justifications for prank	0.37***	0.25*
	[0.31**	0.15]
Misgivings	0.07	0.06
	[0.06	0.04]
Emotion-related experiences while planning prank		
Positive (sadistic)	0.45***	0.32**
	[0.39***	0.20]
Negative	0.07	0.02
	[0.07	−0.01]
Emotion-related experiences during/after prank		
Positive (sadistic)	0.27*	0.25*
	[0.20	0.17]
Negative	0.15	0.07
	[0.13	0.03]

Partial correlations appear in brackets

$N = 86$, *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

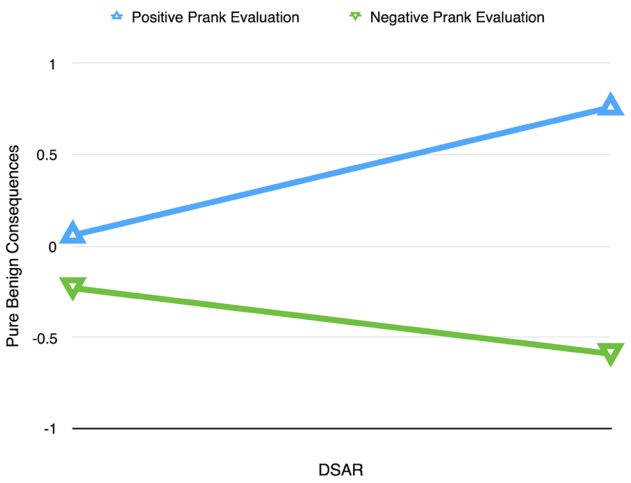

Fig. 1 Pure benign consequences as a function of DSAR and overall prank evaluation, Study 1

for executing the prank and positive (sadistic) emotion during the planning stage, but only DSAR remained significant when controlling for overlap. DSAR and dispositional sadism were both significant, positive zero-order predictors of positive (sadistic) emotion during/after the prank proper; controlling for overlap reduced both relationships to non-significance. Neither DSAR nor dispositional sadism was a significant predictor of misgivings or negative emotions.

Neither DSAR nor dispositional sadism predicted overall prank evaluations, $r\,(83) = 0.00$, $p = .986$, and $r\,(83) = 0.06$, $p = .592$, respectively, but recall that pranksters' justifications are yoked to the valence of the evaluation itself. For example, saying that the prank produced only benign consequences would have very different implications were it linked to a negative versus a positive prank evaluation. With this in mind, we first entered DSAR and the prank evaluation variable, followed by their interaction, in separate regression analyses to predict the two evaluation justification variables. We also performed parallel analyses with dispositional sadism.

For the pure benign outcomes variable, there was a significant main effect for prank evaluation, $\beta = 0.35$, $t\,(82) = 3.41$, $p = .001$, $R^2 = 0.124$, but not for DSAR, $\beta = 0.03$, $t\,(82) = 0.28$, $p = .782$, $R^2 = 0.001$. The DSAR x prank evaluation interaction was significant, $\beta = 0.82$, $t\,(81) = 2.66$, $p = .009$, $R^2 = 0.070$. When self-evaluations of the prank were positive, higher DSAR predicted greater assertions that the prank had only benign consequences, $\beta = 0.30$, $t\,(81) = 2.10$, $p = .038$. This relationship trended negative when prank evaluations were negative, however, $\beta = -0.16$, $t\,(81) = -1.29$, $p = .200$ (see Fig. 1, plotted at ± 1z DSAR).

For the pure adverse outcomes variable, there was a significant main effect for prank evaluation, $\beta = -0.33$, $t\,(82) = -3.21$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = 0.111$, but not for DSAR, $\beta = 0.07$, $t\,(82) = 0.67$, $p = .502$, $R^2 = 0.005$. The DSAR × prank evaluation interaction was significant, $\beta = 0.71$, $t\,(81) = 2.27$, $p = .026$, $R^2 = 0.053$. When self-evaluations of the prank were positive, lower DSAR scorers were more likely to deny that the prank had adverse consequences, $\beta = .31$, $t\,(81) = 2.11$, $p = .038$. This relationship did not emerge when prank evaluations were negative, however, $\beta = -0.09$, $t\,(81) = -0.74$, $p = .461$ (see Fig. 2, plotted at ± 1z DSAR).

For analyses involving dispositional sadism, the significant main effects for prank evaluation (cf. above) remained. For the pure benign outcomes variable, the main effect of dispositional sadism was not significant, $\beta = 0.07$, $t\,(82) = 0.64$, $p = .527$, $R^2 = 0.004$. Neither was the prank evaluation x dispositional sadism interaction, $\beta = 0.17$, $t\,(81) = 1.12$, $p = .266$, $R^2 = 0.023$. Likewise, for the pure adverse outcomes variable, the main effect of dispositional sadism was not significant, $\beta = 0.16$, $t\,(82) = 1.52$, $p = .131$, $R^2 = 0.025$. Neither was the prank evaluation x dispositional sadism interaction, $\beta = 0.27$, $t\,(81) = .52$, $p = .605$, $R^2 = 0.003$.

