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*Review of the doctoral dissertation by Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska, entitled “**Extensive Buying as a Means of Regulating Boredom: The Moderating Role of Materialism**”, prepared under the supervision of prof. Agata Gąsiorowska.*

Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska’s dissertation examines the insufficiently researched phenomenon of boredom in relation to consumer behaviour—specifically, excessive buying, individuals’ materialistic beliefs, and their desire to engage in meaningful, non-superficial activities.

The dissertation comprises a theoretical chapter, a presentation of four studies conducted as part of the project, and a general discussion of the findings. The theoretical section consists of three subsections. The first addresses the phenomenon of boredom. The author distinguishes and discusses three conceptualisations of boredom: as an individual trait, as a mental and emotional state, and as a phenomenon arising from the interaction of the two. She then describes factors that influence boredom and co-occur with it. The discussion is concise and synthetic. In my view, however, this section would have benefited from a discussion of the differences between boredom and other states characterised by low positive affect, such as dull, drowsy, sluggish or low negative effect such as at rest, relaxed (see, for example, Watson and Tellegen’s PANAS model, as well as van Tilburg, W. A. P., & Igou, E. R. (2017). Boredom begs to differ: Differentiation from other negative emotions. *Emotion*, 17(2), 309–322.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000233>). Given that the definitions presented offer an ambiguous picture of the phenomenon, distinguishing boredom from similar states—by clarifying, for instance, what boredom is not—could have helped delineate it more precisely. The remainder of the chapter discusses approaches that explain the functions and mechanisms underlying boredom: self-regulation prompted by the need to change a state that is unfavourable to the individual and guided by the individual’s goals; the experience of meaninglessness; attentional engagement accompanying cognitive processes; and a crisis of personal agency. In the account

that explains the mechanisms of boredom through the experience of meaninglessness, the concept of a sense of meaning (e.g. in the work of van Tilburg and Igou) requires further clarification: how does the author define it, and what exactly does it mean? In discussing meaning, the author uses several non-equivalent terms interchangeably: sense of meaning, meaning in life, need for meaning, and personal meaning. These concepts are not synonymous and may derive from different theories. For example, in the approaches developed by F. Martela and L. A. King, meaning in life is a multidimensional construct encompassing at least three dimensions. By contrast, the need for meaning features in R. Baumeister's framework and concerns understanding events, one's surroundings, and the relationships between them. The sense of meaning derives from V. Frankl's theory and logotherapy, whereas personal meaning arises from Reker and Wong's framework, which distinguishes global meaning from situational meaning. To improve the clarity of the argument, it would be helpful to explain and systematise the terminology used and to apply each term consistently in its intended sense.

Later in the chapter on boredom, the author reviews coping strategies identified in the literature. Drawing carefully and substantively on previous findings, she documents three categories of strategies: those involving changes in the individual's behaviour or circumstances; those concerned with attentional control and personal engagement; and those aimed at restoring stimulation and recovering a sense of meaning.

The second subsection of the theoretical part discusses boredom in the context of consumer behaviour. The author reviews issues and studies concerning various motivations for excessive buying and discusses motivations for impulse buying in the context of overconsumption. She then formulates two hypotheses: the first concerns boredom as a factor that activates excessive buying, while the second proposes that excessive buying reduces the experience of boredom and increases the desire to experience meaning. The discussion is coherent; in my view, however, the theoretical rationale for these hypotheses is presented in an overly simplified manner. For example, the author does not define what she means by a sense of meaning. Nor does she provide arguments or citations indicating a potential relationship between this construct and excessive buying in the context of Hypothesis 2 (pp. 22–23). Furthermore, in discussing excessive buying, she contrasts necessary purchases with purchases driven by

psychological motives (for example, motives concerning the self), but does not explain where the boundary between necessary purchases and purchases made for other reasons lies. One must also ask whether such a boundary can be determined objectively, given that consumer culture is driven by the “empty self” (see Cushman, 1990), while materialism constitutes a dominant life orientation—that is, the pursuit of financial success and image in order to attain social status, expressed through consumption (see Kasser, 2002). The notion of excessive buying may itself be subjective and may vary between individuals. For example, some people may regard an excessive purchase as necessary because they believe it will enable them to save money, that the item may prove useful in the future (for instance, as a gift), or that they need to demonstrate what they can afford.

