

# **Stony Brook University**



OFFICIAL COPY

**The official electronic file of this thesis or dissertation is maintained by the University Libraries on behalf of The Graduate School at Stony Brook University.**

**© All Rights Reserved by Author.**

Boredom in Romantic Relationships

A Dissertation Presented  
by

Gregory James Strong

To  
The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements  
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Social/Health Psychology

Stony Brook University

May 2008

Copyright by  
Gregory James Strong  
2008

Stony Brook University

The Graduate School

Gregory James Strong

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the  
Doctor of Philosophy degree, hereby recommend acceptance of this dissertation.

Arthur Aron, Ph.D. – Dissertation Advisor  
Professor of Psychology

Anne Moyer, Ph.D. – Chairperson of Defense  
Assistant Professor of Psychology

Joanne Davila, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Psychology

Margaret Clark, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology  
Yale University

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Lawrence Martin  
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

Boredom in Romantic Relationships

by

Gregory James Strong

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Social/Health Psychology

Stony Brook University  
2008

The success of romantic relationships, an important goal to most people, depends on many factors. Marital satisfaction decline over time is well documented (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000) but the reasons for decline are little understood. Boredom is often cited as a reason for relationship problems (McKenna, 1989; Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993) and may be a significant predictor of relationship dissolution (Aron & Aron, 1986; Fincham & Linfield, 1997; Gigy & Kelly, 1992). Unfortunately, the concept of “boredom” has received little attention in relationship research (Vodanovich, 2003). Building upon two relationship processes (the self-expansion model and approach/avoidance motivation), I proposed that relationship boredom was associated with an absence of affect and/or motivational goals and leads to decreased relationship satisfaction. I attempted to test this in a series of five studies. In the first two studies, I constructed a scale of relationship boredom by using prototype methods (e.g., Fehr, 1988, 2004) and constructed an additional scale of satisfaction based on relationship rewards. In studies three and four, both the boredom scale and the relationship rewards scale were validated, with both showing high reliability, while correlational analyses supported the association between boredom and affect and motivation. Even while controlling for relationship satisfaction, relational boredom was significantly negatively correlated with positive affect, relationship rewards, and relationship approach and avoidance (there was a slight, non-significant negative correlation with negative affect). In the fifth and final study, I used the new boredom scale to measure relationship boredom in participants primed to feel either high or low levels of positive and negative affect in their relationship, or high or low levels of approach and avoidance motivation in their relationship. The results of the fifth study, the priming experiment, were inconclusive. Possible reasons for the lack of support for the hypothesis in the priming study and potential alternative explanations, as well as implications, limitations, and future directions, are discussed.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	v
Introduction .....	1
I.    The Self-Expansion Model .....	1
Approach and Avoidance Motivations .....	2
Interdependence Theory .....	3
The Independence of Positive and Negative Affect .....	4
Lay Meaning of Boredom in Close Relationships .....	5
A Model of Relationship Boredom .....	5
II.   Study 1 .....	6
Method .....	6
Results and Discussion .....	6
III.  Study 2 .....	7
Method .....	7
Results .....	7
IV.  Studies 3 and 4 .....	8
Method .....	8
Results and Discussion .....	9
V.   Study 5 .....	11
Method .....	11
Results and Discussion .....	12
VI.  General Discussion .....	14
References .....	17
Appendix A .....	25
Appendix B .....	27

## List of Tables

Table 1 .....	20
Table 2 .....	22
Table 3 .....	24

## Boredom in Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are very important to people. They are cited as one of the greatest sources of overall life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Berscheid, & Reis, 1998; Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000) and often top the list of people's life goals (Emmons, 1999). Unfortunately, as relationships progress, satisfaction tends to decline over time (Bradbury et al., 2000). Although research documenting the decline of satisfaction is clear, the reasons for it are not. One possible reason may be that couples become bored with each other, with the relationship, or with both. Because people value their romantic relationships, uncovering the reason for relationship failure is unmistakably important.

Boredom is often cited as a reason for relationship problems (McKenna, 1989; Reissman, Aron, & Bergen, 1993). Further, marital therapy often focuses on reducing conflict rather than relieving boredom (Bradbury et al., 2000); however, reducing conflict may actually increase boredom, which in turn may lead back to conflict. Despite the potential threat of boredom in relationships, there is very little research on boredom, especially in the field of relationship research (e.g., Vodanovich, 2003). In this dissertation, I focus on this poorly understood but potentially important challenge in romantic relationships: Relational boredom.

I will begin with brief outlines of the self-expansion and approach/avoidance models of relationships to provide a foundation for examining boredom in long term romantic relationships. Following this, I will give a short description of boredom as it is currently seen in the literature and then apply this to the role of boredom in close relationships. I will then describe a series of five studies I have conducted on the concept of boredom in romantic relationships. Because boredom is not well-understood in relationship research, studies one and two are intended to delineate the lay prototype of boredom in relationships and develop a questionnaire. Studies three and four employ this questionnaire in surveys (one with college students in dating relationships and one with a community sample of non-college participants) to examine its psychometric properties and validity, and to test hypotheses about boredom in relationships based on theoretical considerations described below. The final study tests these hypotheses in an experimental context using priming methods.

### *The Self-Expansion Model*

Why are relationships so important to people? Aron and colleagues (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron, Aron, & Norman, 2001) hypothesize that we form relationships in order to expand our sense of self. Activities, memories, resources, perspectives, and identities are shared with a new relationship partner and our "self" rapidly expands to include aspects of this new person and relationship. Rapid self-expansion is associated with arousal and positive affect and is desirable for most people. Thus, according to this model, one reason relationships are important is because they fulfill our desire for self-expansion.

During the beginning stages of a relationship, self-expansion is quite rapid. In this early relationship formation period, couples typically engage in large amounts of

self-disclosure and shared activities (talking on the telephone for hours, spending vast amounts of time with each other, continually thinking about the partner, etc.). Rapid expansion of the self, so long as it is not overwhelming, is associated with feelings of great pleasure, arousal, and excitement (Aron et al., 2001). After the initial relationship stages, self-expansion slows as couples become more accustomed and comfortable with each other.

Since expansion is pleasing, slowing of expansion is upsetting. This may lead to boredom in the relationship, reduced satisfaction, and possibly a desire to find a new partner in order to experience those pleasurable feelings again. Leaving one's partner to find someone new to expand with is impractical for many reasons and although it sometimes happens, there are many unpleasant consequences for doing so (e.g., loss of shared resources, potential negative impact on children, disapproval from others, etc.). Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, and Heyman (2000) predicted that couples who engage in shared novel and challenging activities would experience renewed self-expansion and greater experienced relationship quality. This prediction was supported by their research and was particularly true for couples in longer-term relationships (about a year or more) for whom expansion from early relationship formation had presumably slowed or ceased. In addition, two of the studies measured "boredom with the relationship," and lower levels of boredom were found to be a significant mediator of the link between self-expanding activities and relationship quality. In other words, couples may be able to alleviate boredom and keep their relationship "new" by doing novel and challenging activities with each other so that self-expansion continues and boredom does not set in.

The principle is that as a result of the decline of rapid self-expansion some couples may experience distress and boredom. The couple may not feel as happy or passionate with the relationship now that the newness and excitement has begun to disappear into feelings of predictability and complacency. In other words, as self-expansion slows over time, *highly* positive affect (e.g., excitement) may also begin to disappear, leaving only *low* positive and/or negative affect (e.g., complacency and boredom).