Discussion

These results offer support for several elements of Burris and Leitch's (2016) conceptual analysis of sadism in the context of pranking. First, consistent with their suggestion that

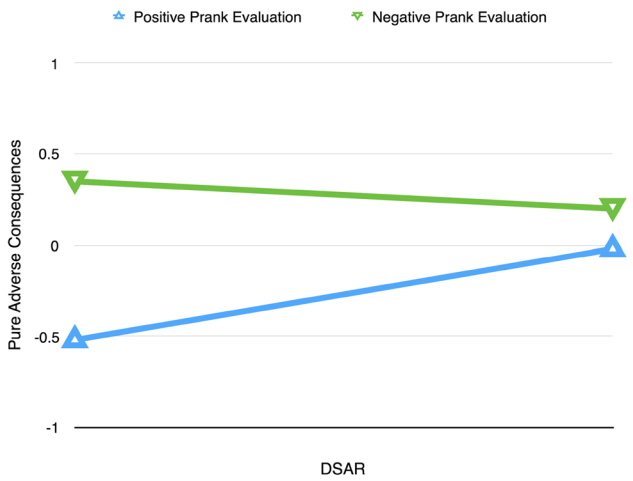

Fig. 2 Pure adverse consequences as a function of DSAR and overall prank evaluation, Study 1

sadistic motivation—the desire to harm others as a means of boosting positive affect—can be understood as a displaced aggressive response to feelings of insult, DSAR (disrespect sensitivity and anger rumination) was moderately positively correlated with dispositional sadism (Hypothesis 1).

Second, consistent with the suggestion that pranking is a context for sadistic motivation, higher dispositional sadism predicted admission of having pranked someone at least once in the past. Moreover, dispositional sadism also predicted key experiential elements congruent with sadistic motivation as part of a specific recalled prank experience (Hypothesis 2).

Third, in no case was dispositional sadism a better predictor of sadistic motivation and satellite phenomena than was DSAR (Hypothesis 2). Indeed, only DSAR predicted unique portions of variance in sadistic thoughts across the prank timeline and sadistic (positive) affect during the planning stage. DSAR also outperformed dispositional sadism with respect to predicting justifications for executing the prank as well as post hoc assertions that the prank's outcomes were benign if the prankster held a favorable evaluation of it.

Fourth, illustrating the specificity of the above links, neither DSAR nor dispositional sadism was linked to identifying boredom or mood repair as motives for pranking. Likewise, neither measure predicted misgivings or negative emotions associated with executing the prank.

The role of justifications in the sadistic process deserves clarification, for higher DSAR scorers were more likely to affirm during the planning stage that the individual(s) being pranked "deserved it." Although this suggests that at least some pranks were intended as direct retribution (rather than *displaced* aggression), deservingness can be invoked as an excuse whether or not the victim has directly wronged a perpetrator (e.g., Brambilla and Riva 2017). Moreover, perpetrators are arguably poor judges of the negative consequences of their behavior (see, e.g., Baumeister's, 1997, discussion of the "magnitude gap"). Consequently, claims of benign outcomes for everyone involved by higher DSAR scorers who viewed their own pranks favorably should be viewed with considerable suspicion. Such claims make no sense if harm is a vehicle for sadistic gratification. They could conveniently reduce the prankster's self-perceived culpability, however.

In order to address this in Study 2, we focused on prank videos wherein pranksters and their victims were complete strangers to viewers. This eliminated the possibility that the prank victim could have personally insulted the viewer, so victim blame could not be revenge-based. Also, we attempted to shift viewers' attention either toward or away from the prospect of significant harm befalling prank victims. We reasoned that sadistic motivation could be vicariously gratified most easily when bona fide harm is salient (see Međedović 2017; Schumpe and Lafrenière 2016). This would suggest that Study 1's "benign outcomes" effect reflected post hoc justification rather than a precondition for sadistic gratification in a pranking context.

Thus, Study 2 participants completed the same premeasures used in Study 1 and then rated their reactions to two pranking videos that respectively highlighted primarily physical or psychological harm befalling an unsuspecting victim. After viewing each video but before completing the dependent measures, participants read comments intended either to amplify or minimize the prospect of significant long-term harm befalling each prank victim.

If vicarious sadistic gratification can be had via prank viewing, higher DSAR should predict greater sadistic affect/motivation, but only *when the prospect of significant harm is salient* (Hypothesis 3). Minimizing the prospect of harm should reduce the effectiveness of viewing pranks vis-à-vis discharging sadistic motivation, so we would not expect a positive relationship between DSAR and sadistic affect/motivation in that circumstance. Moreover, because the core of sadism is feeling better *at someone else's expense*, higher DSAR should also predict greater self-elevation/victim derogation, but only when significant victim harm is salient.

More tentatively, we wondered whether DSAR would predict vicarious identification with the prankster when harm was salient. Thus, we assessed viewers' pro-prankster attitudes and their tendency to adopt either the prankster's or the victim's perspective while viewing.

Finally, we again investigated dispositional sadism's predictive utility. Given its overall weaker performance compared to DSAR in Study 1, we made no specific predictions.

Study 2

Method

Participants

213 undergraduate psychology students (160 women, 50 men, 3 other/missing; 91% aged 18–23, 9% >age 23) enrolled in a university in southwestern Ontario, Canada completed IRB-approved materials online in exchange for bonus points to be added to their course mark. They responded to an invitation posted on the university's research participation website that described the study as intended to "understand people's experience associated with viewing pranks (practical jokes)." They were explicitly informed that they could participate whether or not they had willingly observed a pranking episode in the past.

