



# The Joys of Hurting Others: Everyday Sadism and the Dark Tetrad of Personality



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## Introduction

The **Dark Triad of personality** (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) consists of three noxious traits: subclinical psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism.

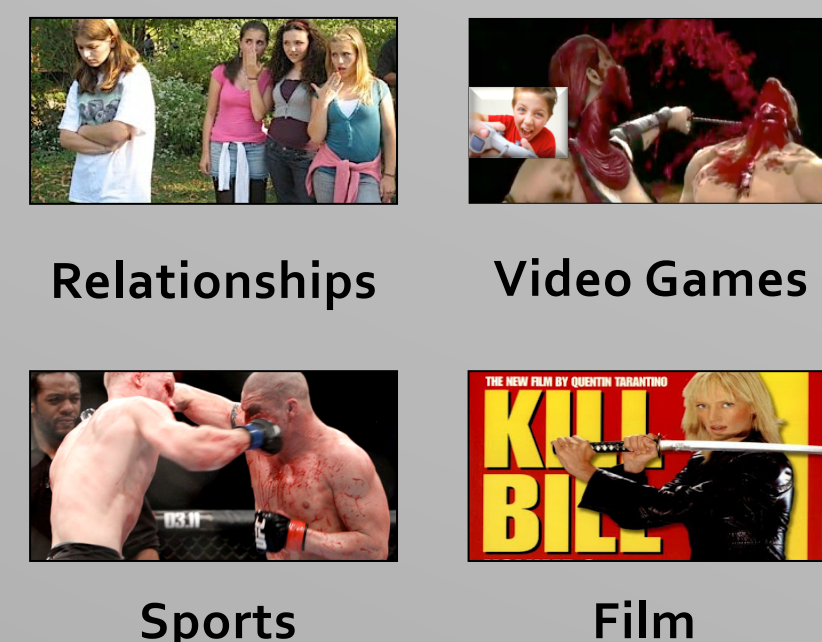
### A Dark Tetrad?

- Chabrol et al. (2009) proposed to add sadism to the cast of villains.



### “Everyday” Sadism :

Callous tendency to enjoy the suffering of others.



- Non-clinical levels in the normal range of personality.
- Appetitive motivation for cruelty.
- Suffering: physical and/or emotional pain.
- May or may not be sexualized.
- O'Meara et al.'s (2011) SSIS measure.

### The Varieties of Sadistic Tendencies Scale (VAST; Paulhus et al., in prep):

- Direct sadism (enjoy personally inflicting suffering)
- Vicarious sadism (e.g., through movies, video games)

## The Present Research

- How can we study sadistic behavior under controlled laboratory conditions?
- Is sadism different from other callous traits, especially, the Dark Triad?
- How do direct and vicarious forms of sadism differ?

## Additional Methods Info

### Participants:

Study 1: 71 undergraduate students (73% female)  
Study 2 : 71 undergraduate students (51% female)  
Study 3: 107 undergraduate students (72% female)

### Questionnaires:

- Short Dark Triad (Paulhus, & Jones 2011)
- Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983)
- Short Sadistic Impulse scale (O'Meara et al., 2011) in Study 1
- The Varieties of Sadistic Tendencies Scale (VAST; Paulhus et al., in prep.) in Studies 2,3

### Gore Images:

6 photos from the International Affective Picture System (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 2005).

## Discussion

- Everyday sadism is a useful personality construct with unique antisocial outcomes.
- Direct sadists went out of their way to hurt other people and animals. They were even willing to expend time and effort (personal cost) to do so. Likely due to intrinsic pleasure.
- Vicarious sadists displayed implicit associations between gore and positive emotions.
  - Direct sadists did not.
  - Apparently direct sadists do not necessarily enjoy graphic sadistic imagery. They enjoy the *experience* of hurting.
- Independence from the Dark Triad supports the incorporation of sadism into the new “Dark Tetrad” of personality.