The third subsection of the theoretical part addresses materialism and its moderating role in the relationship between boredom and excessive buying. The author presents selected definitions (drawing, for example, on Richins and Dawson, Belk, and Ryan and Kasser) and correlates of materialism (including motives for purchasing and consumption, as well as attitudes and behaviours associated with buying), before developing the rationale for and formulating the moderation hypothesis. The chapter is substantive, although it has certain limitations. In discussing materialism, the author conflates theoretical conceptualisations of the construct (e.g. Belk) with findings from consumer research in which materialism served as a moderator (e.g. Van Boven and Gilovich) (p. 23). The account of definitions of materialism lacks precision and systematic organisation. The text does not make clear that the three principal approaches to materialism—those of Richins and Dawson, Belk, and Kasser and Ryan—emphasise different definitional aspects. For example, R. Belk focuses on traits reflected in human behaviour; M. Richins and S. Dawson emphasise beliefs about the value of possessions in life; and R. Ryan and T. Kasser present materialism as a dominant orientation towards extrinsic life goals, namely financial success, image, and popularity. The author also notes that aspiration theory offers a more complex account of materialism than the other approaches cited, but does not explain the nature of this difference. In summary, the concepts derived from the theories of materialism cited should be organised more systematically in order to make the argument clearer and terminologically consistent.

The second, empirical part of the dissertation discusses the studies conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The first study aimed to review research on boredom indexed in the Scopus database and to critically analyse the methods used to induce boredom. Using the PRISMA framework, the author identified 83 studies (reported in 55 articles) that met the inclusion criteria and subjected them to further analysis. She then distinguished five categories of boredom-induction procedures, discussed their methodological utility and reliability, and identified the challenges and risks associated with their use. The conclusions drawn from Study 1 made it possible to employ established, reliable, and valid materials for inducing and measuring boredom in the three subsequent studies. These studies tested the hypotheses concerning the effect of boredom on excessive buying, the effect of excessive buying on boredom and the desire to do something meaningful, and whether these effects depend on an individual's level of materialism. All the studies were conducted with due care. They were meticulously designed and used different modes of data collection, both in person and online. In each study, care was taken to ensure the required sample size and appropriate gender distribution. Materials for inducing and measuring boredom were carefully selected and prepared; the methodology incorporated different types of boredom induction (active and passive) as well as diary studies. The assessment of excessive buying was likewise carefully designed and prepared, for example through a simulated shop. Potential covariates were controlled for, including trait boredom and the emotions of sadness and happiness. The findings were analysed using a range of statistical models well suited to the research questions, including regression models with interaction terms and path models with latent variables. The statistical analyses are described clearly and comprehensively. Each study complements and extends the others, and their findings form a coherent whole. The research yielded important results, demonstrating a bidirectional relationship between excessive buying and boredom: boredom may lead to excessive buying, while excessive buying may reduce the experience of boredom. Furthermore, materialism was found to strengthen these relationships, indicating that they are more pronounced among individuals with strong rather than weak materialistic beliefs. In summary, I consider the empirical part to have been exceptionally well designed and executed. The dissertation concludes with a well-developed discussion that summarises the findings, interprets them in relation to previous research, identifies the

limitations of the studies, and demonstrates their contribution to existing theories and research on boredom.

One issue in the empirical section that remains open to discussion is what was actually measured as a sense of meaning and how the results of this measure were interpreted in relation to excessive buying and materialism (Study 4b). The regression model identified only materialism as a predictor of the desire to do something meaningful (p. 85): “To what extent would you like to do something more purposeful?” and “To what extent would you like to do something of greater significance?” (p. 73). This result is therefore not sufficiently robust to support the claim that materialism, through its association with excessive buying, compensates for a lack of meaning (pp. 90–91). The interpretation of the finding obtained in Study 4 certainly requires caution; otherwise, it risks becoming an overinterpretation.

Although I have identified several issues in this review that would benefit from further refinement or elaboration, the dissertation has numerous strengths that attest to its scholarly value and contribution to the field of psychology.

The principal strengths of the dissertation are as follows:

1. The research design is innovative. Although correlational research on boredom and excessive buying has previously been conducted, causal research has been lacking; this dissertation addresses that gap.
2. The studies provide new knowledge about the bidirectional relationship between boredom and excessive consumer behaviour: the effect of boredom on excessive buying and the effect of excessive buying on reducing the experience of boredom.
3. The studies advance knowledge of materialism in the context of excessive buying by demonstrating that it is an important moderator of the bidirectional relationship between boredom and excessive buying.
4. The dissertation extends knowledge of methods for measuring boredom by providing a rigorous review of the instruments and procedures used in previous research.
5. The dissertation demonstrates a rigorous methodological and statistical approach to the conduct of experimental research.

6. The dissertation makes a valuable contribution to knowledge of boredom, extending research in consumer psychology, motivational psychology, and the psychology of individual differences.

I therefore conclude that Agata Kocimska-Bortnowska's doctoral dissertation fully meets the requirements applicable to a doctoral thesis and recommend that the candidate be admitted to the subsequent stages of the doctoral examination process.