Premeasures

Following a demographic questionnaire, participants completed measures of dispositional sadism, disrespect sensitivity, and anger rumination as in Study 1.

Pranking videos/harm salience manipulation

All participants then viewed (in fixed order) two brief (< 5 min) pranks that appeared on a popular video-sharing website. The first had a physical focus (an adolescent male tricked into tossing a log onto a shovel head while blindfolded, which caused the shovel handle to strike his groin forcefully); the second was more psychological (a woman terrorized with ghoulish and ghostly apparitions in a parking garage).

Immediately after viewing each video, participants read a brief comment that either made salient or minimized the prospect of long-term victim harm. Comments were randomly assigned but yoked, such that each participant read only either high or low harm comments:

> *Low harm (physical)*. Although the young man appeared to be experiencing some discomfort, such experiences are commonplace and are unlikely to produce any negative, long-term physical effects.
> *Low harm (psychological)*. Although the woman's reaction appeared intense, it is unlikely that she experienced any negative, long-term psychological effects.
> OR
> *High harm (physical)*. Given the obvious intensity of the victim's reaction, he may now be suffering from negative, long-term physical effects such as chronic genital pain and decreased fertility later in adulthood.
> *High harm (psychological)*. Given the intensity of the victim's reaction, she may now be suffering from negative, long-term psychological effects such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Reporting positive reactions to pain or panic inflicted upon an unsuspecting other could reasonably be regarded as socially undesirable (cf. Schumpe and Lafrenière 2016), so some participants were explicitly instructed to rate their reactions to the pranks from the perspective of their "Hidden Observer" (HO)—the alleged part of their inner self that knows their true thoughts and feelings, for HO instructions have been shown experimentally to disinhibit sensitive disclosures (see Burris and Mathes 2011). We intended to manipulate the presence/absence of HO instructions, but those who did not receive the full HO instructions were nevertheless prompted to respond from the perspective of their HO due to a programming error. Thus, we collapsed over the incomplete HO manipulation and focused solely on the harm salience manipulation.

Dependent measures

Participants rated their reactions to each video (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*) immediately after viewing it and the follow-up comment. On an a priori basis, 20 items (see Appendix) were sorted into four separate measures: sadistic affect/motivation (3 items); self-elevation/victim derogation (7 items); pro-prankster attitudes (8 items); and (prankster or victim) perspective-taking (2 items). Two items assessing the perceived likelihood that each victim experienced long-term physical and/or psychological harm served as manipulation checks. Correlations ranged from 0.19 ($p = .006$) for the physical and psychological video perspective-taking indices to 0.42 ($p < .001$) for the physical and psychological video pro-prankster indices. These results bolstered our a priori decision to collapse across the two videos and compute omnibus sadistic affect/motivation, self-elevation/victim derogation, pro-prankster, and perspective-taking measures to be used in our primary analyses. As might be expected, the four omnibus variables were all moderately positive correlated (from 0.40 to 0.62; all $ps < 0.001$).

Results

Data preparation

For dispositional sadism, $M = 0.78$, $SD = 1.24$, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.63. Inspection revealed that scores were highly positively skewed, so they were log-transformed for all reported analyses.

Table 2 Effects of prank type and harm salience on perceived harm, Study 2

Prank type	Shovel		Ghost	
	Physical harm	Psychological harm	Physical harm	Psychological harm
Low harm salience	3.76 (1.79)	3.86 (1.88)	2.31 (1.60)	4.71 (1.71)
High harm salience	5.09 (1.69)	4.36 (1.77)	2.90 (1.87)	5.81 (1.35)

Standard deviations appear in parentheses beside the means

Table 3 Effects (Betas) of DSAR and harm salience on reactions to prank videos, Study 2

Block	Sadistic affect/motivation	Self elevation/victim derogation	Pro-prankster attitudes	Prankster (v. Victim) perspective-taking
1. DSAR	0.07	0.03	−0.07	−0.04
Harm salience	−0.11	−0.16*	−0.16*	−0.05
2. DSAR × harm salience	0.24*	0.31**	0.24*	0.14

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

For disrespect sensitivity, $M = 6.02$, $SD = 1.50$, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.92. For anger rumination, $M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.68$, and Cronbach's alpha = 0.94. As in Study 1, these two measures were moderately positively correlated, $r\ (211) = 0.46$, $p < .001$, so we standardized and averaged them to create the DSAR index. Replicating Study 1 and again supporting Hypothesis 1, DSAR was moderately positively correlated with dispositional sadism, $r\ (211) = 0.31$, $p < .001$.