Loss of excitement due to habituation and slowing of expansion is likely to lead to boredom with the partner and with the relationship in general. Dissatisfaction due to decreased self-expansion may cause larger problems to begin appearing (e.g., arguing, avoidance of one's partner, infidelity). Many couples experiencing distress and problems in their relationship, and who seek professional help to alleviate these problems, may only be exhibiting symptoms of an underlying problem – boredom and disenchantment with the relationship and partner. Indeed, simply becoming bored and disinterested with the relationship (i.e., feeling a lack of positive *or* negative affect) are potentially some of the greatest predictors of subsequent relationship dissolution (e.g., Aron & Aron, 1986; Fincham & Linfield, 1997; Gigy & Kelly, 1992).

#### *Approach and avoidance motivations*

Approach goals refer to anything someone is motivated to acquire; whereas avoidance goals refer to anything someone is motivated to lose or avoid. When taken in the context of romantic relationships, approach goals help explain why people typically

begin romantic relationships; because the other person offers something one desires or needs. Avoidance goals may also explain relationship formation, in that people desire to avoid loneliness or social stigmatization (e.g., Gable & Reis, 2001; Reis & Gable, 2003).

Hedonism refers to the pursuit of pleasures and the avoidance of pains but these are separate goals and engaging in one does not necessarily prevent the other. This is an important difference because there are different outcomes when one either achieves or fails to reach a goal, depending on whether one is approaching a desired outcome or avoiding an undesired outcome (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1999). When a person is doing well in approaching a desired goal (engaging in a discrepancy-reducing loop), the result is an increase in positive affect such as joy or happiness. When one is doing poorly at the same goal, the result is a decrease in positive affect (i.e., experiencing *low* positive affect), such as disinterest or boredom. When one is doing well at avoiding a particular undesired goal (engaging in a discrepancy-enlarging loop), the result is a decrease in negative affect (i.e., experiencing *low* negative affect), such as relief and security, but *not* an increase in positive affect, such as joy and excitement. When one is doing poorly at this task, the result is an increase in negative affect such as fear, anger, sadness, etc., but *not* a decrease in positive affect, like boredom. Successfully avoiding a conflict with your spouse is rewarding and positive; nevertheless, it is not the same as successfully receiving praise from your spouse. Avoiding an argument is not the same thing as receiving a gift, even though in both cases, goals are being achieved (avoidance goals for the former and approach goals for the latter – avoiding pain versus pursuing pleasure).

Since low positive affect (an absence of positive affect) is represented by feelings of boredom and disinterest and low negative affect (an absence of negative affect) is represented by feelings of calm and security, what happens when someone is experiencing an absence of both positive and negative affect (feeling both low positive and low negative affect)? In this case, overall relationship satisfaction may play the deciding role. Perhaps when one is feeling a general lack of either positive or negative affect, then, in the context of one's romantic relationship, if satisfaction is relatively high, then calmness is experienced and if satisfaction is low, boredom is experienced.

The theories described above, as well as common reinforcement theories and research by those involved in this field (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1990, 1998; Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Gable & Reis, 2001; Higgins, 1997) suggest that positive and negative affect shares close links with approach and avoidance (and appetitive/aversive) goals. Simply, that people approach positive affective states and avoid negative affective states. For example, one is more likely to volunteer for a job or position if he or she believes a positive affective state will result. Conversely, one would be expected to more frequently withdraw from engaging in an activity or task that produces negative affect.

### *Interdependence Theory*

According to interdependence theory (Kelly, 1991), particularly as elaborated in the investment model (e.g., Rusbult & Arriaga; 1997), a person feels committed to his or her partner in a close relationship largely as a function of satisfaction, investments, and having poor alternatives to the relationship. Satisfaction is essentially the degree of enjoyment and happiness one has due to being in the relationship. Investments can

represent actual shared material goods (home, savings, etc.), children, time spent together, future plans, and shared goals. Investments can also be considered *barriers* to leaving the relationship. For example, societies or religious organizations that disapprove of divorce may serve as barriers. Finally, the “comparison level of alternatives” to the relationship can be other seemingly better partners or even the alternative to not be in a relationship at all. Taken together, the combination of high satisfaction, high investments/barriers, and low quality of alternatives, leads to greater commitment to one’s relationship

In the context of the present issues, an interesting situation is one in which satisfaction is low, but there is an absence of alternatives, or the potential loss of investments and the barriers to leaving the relationship are overpowering. When satisfaction is low, one is certainly not happy. Still, low satisfaction does not necessarily imply high levels of negative affect (e.g., anger or fear) either. That is, under conditions of low satisfaction, there can be situations in which both rewards *and* punishments are low. Such an absence of any sort of affective stimulation, whether positive or negative, may create a condition in which neither happiness nor anger/fear are present. Under these conditions, if there are good alternatives and low investments and barriers, then people would probably end the relationship to pursue the alternatives. But if alternatives are unavailable or undesirable, or barriers or investments are high, then ending the relationship may not be an option. In this case, when one is stuck in an unsatisfying relationship, yet there is no abuse or punishment, perhaps boredom is the result.

#### *The Independence of Positive and Negative Affect*

My model of boredom is based on the notion of low positive and low negative affect (for a review, see Strong & Aron, 2006). In this context it is important to briefly consider current thinking that affect can manifest itself as either positive (happy, joyous, elated, etc.) or negative (angry, sad, frightened, etc.). Positive and negative affect have traditionally been depicted as opposing ends of a single dimension. However, the model that appears to have the most consistent support in the contemporary research literature posits two separate dimensions, one representing positive affect and the other representing negative affect (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1990, 1998; Diener & Emmons, 1985; Fincham & Linfield, 1997; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The positive and negative dimensions are generally independent of (orthogonal to) each other. The positive and negative axis labels depend on the factor rotation. That is, Watson et al. (1988) found that factor analyses on a number of self-report items of a participant’s affective state tended to produce two factors. Prior to rotation, one factor appears to represent positive versus negative valence (termed “pleasantness/unpleasantness” by Watson et al.) and the other factor appears to represent high versus low arousal. After Varimax rotation, however, the two factors clearly represented high versus low positive affect and high versus low negative affect. On each axis, one end represents high presence (high positive/high negative) of that affect and the other end represents an absence (low positive/low negative) of that affect. In this case, anger, anxiety, and fear lie on the high end of the negative axis and peacefulness, contentment, and security lie on the low end of the negative axis. Similarly, joyousness, exhilaration, and excitement lie

on the high end of the positive axis. The low end includes melancholy, loneliness, and – significantly – boredom. The low ends of each axis represent the *absence* of that affect. For example, contentment, lying on the low end of the negative axis, represents a *lack* of negative affect without necessarily representing the presence of positive affect. Likewise, boredom, our main focus here, lying on the low end of the positive axis, represents a *lack* of positive affect without necessarily representing the presence of negative affect.

### *Lay Meaning of Boredom in Close Relationships*

Boredom in the context of romantic relationships has received little attention by researchers. Indeed, the very concept of “boredom” in general is not well understood or defined (Mikulas & Vodanovich, 1993, Vodanovich, 2003). Factor analyses of several constructs of boredom have turned up various, differing factor structures (for a review, see Vodanovich, 2003). One likely reason for these differences may be because the definition for boredom in ordinary usage resembles a more loosely defined prototype structure, just as Fehr (1988) has shown that love and commitment (and more recently, intimacy; Fehr, 2004), have a prototype structure in lay understanding. In a prototype structure, some features associated with the prototype are seen as more central than other features, but there is no systematic definition that encompasses the meaning of the term.