## References

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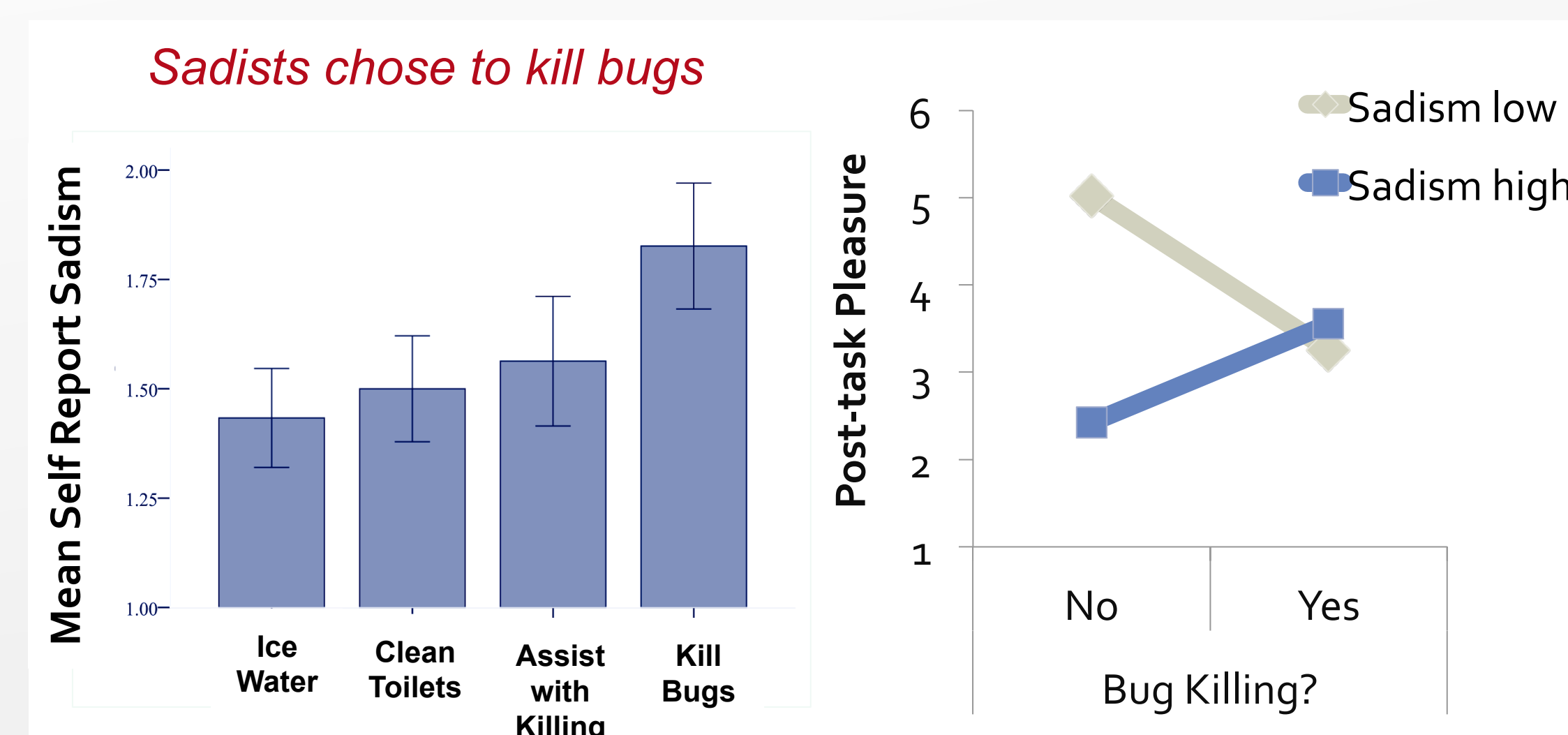
## Study 1: Desire to Kill Bugs

### Choose from the following:

- Kill bugs yourself
- Help experimenter kill bugs
- Clean toilets
- Ice water pain tolerance

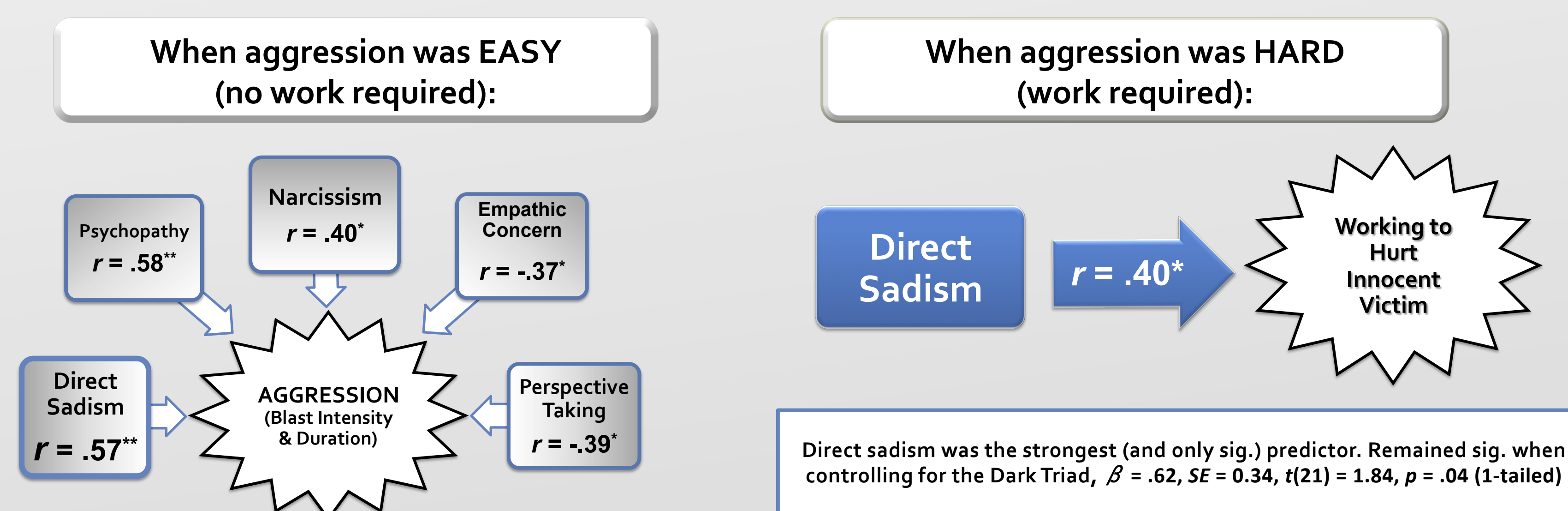


Anthropomorphized Names:  
Ike, Muffin, & Tootsie



## Study 2: Hurting Innocent Victims

- White-noise aggression task. Ostensible opponent: innocent same-sex student who NEVER blasted participant.
- Randomly assigned to:
  - No Work Condition
  - Work Condition - Must complete a boring counting task to punish opponent.



## Study 3: Vicarious Pleasure from Gore

- Used the Affective Misattribution Procedure (AMP) to assess implicit positive affect to gore.
- Afterwards, given the opportunity to view the gore photos discreetly at own leisure.

