

Current thinking on Hoarding Behaviour: a perspective from Clinical Psychology



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Look around you.....

- What's in your bag/on your desk/under your bed/in your loft or garage?

Is there anything you have:

- for sentimental reasons?
- Reminds you of good times?
- Might come in handy some day?
- You have to give it to the right person?
- You need to look after it?
- Feels like its connected to who you are?
- You have put off dealing with it?
- Other reasons for retaining things?

Why do any of us have stuff?

Furby (1978)

1. Possessions allow the owner to accomplish something – instrumental value, tools to perform tasks
2. Possessions provide a sense of security and comfort
3. Possessions become part of an individual's sense of self – increase sense of status and power; also to maintain identity by preserving personal history.
We all keep mementos of the past – photos etc.

Working with hoarding issues



Who is this?



Jean Piaget, renowned developmental/child Psychologist



Why do some people have so much stuff?

Furby (1978)

- Possessions allow the owner to accomplish something – instrumental value, tools to perform tasks

People who hoard – Different definition of what is regarded as 'useful'

- Possessions provide a sense of security and comfort

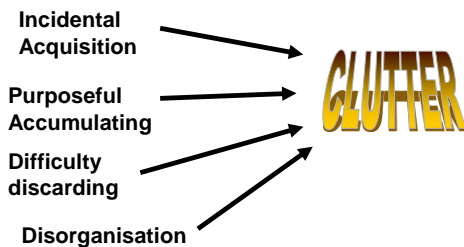
People who hoard - Describe their homes as 'cocoon' or 'bunkers'

- Possessions become part of an individual's sense of self – increase sense of status and power; also to maintain identity by preserving personal history

- People who hoard:

- Specific beliefs about their memories (poor memory requiring reminders)
- Form intense emotional attachments to a wider range of objects

Manifestations of Hoarding



Hoarding Disorder Criteria

- ▶ C. The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (including maintaining a safe environment for self and others).
- D. The hoarding symptoms are not due to a general medical condition (e.g., brain injury, cerebrovascular disease).
- E. The hoarding symptoms are not restricted to the symptoms of another mental disorder (e.g., hoarding due to obsessions in OCD, lack of motivation in MDD, delusions in Schizophrenia or other Psychotic Disorder, cognitive deficits in Dementia, restricted interests in Autistic Disorder, food storing in Prader-Willi Syndrome).

What is it?

“Final common pathway”: that is, the end result of a range of different behaviours which in turn are underpinned by a range of different cognitive and emotional factors.

Pretty much anything can be hoarded. Discuss

Unusual examples: Information, Money

DSM-5 Criteria for Hoarding Disorder

- A. Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with personal possessions, even those of apparently useless or limited value, due to strong urges to save items, distress, and/or indecision associated with discarding.
- B. The symptoms result in the accumulation of a large number of possessions that fill up and clutter the active living areas of the home, workplace, or other personal surroundings (e.g., office, vehicle, yard) and prevent normal use of the space. If all living areas are uncluttered, it is only because of others' efforts (e.g., family members, authorities) to keep these areas free of possessions.

Hoarding disorder Criteria

- But what about collectors?

Collecting is not hoarding

- A collection is a set of objects related by a cohesive theme
- Actively acquired – some enthusiasm to seek out
- Enjoyment from planning and anticipating the acquisition
- Once acquired, objects removed from their typical use
- Objects are organised

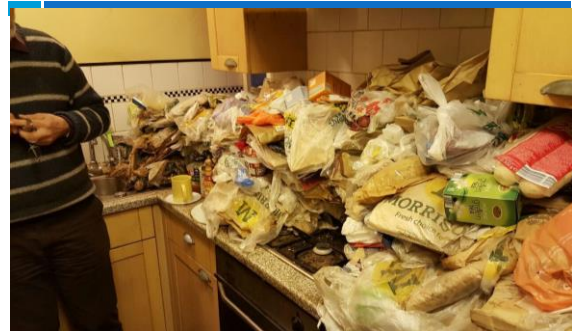
A collection: in a shed



Is this a kitchen?

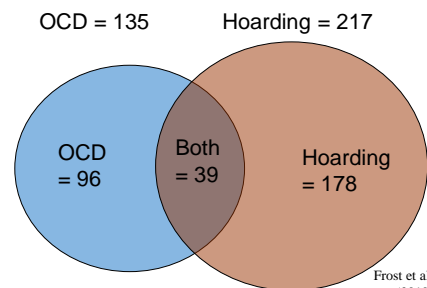


This is a Kitchen!



Is Hoarding a subtype of OCD?

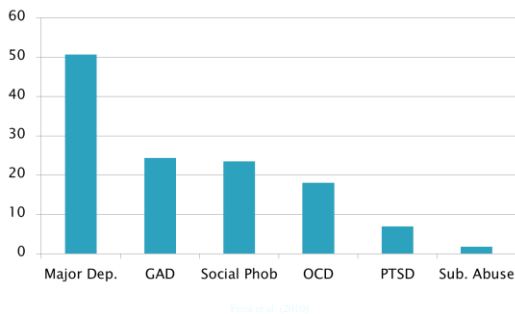
- Can be, but mostly its not!



