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Exploring Differences in the Relationship Between Boredom Proneness and the Feeling and Judgement of Agency

In recent models of boredom, agency has been theorized as a cardinal component of the boredom experience (Danckert & Eastwood 2020). Boredom, an emotion that is negatively valenced, is characterized as the state of wanting to but failing to engage meaningfully in available activity options (Eastwood et. al., 2012). It is associated with a number of negative traits including low self-control. People who experience boredom more frequently have been characterized in several survey samples as having diminished trait level self-control, indicating the inability of the boredom prone to marshal their thoughts, feelings and emotions towards goal directed behaviour (Danckert, Struk, Mugon 2018). Models of self-regulation that are more specific to goal pursuit, such as Kruglanski's regulatory mode theory, confirm this negative association between boredom proneness and self-regulation. The theory identifies two approaches to goal pursuit – the locomotion focus and the assessment focus – where people who adopt the locomotion focus tend to move rapidly from one available option to the next, demonstrating effective agency, while those who adopt the assessment focus spend considerable amounts of time reflecting on options available to them. Results from survey data reflect a negative relationship between boredom proneness and the locomotion focus. This confirms the notion that people who are high in boredom proneness fail to launch into action, (Mugon 2018) thereby demonstrating ineffective agency. Agency is considered a strong human need (Bandura 2006) which focuses on a person's sense of control over their actions as well as their tendency to ascribe agency to self and to external actors (Moore 2016). We hypothesize a negative association between boredom proneness and agency and consider that the human need for agency significantly contributes to the discomfort experienced during boredom. The hypothesized relationship between trait boredom and agency will be examined in 2 studies. In study 1,

participants will be required to complete five survey measures online. Data from participant responses on the short boredom proneness scale, the brief self-control scale, the regulatory mode questionnaire, the sense of agency scale and the self-efficacy scale will be analyzed by establishing zero order correlations between the measures then conducting a hierarchical multiple regression with boredom as the outcome variable. In study 2, the relationship between boredom and the perception of agency will be explored using the Heider and Simmel (1944) task. This will require participants watching a short animation of geometric shapes moving and interacting on a screen. Participants will then rate how intentional and human-like they believed the shapes to be. Participants will also be required to complete questionnaires that measure boredom proneness as well as their tendency to anthropomorphize. The study will include a probe that assesses how bored participants were during the task. This preliminary distinction between the two foci of agency and their respective association with boredom will provide a better understanding of the role of agency in boredom and serve as a foundation for exploring a possible bi-directional relationship between the two constructs.