### *A Model of Relationship Boredom*

In the preceding sections, I have introduced the concept of boredom in romantic relationships, a concept that has been mostly neglected in research but that could potentially be an important precursor to declines in relationship satisfaction and subsequent relational problems. I then proposed that relationship boredom may be associated with a deficiency of positive and negative affect and approach and avoidance motivations in relationships. Finally, given that relationship boredom lacks a clear definition, I suggested that it may have a prototype structure. From these observations, I formulated two hypotheses:

1. Boredom in a close romantic relationship is experienced when the relationship produces: (a) low positive affect (i.e., absence of positive affect) and (b) low negative affect (i.e., absence of negative affect). Alternately, instead of a lack of *affect* producing boredom, it may be: (a) low approach motivation and b) low avoidance motivation that lead to boredom.
2. The lay meaning of boredom in relationships has a prototype structure (but one in which central features corresponds loosely to the more systematic definition in point 1 above).

I carried out a series of five studies to test these hypotheses. The first two focused on the construct of boredom, identifying its prototype structure, testing its association to affect and motivation, and creating a self-report measure of relationship boredom. The aspect of these two studies that focuses on developing a prototype structure is based on Fehr’s (1988) paradigm that she applied successfully to identifying the prototype structure of love and commitment, and which she has used more recently to identify the prototype structure of intimacy (Fehr, 2004); other researchers have used this approach to

identify other relationship relevant prototypes (e.g., Hassebrauck's [1997] work on the prototype of a "good relationship."). In the third and fourth studies, I validated the newly created measure of relationship boredom in a student and non-student, community sample, respectively. In the final study, I attempted to experimentally manipulate relationship-related affect or motivation in participants using priming methods and then measured their amount of relationship boredom using the scale validated in the previous studies.

### Study 1

This study identified the features of boredom (specific to romantic relationships) that came to mind spontaneously in lay individuals. The purpose was to allow free response to participants in order to encourage the generation of all potential terms corresponding to relationship boredom.

#### *Method*

For this study, 216 Stony Brook University undergraduates, enrolled in an introductory psychology course, completed the questionnaires during a special class session in which everyone participates in several psychology studies (all conducted using questionnaires and similar forms). Although no demographic information is available, the makeup of the participants was very typical of Eastern United States, metropolitan, early-year college students. The students completed a questionnaire requiring them simply to list as many words or short phrases as they could about the word "boredom" in the context of close relationships. Students were able to spend as much time as they wanted thinking of words; however, the majority of them completed the questionnaire in 1 to 3 minutes.

#### *Results and Discussion*

Two undergraduate research assistants tabulated the responses, combining highly similar terms following Fehr's (1988) procedure. The assistants were blind to the study's purpose and worked independently of each other. Both assistants were trained on how to group responses and were instructed to be conservative in ambiguous cases, leaving words separate if they were not sure about how similar the words were. Single words, such as "tired," "lonely," and "sad" were easily identified as individual and separate categories. Words that were grammatically equivalent were combined with those categories. For example, "sadness" would be grouped with "sad." Modifying adjectives, adverbs, and phrases (i.e., "very sad," "feeling lonely," and "starting to get tired of the relationship") were dropped and the single word was then grouped in its corresponding category as long as that word could stand on its own. As stated above, a conservative approach was taken in more ambiguous cases, where similar words may have different meanings (e.g., "love" and "in love"). Usually, these were left separate unless doing so would create too many redundant categories. Thus, "sadness," "sorrow," and "unhappy" were all combined into the category "sad" but "discontent" was not because it might have a meaning other than "sad." The most frequently listed terms appeared on face value to correspond to the hypothesis that boredom represents an absence of affect or motivation.

Among the most common items, for example, were the terms; “lack of intimacy,” “not going out,” and “no emotions/feelings.” Fifty four of the most frequently listed terms are shown in Table 1.

### Study 2

Following Fehr’s (1988) procedures, in Study 2, the most frequently listed items identified in Study 1 were listed in random order on a new questionnaire in which participants rate each term for its centrality to the concept of boredom in relationships.

#### *Method*

A new sample of 179 Stony Brook students (91 women and 85 men (3 left blank); mean age = 18.4), in a classroom setting identical to the one described in Study 1, were instructed to rate each item on a scale of 1 (not at all central to the concept of boredom) to 9 (very central to the concept of boredom). For relationship status, 94 participants reported their current status as “not dating” (of these, 44 had never been in a romantic relationship) and the remaining 85 participants were currently dating, engaged, or married. Duration of relationships ranged from zero (not in a relationship) to 6 years, 7 months (median relationship length: 1 year, 5 months). Each participant completed the measure of centrality ratings for the 52 most frequently listed terms and a demographic information sheet.

#### *Results*

The centrality ratings for all 52 items are listed (along with their means and standard deviations) on Table 1. I also used the demographic information to test the centrality ratings for possible gender differences and differences due to relationship length. For both gender differences and relationship length differences, the order of centrality for some items was different but the top items consistently stayed on top. The most central rated items for each gender and for varying relationship lengths is shown in Table 2.

In addition, following Aron and Westbay (1996), I conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the top 15 most centrally rated items to identify potential latent factors underlying an overall relationship boredom prototype. I chose to focus on only 15 items because my intention was to construct a relationship boredom measure using the most highly rated items and I wanted it to be short enough to remain practical for general use. Using a 15 item measure for the validation studies (Studies 3 and 4, described below) left room to eliminate a few problematic items, should they occur, and help ensure the final measure would be concise and effective. Using principle axis factoring, one factor was extracted accounting for 76% of the variance and all 15 items loaded at .75 or greater on the single factor. The 15 items, considered as a scale, also showed very high reliability: Alpha = .97.

Based on the frequency of items from Study 1 and the centrality ratings and factor analysis results from Study 2, I constructed a scale of “boredom in romantic relationships” consisting of the 15 items with the highest frequencies, centrality, and highest factor loadings on the key factors. The items were incorporated into sentence

structures mostly phrased in a positive aspect (i.e., the item “No Laughing” was used to form the sentence “My partner and I laugh together” with high scoring on the item corresponding to less boredom). This new measure of boredom in romantic relationships was then validated in Studies 3 and 4 and used as the dependent variable measure in Study 5. The final questionnaire is shown in Appendix A.

#### Studies 3 and 4

Both Studies 3 and 4 were conducted to refine and validate the new “boredom in romantic relationships” measure as well as serving as an initial test of my hypotheses about the sources of relationship boredom. Study 3 was comprised of a student sample whereas Study 4 was comprised of non-students. Results from each sample were compared to each other in order to determine if non-students were answering differently. In both studies, participants received identical questionnaires; the only difference was in sample composition. Thus, I have combined both in this section and will describe differences when appropriate.

#### *Method*

For Study 3, a new sample of 164 undergraduate students at Stony Brook University, recruited through the Department of Psychology’s experiment scheduling service, served as participants. For their participation, each student received credit to partially fulfill regular course requirements. Because I wanted results from a sample more likely to have experienced relationship boredom themselves, all participants in this study were currently in romantic relationships that had lasted at least one year. For Study 4, 32 people recruited from the Long Island, New York area served as participants, also under the requirement that they were currently in a romantic relationship of at least one year’s duration. Undergraduate research assistants approached strangers or recruited people they were acquainted with (although they were specifically instructed not to recruit close friends or family members) and these participants completed the questionnaires in a quiet and secluded area while the research assistant waited a short distance away. For their participation, each person was entered into a lottery to win a \$100 prize.

