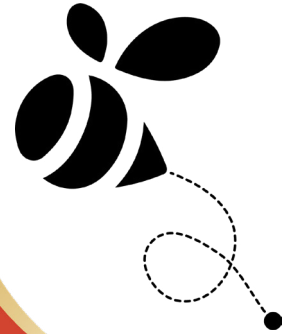


research snapshot

summarize mobilize



Do Situational and Personality Factors Interact to Produce Boredom?

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

What causes an individual to become bored? Since some situations are more boring than others, some academics suggest that an understimulating environment leads to boredom. Additionally, since some people are more likely than others to experience boredom, other academics assert that there are particular traits that predispose certain people to boredom. The purpose of the current study was to investigate if situational causes and personality predispositions work together in facilitating boredom. For example, if boredom prone individuals are especially bored in boring situations, this may indicate that personality and situational causes of boredom interact. Alternatively, if these two factors do not interact, boredom prone people will feel bored regardless of the whether they are in a boring situation or not and some situations may be boring for most people regardless of their personalities. This research is incredibly important because it helps us better understand boredom prone individuals - a group which frequently suffers from a range of psychosocial problems, and how we may assist them in preventing boredom. For instance, if they experience greater boredom only in boring situations then, boredom prevention techniques may involve teaching them to cope with or avoid such situations. However, if they feel bored in all situations, then boredom intervention strategies should target and amend the aspect of their personality that is causing the frequent boredom. This newfound information contributes to a more holistic understanding of boredom and its' risk factors.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Boredom can be caused by personality characteristics such as the tendency to become frequently bored. Situational factors such as being in a boring situation can also cause boredom. However, situational and personality factors do not work together in producing boredom. Lastly, some individuals experience boredom more often because of an aspect of their personality, regardless of the environment they are in.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers measured undergraduate students' propensity to feel bored. They also measured their levels of boredom after being placed in a boring or interesting situation.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The researchers found that participants in the boring situation were significantly more bored than those in the interesting situation. Also, individuals with a greater propensity for boredom reported more intense boredom. These results indicate that 1) being in a boring situation and 2) having a propensity for boredom, facilitate boredom. However, the researchers found no evidence to suggest that situational and personality factors work together to produce boredom. Specifically, people who had a propensity for boredom were not more sensitive to boring situations.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This study reveals new information about why people experience boredom and why certain people are more prone to boredom. This is one of the first steps in determining boredom prevention techniques. For instance, everyday people are now aware that avoiding under stimulating environments is one way to prevent boredom. However, for individuals who suffer from more frequent or intense boredom, combating boredom may not be as simple as avoiding un-engaging situations. Indeed, the findings suggest that it is some facet of boredom prone individuals' personalities, not the situation, that brings about their frequent boredom. Therefore, future work should explore and develop ways of resolving the boredom causing aspects of their personalities.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHERS

Kimberley Mercer-Lynn is completing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at York University. Rachel Bar is completing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Ryerson University and at the time of the article's submission, was an undergraduate student at York University working under Dr. Eastwood's supervision. Dr. John Eastwood is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at York University.

KEYWORDS

State boredom, Trait boredom, Behavioural activation, Behavioural inhibition, Person-Situation interaction

CITATION

Mercer-Lynn, K. B., Bar, R. J., & Eastwood, J. D. (2014). Causes of boredom: The person, the situation, or both? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 56, 122-126. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.08.034>

Summary prepared by: Carla Rumeo

KMb AT YORK UNIVERSITY

Innovation York's Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) Unit is a national and international leader in knowledge mobilization. The KMb unit has a suite of activities that create connections between researchers and community and government organizations in order to support the development of research partnerships and dissemination of research results, as well as a suite of training tools to teach you how to develop and implement knowledge mobilization strategies. Contact us at kmbunit@yorku.ca