Frost et al.
(2010)

Comorbidity in 217 adults with hoarding Dx

Frost, Steketee, Tolin, 2011



Prevalence of Hoarding 2-5%

- ▶ 5% in US
- ▶ 1.5% in UK
- ▶ 4.6% in Germany
- May be twice as common in men
- Nearly 3X as common in people age 55 and older

Demographics & Features

- Wide range of educational achievement
- Average age at treatment = 50
- Low marriage rate, high divorce rate
- Tend to live alone
- Family history of hoarding is common

Why is hoarding a 'problem'?

- For some it's not! Orderly hoarding, collecting
- Hoarding follows a chronic and deteriorating course
- Accumulation of clutter is a dangerous problem
- Risks
- Social isolation
- Eviction, removal of children
- High levels of family conflict and distress
- Financial difficulties
- Significant impairment in employment (greater impairment than those with anxiety or depression; comparable to impairment reported by people with psychotic disorders)

Fire risk

- House full of "fuel" in fire terms
- Unsafe electrical installations
- Use of unsafe heating elements in cluttered locations
- Obstruction of escape and rescue routes

Other Risks

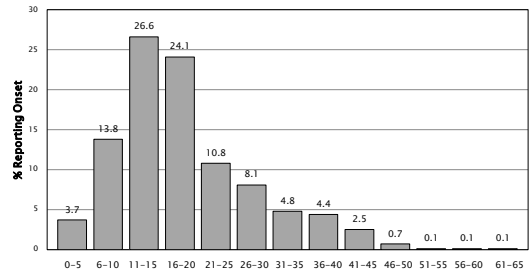
- Vermin
- Property deterioration
- Cold
- Sanitation
- Risk of falling
- Legal issues
- Children
- Quality of Life

Firefighters took three days to find body of obsessive hoarder buried under 3ft of rubbish



Onset and Development

- Data from our research (Gregory, Lomax, Lambe and Salkovskis, in preparation) suggests:
 - Early onset most common, later onset less so
 - Differences in age of onset for acquiring, difficulty discarding and then clutter
 - Differences between onset and when different aspects of hoarding become distressing
 - Times at which acquiring and difficulty discarding become distressing/intensify co-occur with stressful life events
 - Hoarders report experiencing significantly more traumatic/stressful life events than non-hoarders?
 - Emotional deprivation more prominent than material deprivation



Age of onset of hoarding symptoms

Pathways to hoarding?

- Harm avoidance: Ideas of their needing to prevent harm coming to themselves or others.
- Objects are acquired and subsequently kept because to not do so might result in harm to the person or other people
- “Something bad will happen if I throw this away, and it will be my fault”.
- Like OCD, similar treatment.

Pathways to Hoarding

- Sentimental links: Disturbances of attachment, so that possessions are regarded as emotionally much more significant than they others would see them.
- This emotional significance means that the person struggles with the idea of losing their belongings, experiencing this as a separation experience
- “To lose this is to lose part of myself and my life”; “Throwing this away is like throwing away my relationship with the person who gave it to me”

When hoarding IS part of OCD

- **Characteristically involves harm avoidance beliefs**
- For example, collecting broken glass from the street and keeping it at home to ensure that no-one comes to harm (other people on street, refuse collectors). Keeping contaminated items to stop it spreading.
- Other OCD features likely to be present
- Anxiety associated with hoarding, rather than positive emotions
- No prominent sentimental attachment to the items, not seen as valuable

Pathways to Hoarding

- Deprivation fear: Beliefs arising from historical periods of substantial material deprivation, where the person's earlier experience of being deprived of belongings is linked to a sense of dread that this may happen again.
- Objects are acquired or kept against such an eventuality; sometimes linked to beliefs about later positive effects
- "I have to make sure that I always have what I need and more"; "I remember once being able to find something I really needed"

Pathways to hoarding?

- Compared to non-hoarders, people who hoard report more traumatic events and greater variety
- Having something taken by threat or force
- Being forced into sexual activity
- Being physically assaulted
- Clutter helps to feel 'protected' at home
- Not necessarily PTSD, but is a response to trauma
- Probably non-specific?

Pathways to Hoarding

- Positive source of satisfaction: Where acquiring and retaining are associated with positive feelings
- "I always feel great at the jumble sales and on the way home"; "I feel safe, like in a cocoon"; "I have all my memories to hand".
- Philanthropic hoarding.....looking after others

Pathways to Hoarding

- Emotional avoidance: Grief, loss. Appears to be mostly secondary, may occur late in evolution of problem?

What does this look like in 'real life'?

- <https://vimeo.com/603058>
- This is a 20 minute video that we will watch a small part of - do try to watch the rest in your own time