Participants completed the newly created “boredom in romantic relationships” measure; two direct items about boredom in their relationship (how boring is it and how exciting is it) from Aron et al. (2000); the positive and negative affect scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), but with each affect item answered for how participants feel in their relationship; the Generic Measure of Relationship Satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988); relationship self-expansion measured with the Self-Expansion Questionnaire (SEQ; Lewandowski, 2002); Elliot, Gable, and Mapes’s (2006) measures of friendship approach and avoidance goals (tailored for participants to respond to these goals in the context of romantic relationships); Sullaway & Christensen’s (1983) short form measure of relationship conflict; the short form items from Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) on relationship satisfaction, alternatives, investments, and commitment, to assess the importance of barriers-to-leaving/investments and contrast effects of the current partner and potential alternative partners; Loving and Agnew’s (2001) measure of

relationship social desirability; and finally, a page of demographic information (e.g., gender, relationship length, etc.). Additionally, I constructed a measure of relationship satisfaction based on rewards and costs in order to examine how the presence and absence of rewards and costs might be associated with more general satisfaction and relationship boredom.

### *Results and Discussion*

This study was designed to test and validate the newly created boredom in romantic relationships scale. The results generally confirmed the scale's validity as a measure of relationship boredom. I ran several t-tests on the principle variables to compare potential differences between Study 3 (students) and Study 4 (non-students). Although the non-student sample was significantly older (Study 3 mean age = 19.9,  $SD = 2.8$ ; Study 4 mean age = 31.2,  $SD = 10.8$ ;  $t = 11.6$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and in longer term relationships (Study 3 mean duration = 26.7 months,  $SD = 22.2$ ; Study 4 mean duration = 97.3 months,  $SD = 96.7$ ;  $t = 8.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ), none of the other tests (e.g., scores for relationship boredom, satisfaction, affect, etc.) approached significance. In addition, I conducted several regression analyses to determine if the student versus non-student sample had any influence. In each regression, relationship boredom was the criterion variable and the predictor variables were the subject type (student or non-student), the variable of interest (i.e., each variable used in testing validity described below: negative affect, positive affect, relationship conflict, and so forth), and the product of subject type and the variable of interest (e.g., negative affect X subject type). In all regressions, the product terms never approached significance; therefore, all subsequent analyses included both samples of subject types equally.

Following the above analyses to rule out any potential interaction effects from subject type, I tested the validity of the relationship rewards and costs scale I created. After deleting unreliable items, a short scale of four questions remained and had good reliability,  $\text{Alpha} = .89$ . I conducted several exploratory factor analyses and tested the reliability of various combinations of items from the rewards and costs measure to determine if there was a two-factor subset (or multiple subsets); however, all of these analyses were inconclusive and none of them proved fruitful; they were all much weaker than the four-item, final measure. The remaining items focused entirely on relationship rewards or benefits; as a result, the scale will be referred to as a relationship reward scale for the remainder of this paper. This scale was positively correlated with the Rusbult et al. (1998) satisfaction scale ( $r = .81$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the Hendrick (1988) satisfaction scale ( $r = .80$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

I tested the internal consistency of the boredom in romantic relationships scale using alpha and factor analysis. After removing a single item (coincidentally, the only reverse-scored item),  $\text{Alpha} = .92$ . I also conducted an exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring (using all items except the one dropped in the reliability analysis). One factor was extracted, accounting for 49.8% of the variance, with all items loading at .50 or greater on the single factor. Eigenvalues for the first five factors were: 6.97, 1.25, 1.16, .74, and .69, respectively.

Following the reliability and factor analyses to test for internal consistency, I conducted additional correlational analyses between the boredom scale and the other measures to test the external validity of the relationship boredom scale. Correlations, means, and standard deviations for major variables are shown in Table 3. A full table of correlations, means, and standard deviations for all variables in Studies 3 and 4 are shown in Appendix B. Additionally, to control for the possibility of multicollinearity between boredom and relationship satisfaction, additional correlation analyses were conducted between boredom and affect and boredom and approach/avoidance motivation, in all cases controlling for relationship satisfaction (using Rusbult et al.'s 1998 measure). These partial correlations are also shown in Table 3.

The high, positive correlation of the boredom scale with the simple two-item boredom measure ( $r = .73, p < .001$ ) suggests good convergent validity, and the low, non-significant correlation with relationship social desirability ( $r = -.04, ns$ ) suggests good discriminant validity. Construct validity, and my initial hypotheses that boredom is represented by a lack of affect and approach/avoidance motivation, were generally supported by the negative correlations with positive affect ( $r = -.76, p < .001$ ), relationship approach ( $r = -.53, p < .001$ ), relationship avoidance ( $r = -.22, p < .01$ ), relationship satisfaction (with the Rusbult et al. (1998) measure,  $r = -.73, p < .001$ ; similar results were found with the Hendrick (1988) measure,  $r = -.70, p < .001$ ; and my relationship rewards measure  $r = -.74, p < .001$ ), and relationship self-expansion ( $r = -.60, p < .001$ ). The positive correlations of relationship boredom with negative affect ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ) and relationship conflict ( $r = .36, p < .001$ ) were not consistent with my hypotheses that boredom is best represented by an absence of both positive *and* negative affect. However, people's overall relationship satisfaction may have an influence on their feelings of relationship boredom (i.e., very satisfied people might see everything more positively while very unsatisfied people might see everything more negatively). Thus, correlations partialling out satisfaction were conducted. When controlling for satisfaction, the partial correlations between boredom and positive affect ( $r = -.57, p < .001$ ), relationship approach ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ ), relationship avoid ( $r = -.33, p < .001$ ), and self-expansion ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ ) all remain significantly negative (also, the partial correlations between boredom and the simple boredom items and relationship social desirability also remain very similar to the bivariate correlations), lending further support to the discriminant validity of the relationship boredom measure. Of particular note is the partial correlations between boredom and negative affect ( $r = -.09, ns$ ) and relationship conflict ( $r = .09, ns$ ). While both partial correlations in this case do not directly support the hypothesis of a lack of negative affect, their non-significance (and the reversed sign of negative affect) is promising.

To be thorough, and as a more direct test of the hypothesis that high levels of relationship boredom are associated with a lack of affect (low positive *and* low negative affect) or motivation (low approach *and* low avoidance motivation), I conducted two regression analyses. For the first regression, positive affect and negative affect were entered as simultaneous predictors (along with relationship length, age, gender, satisfaction, and subject type all as covariates) and relationship boredom was entered as the criterion variable. The second regression emulated the first, except approach

motivation and avoidance motivation were entered in place of positive and negative affect. The results were almost identical to the partial correlations. Following this, I conducted two more regressions with the same criterion variable (relationship boredom) and covariates, but the predictors were self-expansion for the first regression and relationship conflict for the second. Again, the results mirrored the partial correlations almost exactly.

Finally, in order to assess possible barriers/investments associations or contrast effects, I conducted three additional regression analyses using the alternatives and investments scales from the Rusbult et al. (1998) Interdependence measure. In all three regressions, relationship boredom was the criterion variable and gender, relationship length, and satisfaction were entered as independent variables (as covariates). In the first regression, alternatives was entered as the predictor, in the second regression, investments was entered as the predictor, and in the third, both alternatives and investments were entered. In all three regressions, the results for alternatives and investments were non-significant (the standardized regression coefficient for alternatives in the first regression,  $Beta = .036$ , *ns*; for investments in the second,  $Beta = -.124$ , *ns*; and for the third regression, alternatives  $Beta = .046$ , *ns*, and investments  $Beta = -.128$ , *ns*).

