



BOREDOM BEGS TO DIFFER: DIFFERENTIATING BOREDOM AMONG NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AS LAY CONCEPT, STATE, AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE

Despite gathering psychological interest in boredom and its various implications, boredom remains poorly understood; an issue that various scholars have raised (e.g., Vodanovich, 2003; Eastwood et al., 2012; Leary, et al., 1986; Van Tilburg & Igou, 2012). At the core of this lack of understanding lies the question of whether boredom can and should be distinguished from other negative emotions. This limited understanding of boredom's distinctiveness is problematic. Insufficient differentiation may erroneously lead to confounding boredom with other negative emotions. Yet, unwarranted differentiation between boredom and other negative emotions may lead to overestimation of uniqueness in boredom's origins, experiences, and impact. We examined, in three quantitative empirical studies, whether boredom differs from other negative emotions and then probed why boredom differed from these. Using a multidimensional scaling approach (Shepard, 1980), we estimated the relative dissimilarities between boredom and other negative emotions (sadness, anger, frustration, fear, disgust, feeling depressed, guilt, shame, regret, and disappointment). Results indicated that boredom is highly distinct from these in terms of (a) lay concept (Study 1), (b) state experience (Study 2), and (c) as individual difference (Study 3). Results further indicated that the differences between boredom and the other emotions can be attributed to (a) boredom's relatively mild negative affective valence, (b) low arousal, (c) low relevance to morality, (d) low perceived challenge, (e) low perceived meaningfulness, and (f) low attention. Results were strikingly consistent across three studies and portray boredom as a unique, discrete emotion that should not be confused with other negative emotions.