Manipulation checks

A mixed-factor MANOVA revealed that the perceived likelihood of long-term harm befalling the prank victims was higher following the high ($M = 4.55$; $SD = 1.20$) versus the low ($M = 3.64$; $SD = 1.25$) harm salience prompt, $F\ (1, 204) = 27.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = 0.118$. A prank type x prank effect interaction also emerged, $F\ (1, 204) = 274.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = 0.574$, such that the shovel prank was thought to have produced more long-term physical harm ($M = 4.40$; $SD = 1.85$) than the ghost prank ($M = 2.61$; $SD = 1.76$), whereas the ghost prank was thought to have produced more long-term psychological harm ($M = 5.24$; $SD = 1.66$) than the shovel prank ($M = 4.09$; $SD = 1.86$). Moreover, this two-way interaction was qualified by a significant three-way interaction, $F\ (1, 204) = 14.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{partial} = 0.065$: Physical harm ratings were highest in response to the shovel prank when long-term physical harm was salient, and psychological harm ratings were highest in response to the ghost prank when long-term psychological harm was salient (see Table 2). These results suggest that the harm salience manipulation was effective and that the predominant harmful effects of the shovel and ghost pranks expected by viewers were physical and psychological, respectively, as intended.

Hypothesis testing

If viewing pranks can serve as a context for experiencing vicarious sadistic gratification, then higher DSAR should predict greater sadistic affect/motivation among viewers *when the prospect of significant harm is salient*. Likewise, if sadism's core is feeling better *at someone else's expense*, higher DSAR should predict greater self-elevation/victim derogation, but only when significant harm is salient (see Hypothesis 3). We also tested whether DSAR would predict vicarious identification with the prankster (i.e., pro-prankster attitudes and/or adopting the prankster's perspective while viewing) when harm was salient.

Thus, we performed a series of regression analyses wherein we entered DSAR, a dummy-coded harm salience variable (0 = *harm not salient*; 1 = *harm salient*), and their interaction to predict each of the above four outcome variables. Although self-elevation/victim derogation and pro-prankster attitudes were lower overall when harm was salient, in no case was the DSAR main effect significant (all $ps > 0.31$; see Table 3). The DSAR × harm salience interaction was significant for both sadistic affect/motivation, $R^2 = 0.027$, and self-elevation/victim derogation, $R^2 = 0.044$, however. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, higher DSAR predicted more sadistic affect/motivation when harm was salient, $\beta = 0.21$, $t\ (209) = 2.33$, $p = .021$, but not when harm was minimized, $\beta = -0.12$, $t\ (209) = -1.18$, $p = .240$ (see Fig. 3, plotted at $\pm 2z$ DSAR). Also consistent with Hypothesis 3, DSAR predicted greater self-elevation/victim derogation when harm was salient, $\beta = 0.21$, $t\ (209) = 2.35$, $p = .020$, but the relationship reversed when harm was minimized, $\beta = -.21$, $t\ (209) = -2.09$, $p = .037$ (see Fig. 4, plotted at $\pm 2z$ DSAR).

Table 3 shows a significant DSAR × harm salience interaction for pro-prankster attitudes as well,

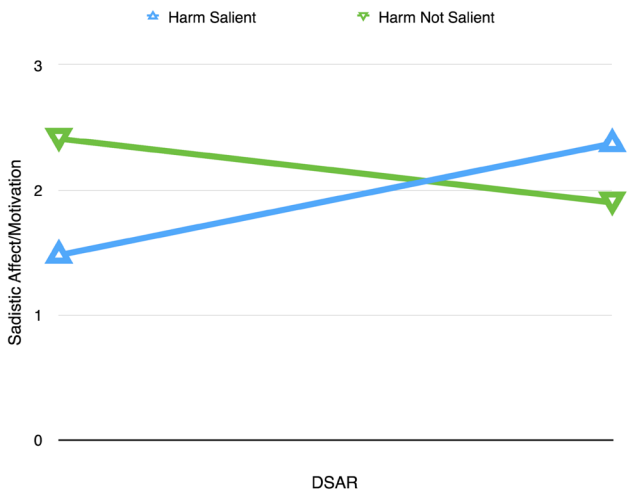

Fig. 3 Sadistic affect/motivation as a function of harm salience and DSAR, Study 2

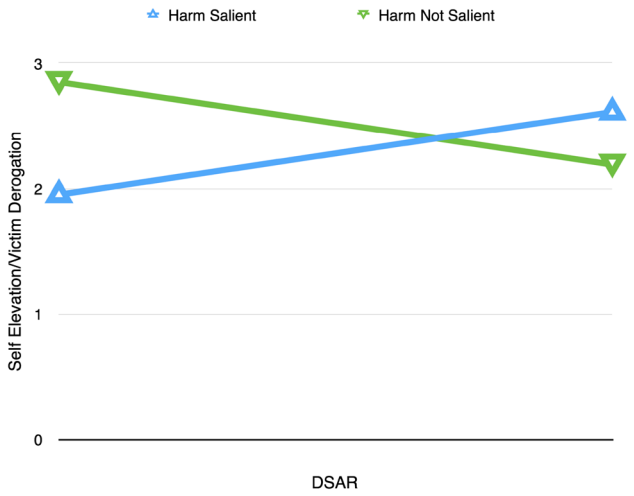

Fig. 4 Self-elevation/victim derogation as a function of harm salience and DSAR, Study 2

$R^2 = 0.027$. Higher DSAR scores predicted *lower* pro-prankster attitudes when harm was not salient, $\beta = -0.26$, $t\ (209) = -2.51$, $p = .013$, but not when harm was salient, $\beta = 0.08$, $t\ (209) = 0.85$, $p = .399$. The DSAR × harm salience interaction was not significant for the perspective-taking variable, $R^2 = 0.009$.