### Study 5

In this final study, I attempted to use priming to manipulate relationship related affect and approach/avoidance motivation to test the hypothesis that relationship boredom is predicted by the interaction of low positive and low negative affect, or alternately, by the interaction of low approach and low avoidance motivations.

#### *Method*

The experiment consisted of a pair of 2 X 2 studies with 40 participants each (overall  $N = 80$ ). As in the previous study (Study 3), all participants were recruited through the psychology department's subject pool in partial fulfillment of course requirements and all participants were required to currently be in a relationship that had lasted at least one year. 40 participated in a 2 (high vs. low positive affect) X 2 (high vs. low negative affect) procedure and the other 40 in a 2 (high vs. low approach motivation) X 2 (high vs. low avoidance motivation) procedure. Participants were primed by writing brief accounts of their relationships, using procedures similar to Rusbult et al. (1998) and Lewandowski et al. (in press). For positive affect, they wrote about either (a – high positive affect condition) *three examples of exciting things they have done with their partner that made them feel "alive and wonderful"* or (b – low positive affect condition) *three times something happened with their partner that was slightly (but not greatly) unpleasant*. For negative affect, they wrote about either (a – high negative affect condition) *three times their partner did something to them that very deeply hurt them or which left them feeling angry, mistreated, afraid, or quite depressed*; or (b – low negative affect condition) *three pleasant, but not exciting, things they have done with their partner which left them feeling comfortable and pleasant but not particularly exhilarated or overjoyed*. For approach motivation, they wrote about, in detail, either (a – high

approach motivation condition) *two important things you are currently working hard to accomplish in your relationship*; or (b – low approach motivation condition) *two things that some people think are important to accomplish in relationships but that you do not think are as important to accomplish*. For avoidance motivation, they wrote in detail about either (a – high avoidance motivation condition) *two important things you are currently working hard to avoid happening in your relationship*; or (b – low avoidance motivation condition) *two things that some people believe are important to avoid happening in relationships but that you do not think are as important to avoid*. The orders of essays were counterbalanced across conditions (for example, half of the people in the low positive by low negative condition wrote the negative essay first and the other half wrote the positive essay first). For all conditions, I planned to include manipulation checks; unfortunately, these were inadvertently left out and therefore I could not accurately measure the efficacy of the priming tasks.

After completing the writing primes, all participants completed the boredom measure developed in Study 2 (and refined in Studies 3 and 4) and the two Aron et al. (2000) boredom items, which were intended to serve as the dependent variables. Additionally, participants in the affect priming group completed the relationship approach and avoidance goals measure (based on the Elliot et al. (2006) measure that was used in the previous studies); whereas, participants in the motivation group completed the relationship-oriented Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; based on the Watson et al. (1988) scale used previously). These measures were also dependent variables and tested as possible mediators because affect was a potential mediator of the association between motivation and boredom, while motivation was a potential mediator of the association between affect and boredom. Participants also completed the Rusbult et al. (1998) Interdependence measure. Finally, all participants completed the same demographic information sheet used in the previous studies. After completing all of these measures, those in the high negative affect by low positive affect condition completed the high positive affect essay so as to offset any negative effects on their relationships.

### *Results and Discussion*

Results from this experiment did not support the hypotheses that relationship boredom is predicted by a lack of affect or a lack of motivation in the relationship. To test the effects of affect on boredom, I conducted an analysis of variance in which the fixed factors were dummy coded variables of 1) high positive affect or not, and 2) high negative affect or not, the dependent variable was the boredom scale, and relationship length and gender were entered as covariates. The results for the interaction of high positive affect or not by high negative affect or not were not significant,  $F(1, 34) = 2.20$ ,  $p = .15$ , *ns*. The main effects for high positive affect or not,  $F(1, 34) = .035$ , and for high negative affect or not,  $F(1, 34) = .613$ , were also not significant. The effects of motivation were similarly tested in an ANOVA in which approach/avoidance was dummy coded as 1) high approach or not, and 2) high avoidance or not and entered as fixed factors, boredom as the dependent variable, and relationship length and gender as covariates. The interaction term of high approach or not by high avoidance or not was

not significant,  $F(1, 34) = .263, p = .61, ns$ . The main effects for high approach or not,  $F(1, 34) = .389$ , and high avoidance or not,  $F(1, 34) = .019$ , were likewise not significant. Thus, the results of several ANOVAs to assess the effect of affect and motivation on relationship boredom did not significantly show that the combination of low positive and low negative affect, or that low approach and low avoidance motivation caused greater relationship boredom.

Likewise, planned contrasts comparing *only* the high affect or high motivation with the low affect or low motivation (i.e., participants in mixed conditions, for example, high positive and low negative, were not included) did not show significant results. As before, dummy variables were created for 1) high affect (both positive and negative included) or not, 2) low affect or not, 3) high motivation (both approach and avoidance included), and 4) low motivation. Two separate ANOVAs were conducted. In the first, high affect and low affect were entered as fixed factors, boredom as the dependent variable, and gender and relationship length as covariates. For high affect,  $F(1, 35) = .733, p = .40, ns$ . For low affect,  $F(1, 35) = 2.412, p = .13, ns$ . There was no interaction term for high affect only by low affect only because, by definition, each one excludes the other (i.e., the product term equals zero). In the second ANOVA, high motivation and low motivation were entered as the fixed factors, boredom as the dependent variable, and gender and relationship length as covariates. For high motivation,  $F(1, 35) = .011, p = .92, ns$ . For low motivation,  $F(1, 35) = .568, p = .46, ns$ . The same inconclusive results were found with the simple boredom items as the dependent variables instead of the relationship boredom measure. Indeed, in all analyses the results tended slightly (though non-significantly) towards the opposite results; that higher levels of affect and motivation led to increased boredom. When overall relationship satisfaction was controlled for, the effects became close to zero, suggesting some multicollinearity between relationship boredom and relationship satisfaction. I also tested for possible curvilinear effects between relationship boredom and relationship satisfaction. To test for quadratic effects, the boredom score was squared and entered as predictor (along with the unsquared boredom score) in a regression equation with relationship satisfaction as the criterion. The Beta (standardized regression coefficient) for the quadratic term was  $.253, p = .54, ns$ . To test for cubic effects, the boredom score was cubed and entered as another predictor in the regression equation (along with the other variables as described above). The Beta for the cubic term was  $-1.372, p = .57, ns$ . Thus, there were no significant curvilinear effects between boredom and relationship satisfaction.

To determine if the order of the essays (i.e., positive or negative first, or approach or avoidance first) affected the outcome, I conducted independent samples t-tests for each possible condition, with condition order as the independent variable and relationship boredom as the dependent variable. However, none of these t-tests approached significance, suggesting that the order in which participants wrote about their relationships did not influence their reports of relationship boredom. Despite this, I thought participants may have been more influenced by the last essay they wrote; thus, I conducted new ANOVAs in which only the second of the two essays were included as independent variables. For affect, an ANOVA was conducted with three conditions of the second essay as the independent variable (high positive affect, high negative affect, or

low affect), boredom as the dependent variable, and gender and relationship length as covariates.  $F(2, 35) = 1.127, p = .34, ns$ . For motivation, the same analysis was conducted but with high approach motivation, high avoidance motivation, and low motivation (as with affect, low approach and low avoidance were combined into one condition) as the conditions of the independent variable.  $F(2, 35) = .023, p = .977, ns$ . As before, the results were not significant and generally inconclusive. I also conducted independent samples t-tests with second essay as the independent variable and boredom as the dependent variable. This time, the conditions in the independent variable were simply “high” or “low,” for both the affect essays and motivation essays. Once again, the t-scores were low and non significant and the results inconclusive.

### *General Discussion*

The goals of these studies were to discern the meaning of boredom in the context of romantic relationships, design a measure of relationship boredom based upon the lay terminology discovered, and use this measure to test the hypothesis that relationship boredom arises due to a lack of positive and negative affect or a lack of approach and avoidance motivation. Except for the failure to confirm a causal link between affect/motivation and boredom, the results supported the goals and hypotheses of these studies.

Two independent samples provided and rated the lay terminology of relationship boredom, which led to the creation of a measurement of it, and additional samples confirmed the internal and external validity of the new measurement of relationship boredom. Further, correlational analyses suggested that relationship boredom is either negatively associated or unassociated with positive and negative affect and approach and avoidance motivation. More specifically, these studies imply that people probably do not see boredom as a highly negative emotion or behavior, and certainly not as positive ones. Rather, relationship boredom appears to represent the very absence or lack of emotions and behaviors. The most frequently listed terms for participant’s ideas of what relationship boredom means clearly indicate the removal or absence of things: “no fun,” “no emotions,” “not going out,” and so on. It is important to note that people did *not* frequently list, nor rate as highly central, terms that indicated obviously positive or negative terms such as: “angry/sad/unhappy emotions,” “bad times going out,” “arguing/fighting,” or similar items. Indeed, “arguing,” “hurt,” and “bad” were near the very bottom of the list of items central to relationship boredom and the term “need to argue,” although not one of the most central terms, was still rated higher than “arguing.”

The failure of the final study to provide experimental evidence that a lack of affect or motivation leads to relationship boredom was disappointing; however, there are several possible explanations for this. First, it may simply be the case that my hypotheses about the nature of relationship boredom are incorrect, that affect and motivation operate in some fashion other than what I hypothesized, or that the direction of causality leans more towards boredom causing lowered affect and motivation instead of the other way around. Of course, there is also the possibility that some unmeasured variable lies at the root of relationship boredom, perhaps it arises due to frustration or perhaps relationship boredom is more trait-like, with certain people more or less prone to boredom regardless

of their emotional or motivational situations. Another possibility is that the writing primes themselves may not have had the intended effect. For example, participants writing about a time when their partner made them feel “alive and wonderful” (the high positive affect condition) are writing about the past and it may not correctly represent their current feelings about their partner or the relationship. In fact, by writing about great things that happened in the past, they may have inadvertently been primed to believe things were better in the past than they are now; a problem that would cause the proposed results to be reversed (the results, though still not significant, were indeed opposite of the proposed hypotheses). In the motivation condition, participants did not write about past events; however, that may also have been problematic. In the high approach condition, participants write about something important that they are working hard to accomplish in their relationship. By definition, whatever the participant writes is going to be something they have not yet accomplished, which could have contributed to the participant feeling there was a lack of something, which, according to our hypothesis, represents the meaning of boredom. Because the manipulation checks were inadvertently left out of the questionnaires, I was not able to determine if the writing primes were effective or not. Finally, the lack of significant results in the final study could have been due to multicollinearity with overall relationship satisfaction (i.e., when people are satisfied they believe they aren’t bored and vice versa) or to the general floor effect in the results for boredom; scores for boredom were skewed towards the “less bored” end and even after transformation, the amount of variability to be accounted for was small. In any case, future studies on the topic would likely produce better results by using a more direct manipulation. For example, an actual interaction between partners designed to induce or reduce affect or motivation would probably achieve the desired manipulation effect. Regardless, only the final study failed to produce notable results, the correlational analyses suggest some important links between affect, motivation, and relationship boredom.

The results of these studies have some important implications. Research on relationship boredom (and on boredom in general) has been sparse. A potential reason for this has been the lack of a definition or even any solid defining characteristics. That being said, a significant contribution of this dissertation is the production and validation of a measurement of boredom in romantic relationships; a measure that provides a much needed means to appraise relationship boredom. In creating this scale, and more generally, by analyzing and categorizing people’s responses and ideas about what relationship boredom means, I have discovered a rich source of information about the concept. Plus, the general agreement among several samples of participants, both married and single, and student and non-student, about these lay theories about relationship boredom helps to solidify the results of five independent studies into one coherent, programmatic, idea. Now that the concept of relationship boredom is better understood, and a means of assessing it is available, perhaps it will promote further research on the subject. An additional implication is the evidence that relationship boredom represents another concept that is the focus of some debate in the emotion field: the structure of affect, and in particular, the idea that boredom (and perhaps other constructs) can exist as an absence of affect. The suggestion that it is possible to feel

neither positive nor negative affect (in essence, to feel nothing) is somewhat controversial. However, boredom appears to fulfill this unusual aspect of non-feeling, which is something worth further consideration and research. Finally, I believe the most important aspect is also an applied one: that boredom in a relationship may be a potentially important yet mostly unexplored cause of distress in romantic relationships. If relationship boredom is caused by a lack of positive and negative affect or by a lack of approach or avoidance motivation, then relationship therapy that focuses on reducing conflict between couples, without increasing positive emotions or motivations, may be inadvertently causing the couple to become bored. More crucial, the cause of the conflict itself may simply come from boredom in the relationship. If so, then therapy should focus on reducing boredom (as the cause of conflict) rather than on reducing conflict, which would only be a symptom of the greater underlying problem of boredom. In any case, it appears clear that research on relationship boredom deserves more attention, and hopefully the initiatives set forth in this dissertation might serve as a keystone in future studies.

## References

- Aron, A., & Aron, E. (1986). *Love and the expansion of self: Understanding attraction and satisfaction*. New York: Hemisphere.
- Aron, A., & Aron, E., & Norman, C. C. (2001). Self-expansion model of motivation and cognition in close relationships and beyond. In G. J. O. Fletcher & M. Clark (Eds.), *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Interpersonal Processes*. (pp. 478-501). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Aron, A., Norman, C. C., Aron, E. N., McKenna, C., & Heyman, R. (2000). Couple's shared participation in novel and arousing activities and experienced relationship quality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*, 273-283.
- Aron, A., & Westbay, L. (1996). Dimensions of the Prototype of Love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*, 535-551.
- Berscheid, E., & Reis, H. T. (1998). Attraction and close relationships. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. 2, pp. 193-281). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *62*, 964-980.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1990). Origins and functions of positive and negative affect: A control-process view. *Psychological Review*, *97*, 19-35.
- Carver, C. & Scheier, M. (1998). *On the Self-Regulation of Behavior*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Carver, C. & Scheier, M. (1999). Themes and issues in the self-regulation of behavior. In R. Wyer (Ed.), *Perspectives on Behavioral Self-Regulation: Advances in Social Cognition*. (pp. 1-105). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Carver, C., Sutton, S., & Scheier, M. (2000). Action, emotion, and personality: Emerging conceptual integration. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *26*, 741-751.
- Diener, E., & Emmons, R. A. (1985). The independence of positive and negative affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *47*, 1105-1117.
- Elliot, A., Gable, S., & Mapes, R. (2006). Approach and avoidance motivation in the social domain. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *32*, 378-391.