There was a main effect of dispositional sadism on both sadistic affect/motivation and self-elevation/victim derogation (see Table 4), but in neither case did the dispositional sadism × harm salience interaction approach significance ($p = .303$ and $p = .512$, respectively). Likewise, dispositional sadism was a significant positive predictor of pro-prankster attitudes, but the dispositional sadism × harm salience interaction was not significant ($p = .066$). There were no significant relationships for the perspective-taking index (all $ps > 0.11$).

Discussion

As in Study 1, DSAR and dispositional sadism were significantly positively correlated (Hypothesis 1), congruent with Burris and Leitch's (2016) suggestion that sadistic motivation can be understood as a displaced aggressive response to feelings of insult. These two variables were linked to different patterns of reactions to prank videos, however. Higher DSAR predicted greater sadistic affect/motivation and greater self-elevation/victim derogation when the prospect of significant long-term harm to the victim was salient, but not when it was minimized (Hypothesis 3). This suggests that individuals who feel chronically disrespected and who brood over perceived personal injustices can use prank viewing as an outlet for sadistic motivation, *provided that the victim really suffers*. Indeed, controlling for sadistic affect/motivation did not eliminate the significant DSAR × harm salience interaction on self-elevation/victim derogation, $\beta = 0.19$, $t\ (208) = 2.18$, $p = .031$, $R^2 = 0.016$, but controlling for self-elevation/victim derogation completely eliminated the significant DSAR × harm salience interaction on sadistic affect/motivation, $\beta = 0.09$, $t\ (208) = 0.97$, $p = .335$, $R^2 = 0.003$. Thus, feeling good appears contingent upon boosting oneself at the expense of a suffering (prank) victim. It seems extremely difficult *not* to label this sadism.

Curiously, although higher DSAR scorers were less enthusiastic in their endorsements of the prankster when victim harm was minimized, they were *not* correspondingly more aligned with the prankster when the prospect

Table 4 Effects (Betas) of dispositional sadism and harm salience on reactions to prank videos, Study 2

Block	Sadistic affect/motivation	Self elevation/victim derogation	Pro-prankster attitudes	Prankster (v. Victim) perspective-taking
1. Disp. sadism	0.21**	0.18**	0.19**	0.11
Harm salience	−0.11	−0.16*	−0.17*	−0.06
2. Disp. sadism × Harm salience	0.10	0.07	0.18	0.09

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

of long-term harm was salient. Moreover, DSAR did not predict taking the prankster's perspective when harm was salient. Perhaps these viewers construed *seeing themselves as smarter than the prankster as well as the victim* as the surest path toward feeling good (cf. the item "I could have done the prank better…").

Dispositional sadism predicted more sadistic affect/motivation, greater self-elevation/victim derogation, and more pro-prankster attitudes, but did so irrespective of whether the harm experienced by the prank victim was framed as comparatively minor or substantial. These results complement Study 1's by suggesting that pranking viewing can serve as an outlet for sadistic motivation for those who are chronically so predisposed. The apparent lack of impact of the harm manipulation among higher sadism scorers remains puzzling, however, especially given that there was no indication that estimates of physical or psychological harm experienced by either victim varied as a function of viewers' dispositional sadism scores (all $ps > 0.13$).

General discussion

Two studies tested the extent to which pranking is a context for observing sadistic motivation. We reasoned that individuals who are sensitized to being disrespected and who concurrently ruminate on past anger-evoking episodes would derive pleasure and a boosted sense of self from engineering or simply observing a prank victim's suffering (Burris and Leitch 2016).

Study 1 focused on pranksters' recollections of their own experiences, and a DSAR index predicted thoughts and emotions congruent with sadistic motivation, justifications for executing the prank, and post hoc assertion that "good" pranks had benign consequences for self and victim. Moreover, although a dispositional measure of sadism also predicted sadism-congruent thoughts and emotions as well as justifications for pranking at the zero-order level, in no case did it outperform DSAR as a predictor.

Study 2 focused on viewing pranks performed by strangers on strangers, thereby eliminating the possibility that revenge fueled reactions to prank victims. DSAR predicted elevating the self/derogating prank victims and sadistic affect/motivation, but only when the likelihood of significant victim harm was emphasized rather than minimized. Dispositional sadism predicted similar outcomes, albeit not contingent on the salience of harm to the victim.

Results of the two studies taken together seem to support Burris and Leitch's (2016) postulate that sadistic motivation is a compensatory/restorative response to insults to the self that can manifest as displaced aggression that is observable in a pranking context. By specifying a mechanism that can account, at least partially, for the origins of sadistic motivation, the present research complements existing individual difference research on sadism.

Pfattheicher and Schindler (2015) found that dispositional sadism did *not* predict costly punishment of a cooperative other in the absence of a salient threat to the self. Notwithstanding the fact that dispositional sadism and DSAR were significantly positively correlated in both studies, perhaps DSAR does a better job at capturing the (chronically) "insulted self" dynamic that fuels sadistic motivation compared to a measure that directly taps chronic sadistic tendencies. Given that DSAR generally outperformed the dispositional sadism measure as a predictor of sadistic motivation and satellite phenomena in both studies, researchers interested in sadism should consider incorporating DSAR in their future investigations.