- Emmons, R. A. (1999). *The psychology of ultimate concerns: Motivation and spirituality in personality*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Fehr, B. (1988). Prototype analysis of the concepts of love and commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *55*, 557-579.
- Fehr, B. (2004). Intimacy expectations in same-sex friendships: A prototype interaction-pattern model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *86*, 264-284.
- Fincham, F. D., & Linfield, K. J. (1997). A new look at marital quality: Can spouses feel positive and negative about their marriage? *Journal of Family Psychology*, *11*, 489-502.
- Gable, S., & Reis, H. (2001). Appetitive and aversive social relationships. In J. Harvey & A. Wenzel (Eds.), *Close Romantic Relationships: Maintenance and Enhancement*. (pp. 169-194). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gigy, L. & Kelly, J. B. (1992). Reasons for divorce: Perspectives of divorcing men and women. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *18*, 169-187.
- Hassebrauck, M. (1997). Cognitions of relationship quality: A prototype analysis of their structure and consequences. *Personal Relationships*, *4*, 163-185.
- Hendrick, S., S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *50*, 93-98.
- Higgins, E. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, *52*, 1280-1300.
- Kelley, H., H. (1991). Lewin, situations, and interdependence. *Journal of Social Issues*, *47*, 211-233.
- Lewandowski, G., W., & Aron, A. (2002). *The self expansion scale*. Paper presented at the Third Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Savannah, GA.
- Lewandowski, G., W., Aron, A., P., Bassis, S., & Kunak, J. (in press). Losing a self-expanding relationship: Implications for the self-concept. *Personal Relationships*.
- Loving, T., J. & Agnew, C., R. (2001). Socially desirable responding in close relationships: A dual-component approach and measure. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *18*, 551-573.

- McKenna, C. (1989). Marital satisfaction and sensation seeking in the first ten years of marriage: Self-expansion versus boredom. Doctoral Dissertation, California Graduate School of Family Psychology, San Francisco, CA.
- Mikulas, W. & Vodanovich, S. (1993). The essence of boredom. *Psychological Review*, *43*, 3-12.
- Reis, H. & Gable, S. (2003). Toward a positive psychology of relationships. In C. Keyes, & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive Psychology and the Life Well-Lived*. (pp. 129-159). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Reissman, C., Aron, A., & Bergen, M. R. (1993). Shared activities and marital satisfaction: Causal direction and self-expansion versus boredom. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *10*, 243-254.
- Rusbult, C., E., Martz, J., M., & Agnew, C., R. (1998). The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, *5*, 357-391.
- Rusbult, C., & Arriaga, X. (1997). Interdependence theory. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of Personal Relationships: Theory, Research and Interventions (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. (pp. 221-250). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Strong, G., & Aron, A. (2006). The effect of shared participation in novel and challenging activities on experienced relationship quality: Is it mediated by high positive affect? In K. Vohs & E. Finkel (Eds.), *Self and Relationships: Connecting Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Processes*. (pp. 342-359). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Sullaway, M. & Christensen, A. (1983). Assessment of dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *45*, 653-660.
- Vodanovich, S., J. (2003). Psychometric measures of boredom: A review of the literature. *Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, *137*, 569-595.
- Watson, D. W., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *54*, 1063-1070.

Table 1  
*Mean Centrality Ratings for Boredom in Romantic Relationships*

Item	Mean	SD
No Fun	5.50	2.83
Uninteresting	5.38	2.80
No Feelings/Emotions	5.33	2.89
Unexciting	5.30	2.74
Stale Relationship	5.28	2.69
Everything's Old	5.17	2.64
No Laughing	5.14	2.88
Routine	5.12	2.53
Growing Apart/Distant	5.10	2.88
No Romance	5.06	2.77
Lack of Passion	5.00	2.69
Lack of Intimacy	4.99	2.61
No Love	4.99	2.82
Not Going Out	4.96	2.48
Silence	4.94	2.57
Ignore	4.89	2.65
Lonely	4.87	2.71
Tired	4.87	2.45
Lazy	4.86	2.70
Predictable	4.86	2.49
Lack of Communication	4.85	2.71
Empty	4.83	2.76
Plain	4.73	2.59
Coldness	4.73	2.60
Uncaring	4.67	2.88
Awkward	4.64	2.37
Sleepy	4.57	2.54
Bad Sex	4.56	2.50
Breaking Up	4.54	2.73
Unsure	4.51	2.37
Cheating	4.45	2.88
Frustrated	4.44	2.40
Restless	4.42	2.49

Table 1 (continued)  
*Mean Centrality Ratings for Boredom in Romantic Relationships*

Item	Mean	SD
Dislike	4.41	2.52
Annoying	4.40	2.59
Need to Argue	4.39	2.52
Sadness	4.38	2.46
Dishonesty	4.36	2.69
Lack of Sex	4.33	2.46
Distrust	4.27	2.70
Unattractive	4.26	2.32
Confusing	4.18	2.24
Loss	4.16	2.54
Different Interests	4.16	2.41
Stress	4.12	2.48
Stupid	4.11	2.45
Arguing	4.10	2.57
Hurt	4.06	2.61
Bad	4.04	2.55
Change	3.51	2.31
Comfortable	3.40	2.37
Friends	3.31	2.55

Table 2  
Highest Centrality Items as a Function of Demographic Variables

<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>&lt; 1 year</u>	<u>&gt; 1 year</u>
No Fun No Feelings/Emotions Uninteresting	No Fun Uninteresting Stale Relationship	No Fun Uninteresting Unexciting No	Stale Relationship No Feelings/Emotions Everything's Old
No Laughing Unexciting No Love	Everything's Old Routine Unexciting No	Feelings/Emotions Stale Relationship No Laughing	Uninteresting Routine No Fun
Silence	Feelings/Emotions Growing	Everything's Old Growing	No Love
Stale Relationship Not Going Out	Apart/Distant No Romance	Apart/Distant Routine	Ignore No Romance Growing
Lazy Lack of Intimacy Lack of Communication	No Laughing Lack of Passion Lonely	No Romance Silence Not Going Out	Apart/Distant No Laughing Lack of Passion
No Romance Lack of Passion Growing	Lack of Intimacy Predictable	Lack of Intimacy Lack of Passion	Coldness Unexciting
Apart/Distant	Not Going Out	Lonely	Lack of Intimacy

Table 2 (continued)  
 Highest Centrality Items as a Function of Demographic Variables

---

<u>Not in relationship</u>	<u>In Relationship</u>	<u>Never had Relationship</u>
No Fun	No Fun	Unexciting
Unexciting	Uninteresting	No Fun
No Feelings/Emotions	Stale Relationship	No Feelings/Emotions
Uninteresting	Routine	Stale Relationship
No Laughing	No Feelings/Emotions	Lazy
Stale Relationship	Unexciting	Uninteresting
Lack of Passion	Everything's Old	Lack of Communication
Everything's Old	Growing Apart/Distant	Lonely
Growing Apart/Distant	No Love	Routine
No Romance	No Romance	No Love
Not Going Out	Ignore	Tired
Lack of Intimacy	No Laughing	Growing Apart/Distant
Lonely	Lack of Intimacy	No Laughing
Predictable	Silence	Empty
Lack of Communication	Not Going Out	Silence