As noted above, higher DSAR predicted the assertion that pranks self-perceived as "good" produced overwhelmingly benign consequences, but did *not* predict misgivings or negative emotions associated with executing a prank (Study 1). At the same time, DSAR predicted sadistic (positive) affect and motivation *only* when the video prank victims were presented as facing the prospect of significant long-term suffering (Study 2). This suggests that higher DSAR individuals want the affective payoff of observing harm without a sense of personal accountability for it. In this respect, our results are congruent with Trémolière and Djeriouat (2016), who offered evidence that motivated pursuit of positive affect via inflicted harm (i.e., sadism) is a disincentive for engaging mechanisms of moral judgment that are rooted in negative affective reactions to harm-causing interpersonal events (cf. Međedović 2017).

Chester and DeWall (2017) found that social rejection prompted retaliatory aggression, and that this was mediated by people's (apparently accurate) belief that doing so would make them feel better. The outcomes predicted by DSAR in the present research suggest that displaced (i.e., sadistic) aggression may foster mood repair as well, although displacement may make mood repair less consciously accessible as an objective. Recall that DSAR did *not* predict endorsement of "I felt bad and thought it would make me feel better" as a motive for pranking. Indeed, we suspect that it is unlikely that pranksters and prank viewers would be able, by simple introspection, to "connect the dots" between enjoying pranks and the DSAR dynamics that appear to be fueling their enjoyment based on our results. After all, curiosity, determination, pride, and happiness (cf. Study 1's measure of sadistic affect) sound like refreshingly positive experiences, so it is easy to imagine how "insults to the self" may be not at all salient in the moment. Consequently, it is also easy to imagine how pranking can become cyclical and escalating (cf. "I can't wait to do another prank" in Study 1's sadistic motivation measure), for the affective payoff of displaced aggression does not substantively address the distal

triggers of sadistic motivation (viz., feeling disrespected and holding on to anger).

Of course, the present pair of studies has limitations. Both used volunteer student samples and relied exclusively on self-reports. Study 1's retrospective approach allowed for distorted recall. We used a single dispositional measure of sadism, and our retention of its original yes/no item format may have constrained its reliability. We could have supplemented our single yes/no prankster question with items assessing pranking frequency, time invested, self-identity and reputation as a prankster, etc. Study 2 incorporated a technique designed to disinhibit socially undesirable disclosures, and so it is unclear whether the observed relationships would appear under a neutral instructional set (although Study 1's results did). We should also note that *when the likelihood of long-term harm befalling the victims was minimized*, lower DSAR scorers in Study 2 reported levels of sadistic affect/motivation and self-elevation/victim derogation on par with higher DSAR scorers *when long-term harm was salient* (see Figs. 3, 4). This apparent "sadism lite" profile among lower DSAR scorers deserves additional research.

For now, we take issue with Marsh's (2015, p. 4) assertion that "hostility refers to the motives of the joker, and motives are always unknowable." In Study 1, some pranksters reported positive emotion as they planned and executed pranks that—by definition—prioritized their own good feelings over the victims' wellbeing, at least temporarily. In Study 2, some prank viewers reacted positively, simultaneously affirming their own savvy and the prank victims' stupidity, when assured that there was a good chance that the victims suffered long-term physical and psychological damage. And who was most likely to report such reactions? People who agreed with (DSAR) items such as "It is more important to be respected than liked" and "I have difficulty forgiving people who have hurt me." Thus, at least some of time, pranks appear to be born out of (displaced) hostility, and are better characterized as *harmful*—not harmless—fun.

Appendix

Study 1 Thoughts (factor #: primary loading)

As well as you can remember, **why** did you decide to play this prank?

a. I thought it would be fun. (1a: 0.66)
b. I was bored.
c. I felt bad and thought it would make me feel better.
d. I had the opportunity. (1b: 0.63)
e. The individual(s) being pranked deserved it. (1b: 0.44)

As well as you can remember, rate how much each of these **thought themes** went through your mind as you were ***planning*** the prank.

a. How to organize the prank (1a: 0.68)
b. happiness (1a: 0.73)
c. pride (1a: 0.68)
d. reasons why I felt justified in performing the prank (1b: 0.54)
e. worries about upsetting the individual(s) being pranked (2: 0.72)

As well as you can remember, rate how much each of these **thought themes** went through your mind ***during/after*** the prank.

a. This is an amazing prank. (1a: 0.73)
b. This is awesome. (1a: 0.77)
c. I hope I don't get in trouble. (2: 0.67)
d. I hope he/she doesn't get upset. (2: 0.86)
e. I can't wait to do another prank. (1a)

Study 1 Experience Descriptors Before and During/After (factor #: primary loading before)

Please rate how much you felt each of the following **emotions** [during the ***planning*** stage/***during-after*** the prank]

excitement (1: 0.81)
happiness (1: 0.74)
anticipation (1: 0.68)
nervousness (2: 0.70)
anxiety (2: 0.83)
guilt (2: 0.76)
regret (2: 0.70)
pride (1: 0.62)
amusement (1: 0.78)
concern (for yourself) (2: 0.76)
worry (for yourself) (2: 0.73)
concern (for the person being pranked) (2:.69)
worry (for the person being pranked) (2: 0.76)
satisfaction (1: 0.76)
fear (2: 0.80)
curiosity (1: 0.50)
interest (1: 0.76)
determination (1: 0.75)
motivation (1:. 71)
doubt (2: 0.78)
a sense of spontaneity (1: 0.55)
playfulness (1: 0.67)
mischievousness (1: 0.66)
relaxation
patience
caution

disappointment (2: 0.68)
unhappiness (2: 0.62)
relief

Study 1 Evaluation and Justification (factor #: primary loading)

Looking back, do you see **playing this prank** as a [good, mostly good, neutral/mixed, mostly bad, or bad] experience? [please choose one]

Why?

a. It was fun for me. (1: 0.73)
b. It was fun for the person I pranked. (1: 0.77)
c. I felt closer to the person I pranked. (1: 0.76)
d. No one was hurt. (1: 0.60)
e. The person I pranked was not upset. (1: 0.77)
f. The person I pranked got hurt physically. (2: 0.85)
g. The person I pranked got hurt emotionally. (2: 0.75)
h. The person I pranked couldn't take a joke. (1: −0.61→2: 0.30)
i. I felt guilty. (1: −0.66→2: 0.37)

Study 2 Outcome Measures

I experienced the prank from…

the *prankster's* point of view. (PT)
the point of view of the *person being pranked*. (PT)

As I watched the prank, I felt…

amused. (SA/M)
offended. (−PP)
enjoyment. (SA/M)
angry at the prankster. (−PP)
like I wanted to be involved in planning and executing the prank. (SA/M)
sympathy for the person being pranked. (−SE/VD)

The prankster…

needs to "get a life." (−PP)
was clever. (PP)
was mean. (−PP)
was just having fun. (PP)
was thoughtless. (−PP)
cares about the person being pranked. (PP)

The person who was pranked…

was really stupid. (SE/VD)
didn't deserve what happened to him/her. (−SE/VD)
completely overreacted to the prank. (SE/VD)
will probably feel the ***physical effects*** of the prank for a long time. (MC)
should have figured out what was going on earlier. (SE/VD)
will probably feel the ***psychological effects*** of the prank for a long time. (MC)

I think that…

I would not have fallen for the prank. (SE/VD)
I could have done the prank better than the prankster(s) in the video did. (SE/VD)

Note. SA/M = sadistic affect/motivation; SE/VD = self-elevation/victim derogation; PP = pro-perpetrator; PT = perspective-taking (perpetrator minus victim); MC = manipulation check; "−" = reverse-coded.

References

Balakrishnan, A., Plouffe, R. A., & Saklofske, D. H. (2017). What do sadists value? Is honesty-humility an intermediary? Replicating and extending findings on the link between values and "dark" personalities. *Personality and Individual Differences, 109*, 142–147. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.12.055.

Baumeister, R. F. (1997). *Evil: Inside human cruelty and violence*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Brambilla, M., & Riva, P. (2017). Predicting pleasure at others' misfortune: Morality trumps sociability and competence in driving deservingness and schadenfreude. *Motivation and Emotion, 41*, 243–253. doi:10.1007/s11031-016-9594-2.

Brankhurst-Cuff, C. (2017, January 12). YouTube "social experiments" are the worst kind of smug white racism. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/d77gzq/youtube-social-experiments-are-the-worst-kind-of-smug-white-racism.

Buckels, E. E., Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2013). Behavioral confirmation of everyday sadism. *Psychological Science, 24*, 2201–2209. doi:10.1177/0956797613490749.

Buckels, E. E., Trapnell, P. D., & Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Trolls just want to have fun. *Personality and Individual Differences, 67*, 97–102. doi:10.1177/0956797613490749.

Burris, C. T., & Leitch, R. (2016). Your pain, my gain: The interpersonal context of sadism. In K. Aumer (Ed.), *The psychology of love and hate in intimate relationships* (pp. 85–103). Cham: Springer International.

Burris, C. T., & Mathes, S. (2011). Digging in my secret garden: Disinhibitory effects of the "Hidden Observer" on reported sexual fantasies. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 20*, 143–150.

Chester, D. S., & DeWall, C. N. (2017). Combating the sting of rejection with the pleasure of revenge: A new look at how emotion shapes aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 112*, 413–430. doi:10.1037/pspi0000080.

Craker, N., & March, E. (2016). The dark side of Facebook®: The Dark Tetrad, negative social potency, and trolling behaviours. *Personality and Individual Differences, 102*, 79–84. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.06.043.

Dundes, A. (1988). April Fool and April Fish: Towards a theory of ritual pranks. *Etnofoor, 1*, 4–14.

Greitemeyer, T. (2015). Everyday sadism predicts violent video game preferences. *Personality and Individual Differences, 75*, 19–23. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2014.10.049.

Greitemeyer, T., & Sagioglou, C. (2016). Subjective socioeconomic status causes aggression: A test of the theory of social deprivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 111*, 178–194. doi:10.1037/pspi0000058.

Greitemeyer, T., & Sagioglou, C. (2017). The longitudinal relationship between everyday sadism and the amount of violent video game play. *Personality and Individual Differences, 104*, 238–242. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.08.021.

Gross, J. J. (2014). Emotion regulation: Conceptual and empirical foundations. In J. J. Gross (Ed.), *Handbook of emotion regulation* (2nd edn., pp. 3–20). New York: Guilford.

Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 348–362. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.85.2.348.

Gunn, L., & Caissie, L. T. (2006). Serial murder as an act of deviant leisure. *Leisure, 30*, 27–53. doi:10.1080/14927713.2006.9651340.

Hobbs, R., & Grafe, S. (2015). YouTube pranking across cultures. *First Monday, 20*(7), 1–15

Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The Dirty Dozen: A concise measure of the Dark Triad. *Psychological Assessment, 22*, 420–432. doi:10.1037/a0019265.

Krizan, Z., & Zohar, O. (2015). Narcissistic rage revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 108*, 784–801. doi:10.1037/pspp0000013.

Marsh, M. (2015). *Practically joking*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

McDonald, K. L. (2008). *Interpretations and beliefs associated with children's revenge goals in conflict situations*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Duke University.

Međedović, J. (2017). Aberrations in emotional processing of violence-dependent stimuli are the core features of sadism. *Motivation and Emotion, 41*, 273–283. doi:10.1007/s11031-016-9596-0.

O'Meara, A., Davies, J., & Hammond, S. (2011). The psychometric properties and utility of the Short Sadistic Impulse Scale (SSIS). *Psychological Assessment, 23*, 523–531. doi:10.1037/a0022400.

O'Meara, A., & Hammond, S. (2016). The sadistic impulse and relating to others. In J. Birtchnell, M. Newberry, & Kalaitzaki, A. (Eds.), *Relating theory—clinical and forensic applications* (pp. 277–291). doi:10.1057/978-1-137-50459-3_21.

Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Toward a taxonomy of dark personalities. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23*, 421–426.

Pfattheicher, S., & Schindler, S. (2015). Understanding the dark side of costly punishment: The impact of individual differences in everyday sadism and existential threat. *European Journal of Personality, 29*, 498–505. doi:10.1002/per.2003.

Plester, B. (2013). *When is a joke not a joke? The dark side of organizational humour*. Paper presented at the 27th Australia and New Zealand Academy of Management Conference, Hobart, Australia.

Plouffe, R. A., Saklofske, D. H., & Smith, M. M. (2017). The assessment of sadistic personality: Preliminary psychometric evidence for a new measure. *Personality and Individual Differences, 104*, 166–171. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.07.043.

Reidy, D. E., Foster, J. D., & Zeichner, A. (2010). Narcissism and unprovoked aggression. *Aggressive Behavior, 36*, 414–422. doi:10.1002/ab.20356.

Russell, T. D., & King, A. R. (2016). Anxious, hostile, and sadistic: Maternal attachment and everyday sadism predict hostile masculine beliefs and male sexual violence. *Personality and Individual Differences, 99*, 340–345. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.05.029.

Schumpe, B. M., & Lafrenière, M.-A. K. (2016). Malicious joy: Sadism moderates the relationship between schadenfreude and the severity of others' misfortune. *Personality and Individual Differences, 94*, 32–37. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.01.005.

Skrapec, C. (2001). Phenomenology and serial murder: Asking different questions. *Homicide Studies, 5*(1), 46–63. doi:10.1177/1088767901005001004.

Stanek, B. (2014). The big problem with all those viral 'social experiment' videos. Retrieved from https://mic.com/articles/104986/the-big-problem-with-all-of-those-viral-social-experiment-videos#.O1Uzejez8.

Sukhodolsky, D. G., Golub, A., & Cromwell, E. N. (2001). Development and validation of the Anger Rumination Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 31*, 689–700.

Tallman, R. S. (1974). A generic approach to the practical joke. *Southern Folklore Quarterly, 38*, 259–274.

Trémolière, B., & Djeriouat, H. (2016). The sadistic trait predicts minimization of intention and causal responsibility in moral judgment. *Cognition, 146*, 158–171. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2015.09.014.

van Dijk, W. W., Ouwerkerk, J. W., Wesseling, Y. M., & van Koningsbruggen, G. M. (2011). Towards understanding pleasure at the misfortunes of others: The impact of self-evaluation threat on schadenfreude. *Cognition and Emotion, 25*, 360–368. doi:10.1080/02699931.2010.487365.

van Geel, M., Goemans, A., Toprak, T., & Vedder, P. (2017). Which personality traits are related to traditional bullying and cyberbullying? A study with the Big Five, Dark Triad and sadism. *Personality and Individual Differences, 106*, 231–235. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2016.10.063.

VidStatsX. (2017). PrankvsPrank YouTube stats. Retrieved from https://vidstatsx.com/PrankvsPrank/youtube-channel.

Weiss, G. (2016). The good, the bad, and the fake: The rise of YouTube's prank video genre. Retrieved from http://www.tubefilter.com/2016/04/13/good-bad-fake-the-rise-of-youtube-prank-videos/.

Wiggins, B. A. (2014). The culture industry, new media, and the shift from creation to curation; or, enlightenment as a kick in the nuts. *Television & New Media, 15*, 395–412. doi:10.1177/1527476412474696.