---

Table 3  
*Means and Standard Deviations of Major Variables*

	Mean	SD
	N (students and non-students) = 196	
Relationship Boredom	2.15	.87
Simple Boredom Items	2.16	.88
Positive Affect	3.68	.78
Negative Affect	1.76	.65
Relationship Approach	5.98	1.15
Relationship Avoidance	5.36	1.36
Relationship Satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998)	7.12	1.68
Relationship Satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988)	5.37	1.00
Relationship Rewards	5.53	1.17
Relationship Social Desirability	4.58	1.42
Self-Expansion	5.06	.99
Relationship Conflict	3.93	1.37

*Correlations with Relationship Boredom and Partial Correlations Controlling for Relationship Satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998)*

	Relationship Boredom	
	Bivariate Correlation	Partial Correlation
Simple Boredom Items	.73**	.46**
Positive Affect	-.76**	-.57**
Negative Affect	.35**	-.09
Relationship Approach	-.52**	-.31**
Relationship Avoidance	-.22**	-.33**
Relationship Satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998)	-.74**	-
Relationship Satisfaction (Hendrick, 1988)	-.70**	-.22**
Relationship Rewards	-.74**	-.41**
Relationship Social Desirability	-.04	.001
Self-Expansion	-.60**	-.30**
Relationship Conflict	.36**	.09

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Appendix A

## Boredom in Romantic Relationships Measure

Please answer each of the following questions honestly, according to the way you personally feel. Do not leave any question unanswered. Your answers will be kept absolutely confidential and your partner will never see them. Thank you.

Please circle the appropriate response:

1) My partner and I have fun together.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

2) My relationship is interesting.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

3) My relationship is full of emotions and feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

4) My relationship is exciting.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

5) My relationship feels fresh.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

6) My relationship feels new.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

7) My partner and I laugh together.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

<sup>a</sup>8) My relationship with my partner feels routine.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
very untrue	mostly untrue	slightly untrue		slightly true	mostly true	very true

## Appendix A (continued)

## Boredom in Romantic Relationships Measure

9) My partner and I are growing closer to each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true
10) My relationship is romantic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true
11) My relationship is passionate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true
12) My partner and I love each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true
13) My partner and I are intimate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true
14) My partner and I go out together.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true
15) My partner and I talk to each other often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	very	mostly	slightly		slightly	mostly	very
	untrue	untrue	untrue		true	true	true

---

<sup>a</sup>Note. Item 8 was dropped from all analyses.

## Appendix B

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for all major variables from Studies 3 and 4

Measure	Length known partner	Age	Sex (M=1, F=2)	Relationship length	Boredom scale
N = 196					
Length known partner	–	.70**	.11	.73**	.15*
Age		–	.19**	.62**	.17*
Sex			–	.13	.03
Relationship length				–	.17*
Boredom scale					–
M	56.56	21.65	1.74	38.22	2.15
SD	61.98	6.47	.44	50.79	.87
Measure	Simple boredom	PANAS positive	PANAS negative	IOS	Satisfaction
Length known partner	.08	-.07	-.20**	.04	.08
Age	.12	-.07	-.15*	-.05	.07
Sex	.00	-.01	-.01	.02	-.03
Relationship length	.10	-.12	-.20**	.10	.08
Boredom scale	.73**	-.75**	.35**	-.49**	-.70**
Simple boredom	–	-.69**	.34**	-.43**	-.66**
PANAS positive		–	-.23**	.45**	.62**
PANAS negative			–	-.27**	-.58**
IOS				–	.48**
Satisfaction					–
M	2.16	3.68	1.76	5.27	5.37
SD	.88	.78	.65	1.48	1.00

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Appendix B (continued)

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for all major variables from Studies 3 and 4

Measure	Rewards	Satisfaction (Rusbult)	Alternatives (Rusbult)	Investments (Rusbult)	Commitment (Rusbult)
Length known partner	.04	-.01	-.06	.06	.16*
Age	.07	-.04	-.15*	.09	.21**
Sex	-.04	-.04	-.09	-.02	.14
Relationship length	.01	-.03	-.09	.10	.19**
Boredom scale	-.74**	-.74**	.32**	-.27**	-.52**
Simple boredom	-.64**	-.68**	.36**	-.21**	-.49**
PANAS positive	.65**	.68**	-.29**	.30**	.51**
PANAS negative	-.56**	-.48**	.25**	-.08	-.34**
IOS	.49**	.56**	-.27**	.31**	.52**
Satisfaction	.80**	.84**	-.48**	.27**	.69**
Rewards	—	.81**	-.35**	.40**	.62**
Satisfaction (Rusbult)		—	-.42**	.34**	.62**
Alternatives (Rusbult)			—	-.25**	-.48**
Investments (Rusbult)				—	.39**
Commitment (Rusbult)					—
M	5.53	7.12	4.29	6.14	7.41
SD	1.17	1.68	1.80	1.70	1.64

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Appendix B (continued)

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for all major variables from Studies 3 and 4

Measure	Approach	Avoidance	Conflict	Self-deception	Impression management
Length known partner	.01	-.15*	-.19*	.09	.05
Age	-.05	-.25**	-.25**	.15*	.03
Sex	.05	.01	-.06	-.04	.09
Relationship length	-.05	-.16*	-.18*	.06	-.01
Boredom scale	-.52**	-.22**	.36**	-.64**	-.04
Simple boredom	-.45**	-.10	.30**	-.59**	-.01
PANAS positive	.60**	.22**	-.28**	.61**	.02
PANAS negative	-.20**	.02	.47**	-.57**	-.09
IOS	.43**	.20**	-.25**	.52**	-.08
Satisfaction	.47**	-.02	-.48**	.82**	.16*
Rewards Satisfaction (Rusbult)	.49**	.09	-.45**	.76**	.10
Alternatives (Rusbult)	.50**	.07	-.41**	.80**	.06
Investments (Rusbult)	-.23**	.04	.27**	-.38**	-.05
Commitment (Rusbult)	.33**	.16*	.02	.25**	-.16*
Approach	—	.39**	-.28**	.51**	-.01
Avoidance		—	.09	.07	-.28**
Conflict			—	-.51**	-.22**
Self-deception				—	.15*
Impression management					—
M	5.98	5.36	3.93	5.30	4.58
SD	1.15	1.36	1.37	1.26	1.42

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Appendix B (continued)

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for all major variables from Studies 3 and 4

Measure	Attachment anxiety	Attachment avoid	Self-expansion
Length known partner	-.10	-.09	-.12
Age	-.14*	-.19**	-.09
Sex	.13	.01	-.06
Relationship length	-.12	-.11	-.19**
Boredom scale	.20**	.05	-.60**
Simple boredom	.13	.06	-.54**
PANAS positive	-.12	-.13	.63**
PANAS negative	.29**	.09	-.27**
IOS	-.07	-.10	.36**
Satisfaction	-.24**	-.10	.54**
Rewards	-.19**	-.15*	.64**
Satisfaction (Rusbult)	-.18*	-.12	.59**
Alternatives (Rusbult)	-.01	-.07	-.19**
Investments (Rusbult)	.24**	-.14*	.38**
Commitment (Rusbult)	-.08	-.12	.49**
Approach	-.01	-.18*	.54**
Avoidance	.10	.02	.22**
Conflict	.30**	.10	-.22**
Self-deception	-.31**	-.20**	.54**
Impression management	-.14	.03	.02
Attachment anxiety	–	.21**	.04
Attachment avoid		–	-.17*
Self-expansion			–
M	-.53	.43	5.06
SD	4.79	4.19	.99

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .