Trying to “manage the excess”: A constructivist grounded theory of hoarding behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Hoarding can have wide-ranging problems for individuals who hoard, their families and their wider community including distress and impairment in functioning (DSM-5; APA, 2013) and family tension (e.g. Wilbram et al., 2008). Hoarding can constitute a public health problem (Frost et al, 2000).

Despite a large amount of research on hoarding since the 1990s, theoretical work centres around the cognitive behavioural perspective (e.g. Frost & Hartl, 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014a) which relates hoarding to information processing difficulties, beliefs about and attachments to possessions, and learning processes. Although other theoretical perspectives exist (e.g. O'Connor, 2016), much hoarding research focuses on testing hypotheses from the cognitive behavioural model. Additionally, although research also suggests a role for developmental and social factors in hoarding (e.g. Landau et al., 2011), work on hoarding still describes "maladaptive" (Kyrios et al., 2018, p. 311) attachments and "erroneous" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 341) beliefs about possessions which imply that hoarding is a problem within the individual.

Much research on hoarding is also quantitative, focusing on testing possible underlying cognitive deficits in hoarding (e.g. Tolin et al., 2009), developing measurement instruments (e.g. Steketee et al., 2003) and considering the role of specific variables as predictors of hoarding (e.g. Frost et al., 2015). A small but growing qualitative evidence base (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010; Orr et al., 2019) adds detail and nuance to quantitative studies and allows for the perspectives of those who hoard to be considered. However, the development of hoarding and the meaning of possessions have not thus far been studied together from a qualitative perspective.

This thesis attempts to address these issues by using constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 1990; 2014) to explore the development of hoarding behaviours and meaning of possessions in self-identified hoarders. Seventeen participants were interviewed, and twenty-three interviews conducted, with 6 participants interviewed twice. Seven participants were male, and ten were female, with a mean age of 46 (SD=11.09).

The product of this research is a holistic theory which focuses on hoarding as a struggle to manage both possessions and life. Results showed that the emotional impact of life experiences and possessions, and experiences of becoming overwhelmed could prevent managing possessions. For some participants who experienced loss and trauma, hoarding could be both an attempt to cope with these experiences and a further source of loss, struggle and pain. Some participants attempted to overcome their hoarding by resisting temptation to buy and acquire, using formal and informal support and attempting to build a life beyond their hoarding.

Results of this study shed light on which aspects of managing possessions may be most difficult for those with hoarding tendencies, provide insight into an increasingly complex emotional relationship with possessions, and demonstrate how hoarding behaviours may develop from a dynamic interplay of physical, social, developmental and life experience factors. The insights gained from participants who attempted to overcome their hoarding behaviours also give further understanding of how to help those who hoard, for example by understanding the person's perspective on their hoarding and helping to develop new ways of living and functioning.

CONTENTS

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SECTION ONE: THESIS OVERVIEW AND SETUP OF STUDY

This thesis contains three sections. In Section One: Thesis overview and setup of study, the background and format of the study are outlined. These comprise the first three chapters of the thesis and introduce the topic of hoarding disorder (Chapter One), review key literature in the field on the aetiology of hoarding and the meaning of possessions (Chapter Two), and finally outline the methodology and methods used in the conduct of the research (Chapter Three).

Section Two covers the empirical findings of the thesis, beginning with an overview of the grounded theory model which has been developed. In Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life, two key categories are outlined. In Chapters Five and Six the two key processes in the theory are described: Struggling to manage and Trying to overcome hoarding.

The thesis concludes with Section Three: Conclusions, which consists of Chapter Seven covering the limitations and contributions to knowledge of this thesis. The chapter and thesis conclude with an overview of future work to be done to develop the model further in subsequent quantitative and qualitative studies.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter outlines the importance of hoarding behaviour as a topic of study, beginning with the most significant recent development in hoarding research: the introduction of hoarding disorder (HD) as a psychiatric diagnosis. Definitions of hoarding are outlined, including the definition used within this thesis. The prevalence and impact of HD is outlined, and current ways to address hoarding in research and therapy are discussed. I then introduce the way in which this thesis will attempt to address some of the shortcomings of the current hoarding research base and outline aspects of personal reflexivity on the topic. The chapter concludes with a summary of further chapters.

1.1. Setting the scene: The prevalence and impact of hoarding disorder (HD)

The most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013) includes hoarding disorder (HD), previously known as compulsive hoarding, as a diagnostic entity. Once associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) (e.g. Rasmussen & Eisen, 1989; Frost et al. 1996) and obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD) (APA, 2000), more recent lines of evidence (e.g. Mataix-Cols et al., 2010; Tolin et al., 2011) suggest that HD is a separate phenomenon. As a DSM-5 diagnosis, HD involves persistent difficulty in discarding possessions driven either by a perception that the items need to be saved or by feelings of distress associated with discarding them (APA, 2013). Difficulty discarding possessions results in accumulation of objects which "clutter and congest the active living areas and substantially compromise their intended use" (APA, 2013, p. 247). Additionally, hoarding leads to distress and/or impairment of occupational and social functioning, and the ability to maintain a safe environment for the hoarder themselves or others living with them (APA, 2013). Consistent with other DSM-5 diagnoses, symptoms of HD cannot be more accurately attributed to another psychological disorder or a physical condition such as brain injury (APA, 2013). There are also specifiers for excessive acquisition and level of insight, from good insight to absent insight/delusional beliefs (APA, 2013).

1. 1. i. Prevalence of HD

In the DSM-5 (APA, 2013) the prevalence of hoarding disorder (HD) was estimated at 2-6% of the population in Europe and the United States, although the authors stated that there were no nationally representative prevalence studies at the time of its publication. A UK epidemiological study suggested a prevalence rate between 1.3% and 1.5% (Nordsletten et al., 2013), meaning that

between 868,358 and 1,001,952 people in the UK could meet criteria for HD[1]. Although conducted only in London, the sample was drawn from a wider study assessing health in a population including a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic groups, thus the diversity of the sample increases the representativeness of the survey. However, these figures do not consider those who have difficulties with hoarding behaviours or clutter but do not meet criteria for HD.

The prevalence rate identified by Nordsletten et al. (2013) is likely to be an underestimate, as the authors note several factors which may have prevented potential participants with HD from being identified, including social isolation and past problems such as threat of eviction. Such participants would likely be reluctant to participate in studies, especially when approached by unknown researchers (Nordsletten et al., 2013). Therefore, while prevalence estimates indicate that well over half a million people in the UK may have HD, the scale of the problem could be greater still. This is supported by a recent meta-analysis of prevalence studies with samples of over 1000 participants from Europe, Singapore and Australia which suggested a pooled prevalence rate of 2.5% (Postlethwaite et al., 2019). In addition, there are several important consequences for individuals and others, briefly outlined next, that also make hoarding necessary to study.

1. 1. ii. Impact of hoarding on the individual

In the case of clinically significant hoarding, distress and impairment can occur, as reflected in the diagnostic criteria for HD (APA, 2013). Hoarding symptoms (excessive acquisition, difficulty discarding and clutter) have also been suggested to have an impact on aspects of functioning and impairment (e.g. Ong et al., 2015). For example, associations between difficulty discarding and impairment (Rodriguez et al., 2013) and difficulties in carrying out daily living tasks due to clutter (Frost et al., 2013). Endorsement of difficulty discarding old or worn out objects was a significant predictor of lower mental and physical health scores, lower social functioning and more impairment in work role due to emotional problems (Rodriguez et al., 2013). Severe hoarding poses a risk of fire and infestations of rodents and insects if spaces are too cluttered to be cleaned (Brakoulias & Milicevic, 2015). The consequences of poor sanitary conditions such as mould can result in health conditions, a particular risk for children (Tolin et al., 2017) although these could conceivably cause problems for all who live in hoarded homes, including the individual who hoards. Clutter can cause trips and falling, and in extreme cases people who hoard have been found dead under clutter which has fallen on them (Brakoulias & Milicevic, 2015). Other negative outcomes can include eviction and having pets or children removed from the home (Tolin, Frost, Steketee, et al., 2008).

[1] Based on the most recent UK population estimate by the Office for National Statistics (66,796,800 people in 2019) (ONS, 2020)

1. 1. iii. Impact of hoarding on others

A further factor in hoarding is the impact on families and the wider community. Families of people who hoard can experience feelings of marginalisation, depression and disempowerment, and in some cases family breakdown can occur (Wilbram et al., 2008). In a survey study of caregiver burden in relatives of both people who hoard and collectors (Drury et al., 2014), relatives of hoarders had significantly lower scores on emotional wellbeing and higher levels of carer burden. These findings suggest that having a relative who hoards can cause a variety of problems and effects on psychological wellbeing for family members. Negative effects are also not limited to individuals who hoard and their families. Communities can be affected by hoarding, including the effect of clutter spilling onto neighbouring properties, a circumstance which can trigger complaints to health departments (Frost et al., 2000).

It can be seen from the above discussion that hoarding can become a serious psychological, physical, and social wellbeing problem for many. It is therefore important to have a strong conceptual understanding of the development and underpinnings of hoarding behaviour and beneficial treatment interventions.

1.1. iv. Comorbidity of hoarding disorder

Although HD is recognised as a distinct disorder, hoarding is also associated with various other conditions such as autism and schizophrenia (Steketee & Frost, 2014b), and several potentially significant comorbidities have been identified. Although historically related to OCD, the most common comorbid conditions in HD appear to be mood and anxiety disorders. Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) found that 50.7% of participants with HD also had comorbid major depressive disorder, and 24.4% and 23.5% had generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) and social anxiety respectively. In comparison, only 20% of the sample also met criteria for OCD. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can also occur with hoarding; 28% of participants in the study by Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) also had inattentive ADHD. Such comorbid conditions and their associated symptoms have important research implications when considering features which may overlap with hoarding. For example, research on attention deficits in hoarding may be affected by the presence of comorbid ADHD, and indecisiveness may be associated with both depression and hoarding.

1.2. Definitions of hoarding

1. 2. i. Evolution of the phenomenon

The definition of hoarding has been refined over the years. However, it is often described in the literature as a disorder, difficulty or problem, rather than a behavioural phenomenon. Frost and Gross (1993) provided a working definition of hoarding: “acquisition of and failure to discard

possessions that appear to be useless or of limited value" (p. 367). As well as implying an objective value for possessions rather than a subjective value for the person, it was later suggested that this definition was not detailed enough to distinguish between hoarding as a behaviour and hoarding as a clinical problem (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Instead, Frost and Hartl proposed three components of hoarding. The first replicates the Frost and Gross (1993) definition related to acquisition, failure to discard and the lack of or limited value of possessions which are hoarded. Secondly, hoarding involves "living spaces sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 341) and "significant distress or impairment in functioning caused by the hoarding" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 341). Frost and Hartl suggested that distress and/or impairment manifest in several ways, including emotional effects, for example anxiety and distress about not being able to give children a "proper" home environment. The ability to carry out activities in the home such as cooking are also affected. Hoarders may be unable to work or invite people into their home, and experience relationship difficulties such as arguments with spouses over clutter (Frost & Hartl, 1996).

This later definition emphasises clutter, however Frost and Hartl (1996) suggest the possibility of experiencing distress and impairment without a corresponding amount of clutter and note that further research is required to clarify this. It is also worth noting that Frost and Hartl do not define "clutter", however it can be inferred from the rest of the definition that clutter refers to objects which are "useless or of limited value" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 341) in sufficient volume to impair living spaces. The idea of items being useless or of limited value is rather vague and subjective, raising questions about who defines the value of items, and on what basis. This was later clarified (in DSM-5) to differentiate compulsive hoarding from hoarding in obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (OCPD). One criterion for OCPD is an inability to "discard worn-out or worthless objects even when they have no sentimental value" (DSM-IV TR; APA, 2000, p. 729). Such a conceptualisation of hoarding assumes that only those items which are worn out and worthless are difficult to discard, with no sentimental value. However, the range of items which can be hoarded is much greater, and people who hoard can have strong emotional attachments to possessions. Thus, the OCPD criteria does not fully capture hoarding behaviours, a problem identified by Frost and Hartl (1996) with the inclusion of hypersentimentality in their CB model.

The BPS DCP uses a definition of hoarding derived by Steketee et al. (2000) comprising three aspects. First, hoarding involves compulsively acquiring objects. A person who hoards will find it very difficult to get rid of the items they acquire, leading them to avoid discarding. Secondly their living space will

become congested and cluttered with such items. Consequently, living spaces become increasingly difficult to use for their intended purposes, for example a person who hoards may be unable to bathe in their bathroom. Finally, the person who hoards experiences a significant amount of distress or impairment in functioning in their social and working life (BPS DCP, 2015).

1.2. ii. Definition of hoarding behaviour used in this thesis

As is evident from the discussion above, the term hoarding can be -- and often is -- used to refer to a psychological disorder. In this thesis I used the term "hoarding behaviour" to capture a more inclusive range of behaviours. The definition of hoarding used here is more in keeping with that proposed by Frost and Gross (1993). The rationale for this more expansive definition is that the notion of hoarding as a clinical problem involving substantial distress, problems in functioning and using living space is likely to represent the end point of a process. One objective of this thesis is to develop a theory of hoarding behaviours which can potentially capture the processes leading up to more severe hoarding situations, including processes by which people attempt to manage their hoarding behaviours and how such behaviours are maintained.

The use of grounded theory methodology (GTM) to develop such a theory allows for comparisons between people with serious hoarding difficulties, and those who may have difficulties discarding some items, but who would not be diagnosed with HD. Additionally Frost and Hartl (1996) distinguish between hoarding as behavioural and clinical phenomena. This thesis focuses on hoarding in the former context as behavioural phenomenon and attempts to explore the process of hoarding behaviours up to and including their manifestation as a diagnosable condition. In addition to the adoption of a qualitative approach which has not been applied to the field of hoarding (constructivist grounded theory methodology), such an approach can potentially study hoarding behaviours before they become a disorder, a future direction for research which Steketee and Frost (2014b) describe as “essential” (p. 356).

1.3. Addressing hoarding behaviour in theory, research and treatment

The most influential model of hoarding is the cognitive behavioural (CB) framework developed first by Frost and Hartl (1996) and expanded upon by Steketee and Frost (2014a). This model has generated much research since its inception.

However, several methodological issues exist in the current research base. Much extant research on hoarding focuses on developing measurement instruments (Singh & Jones, 2012) and testing hypotheses from the cognitive behavioural model. Additionally, there are many studies employing

correlational analyses and psychometric scales, but relatively few adopting a qualitative perspective. As the original iteration of the CB model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) was meant to be a tentative model of hoarding, and was based on a small corpus of research, moving straight to hypothesis testing may have been premature. Thus, a move back towards conceptual development would strengthen hoarding research, particularly as some key concepts in the CB model are under-explored, for example emotional attachment to possessions, as argued by Kellett and Holden (2014).

Although measurement instruments can be useful ways of quickly gathering large amounts of relevant data, focusing on their development means that nuances of phenomena can be lost, and elements overlooked. For example, the Saving Cognitions Inventory (SCI; Steketee et al., 2003) measures four belief dimensions in hoarding, meaning other potentially important beliefs underpinning hoarding cannot be considered. Correlational research can tell us which variables may be related to hoarding but cannot tell us why or how such relationships develop. Even where studies use further statistical techniques to identify predictors or model relationships between variables, it is difficult to explore the meaning of these relationships for individuals.

Thus, there is a need for theorising from alternative perspectives; a view supported by a call from the British Psychological Society Division of Clinical Psychology (BPS DCP, 2015). A useful approach to this would be to focus on conceptual development, allowing for the elaboration of and full explication of concepts which are relevant to the lives of those who hoard. Adopting a qualitative perspective to hoarding behaviour and additional theory development can add much to the study of this phenomenon. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to consider complexity and nuance. Approaches such as Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2014) allow for the development of much needed alternative theoretical perspectives to help inform interventions and increase conceptual understanding.

In terms of addressing hoarding in treatment, a hoarding-specific form of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been developed. This form of CBT has been helpful for some with hoarding disorder. For example, Steketee et al. (2010) found that participants who undertook hoarding-specific CBT saw improvement compared to a waitlist group. Specifically, 76% of participants rated themselves as improved after their final CBT session, and 41% were rated as clinically significantly improved by clinicians. However, although CBT has been shown to be beneficial for some, there are still several challenges faced by clinicians in treating hoarding.

Cognitive strategies, such as thought records (Beck et al., 1979) and downward arrow (Beck et al., 1979) techniques, have been described by older hoarding participants as unhelpful and difficult, although exposure therapy was found to be helpful (Ayers et al., 2012). The abstract nature of

cognitive techniques and an inability for participants to see their relevance to hoarding were two reasons why these were perceived as unhelpful. Therapists also described how participants who hoarded had problems completing homework assignments and remembering some aspects of the therapies, such as case formulations (Ayers et al., 2012). Singh and Jones (2013) argue that focusing solely on beliefs and behaviours in the traditional CBT model is less beneficial in helping people who hoard. Instead Singh and Jones suggest including more experiential methods which both allow for a potential distancing of hoarders from their emotions, and an increase in motivation to deal with their hoarding. From a practical as well as methodological perspective it is therefore vital to extend the range of theoretical approaches to hoarding behaviour to augment consideration of thoughts and behaviours.

Having outlined the importance of hoarding as a topic of study, and discussed current problems in the research base, I will now introduce and outline my own perspective as a researcher in this area.

1.4. How this thesis will address hoarding behaviour

Much research on hoarding has focused on compulsive hoarding/hoarding disorder (HD), with its attendant clutter, dysfunction and distress. However it is suggested that hoarding follows a chronic course, often beginning in childhood and adolescence (Frost & Gross, 1993; Tolin, Meunier, et al., 2010) and worsening with every decade of life (Ayers et al., 2009) though some research suggests that hoarding can also develop later in life due to traumatic or stressful life events (e.g. Grisham et al., 2006). When considering the degree of clutter required for a diagnosis of HD and the proposed chronic course of hoarding, clearly severe hoarding situations do not appear overnight. It has been suggested that hoarding research is "focused on end-points rather than origins" (Brien et al., 2018, p. 270). Too much focus on the end points, i.e. HD risks missing the way in which hoarding behaviours fit into the flow of the individual's life and the processes which can lead up to and maintain these behaviours. This is also acknowledged by Steketee and Frost (2014b) who emphasise the importance of recruiting a wide range of participants from both community and clinical samples and considering hoarding before it becomes a disorder. Therefore, there is also a necessity for theoretical work focusing on hoarding as a potential process which develops over time, with severe hoarding situations as an end point. Grounded theory methodology (GTM) can provide such a perspective.

My interest in this topic came from the various TV programmes related to hoarding and possessions. These raised questions for me about how hoarding behaviours develop, and the relationships people who hoard have with possessions. Everyone has a relationship with their possessions, however not everyone develops hoarding behaviours. Thus, I was particularly curious about how hoarding

situations occur. These questions were of interest to me given my background in psychology and interests in mental health and wellbeing particularly. My perspective on these topics fits into a broadly critical psychology framework favouring a primarily qualitative approach. Although it has been suggested that there is no one form of critical psychology (McWhirter, 2013), there are some basic principles and assumptions. Those most relevant to my perspective include the acknowledgement that values and assumptions in psychology are determined by the historical, social and cultural context in which they develop (McWhirter, 2013), and the importance of acknowledging change and development rather than fixing people in a static explanation of behaviour (Parker, 2007).

Much traditional psychology research tends to focus on hypothesis testing, experimentation and measurement of psychological constructs. In contrast, qualitative research focuses on in-depth exploration of lived experience and meaning from participants' own perspective and tends to emphasise the role of the researcher in constructing and shaping the research process. Some qualitative approaches also take a more critical stance towards the role of language, seeing it as representing actions and ways of constructing the world rather than a reflection of internal states. Thus, like critical psychology, the qualitative approach includes various perspectives. Rather than one qualitative methodology, there are qualitative methodologies (Willig, 2013), each with their own epistemological and ontological positions.

A distinction has also been made between big Q and small q qualitative approaches (Kidder & Fine, 1987). Big Q research focuses on open-ended exploration of participants' perspectives and meanings, whereas small q research refers to using non-numerical data collection methods to supplement hypothetico-deductive research (Willig, 2013). All research involves a "dance with the data" (Kidder & Fine, 1997, p. 38), where researchers aim to make sense of unexpected results and interpret possible meanings of participants' behaviours and responses. In a qualitative approach, the dance with the data happens throughout, whereas Kidder and Fine note that with more quantitative studies, this process happens mainly in discussion sections of papers. A reliance on measuring phenomena using extant concepts may prevent researchers from fully understanding participants' experience from their own perspectives (Kidder & Fine, 1997).

A further problem with mainstream, traditional psychology is a focus on the individual at the expense of their social context. Kidder and Fine (1997) argue for the need for psychological researchers to focus on the 'voices' of participants and situate them in "their historic and current

circumstances" (p. 49). Clinical psychology has been criticised for a similar individualistic focus, with arguments that both diagnosis and traditional psychotherapies assume that the causes of psychological distress can be located within the individual (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997). Thus, societal causes of distress may be overlooked, and therapies tend to focus on changing either the individual's behaviour or their responses to situations (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997). A more critical approach does not discount potential biological causes, but does consider the wider historical, social and cultural pressures which can influence psychological distress (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997). Social context links meanings, moral judgements and consequences to the social, cultural and historical circumstances of the person (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997). In this way Hare-Mustin and Marecek argue that the critical approach emphasises understanding the broader context of disorders as well as the individuals who experience psychological distress. Recent advances in clinical psychology have sought to address this issue, with the formulation of approaches such as the Power Threat Meaning framework, an alternative to psychiatric diagnosis (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). Rather than asking what might be wrong with the person, the framework considers what has happened to the person, how it affected them, what sense they made of it, and their survival strategies (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). The connection between psychological distress, meaning making and the wider context in which people live, including experiences of trauma and inequality, are thus emphasised. It therefore represents a recent attempt at a more holistic view of psychological distress. The grounded theory produced in this thesis represents an attempt to understanding hoarding in a similarly holistic way, although it does not emphasise the role of inequality and power.

It is important to note that I began this programme of research with more of an inclination towards psychological formulation (BPS DCP, 2011) as an alternative to diagnosis. This was in part due to personal experience, but I began to change my mind when I became involved through my research career with the online OCD community. As I saw how some people with OCD described how they found diagnosis helpful, I began to change my view somewhat on the utility of diagnostic criteria. Thus, my current position is a more pragmatic stance, and is in keeping with my critical realist (CR) ontological viewpoint. The CR perspective stresses a multi-layered reality (Fleetwood, 2005) and therefore I favour a multi-layered approach to mental health and wellbeing focused on increasing wellbeing for those who experience mental health problems, for example, adopting a narrative insight approach (Roe et al., 2008). This approach acknowledges that psychiatric labels and biological narrative may be helpful to some and unhelpful to others. For example, the "insight paradox" states that for some the acceptance of a psychiatric diagnosis can benefit their quality of life, but for others

this can do more harm than good (Macnaughton et al., 2015). Therefore, according to Macnaughton et al., when focusing on narrative insight, individuals are free to choose to frame their life experiences in ways which make sense to them. This approach also has application for hoarding, where it has been noted that some individuals who hoard may want a mental health approach to their hoarding while others would find this stigmatising (Bratiotis et al., 2016).

Thus, my perspective is a holistic, pragmatic and person-centred one in which there are multiple layers of reality, multiple perspectives and continua of psychological distress. The end points of such continua may constitute psychological disorders. Additionally, this thesis will take a somewhat critical stance towards hoarding, viewing this phenomenon as a spectrum of behaviours and interactions with objects embedded in a social, historical and cultural context.
Hoarding is here studied from a qualitative perspective. The ontological and epistemological foundations of the thesis will be described in detail in Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods.

This chapter has summarised the context of the topic area, the prevalence and importance of hoarding disorder, and has outlined how the thesis will address hoarding behaviours. The remainder of the chapter will summarise the following chapters in the thesis.

1.5. Summary of chapters in the thesis

This section summarises the remaining chapters in this thesis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews key literature related to the aetiology and development of hoarding behaviour and the meaning of possessions. It also considers the related constructs of severe domestic squalor, compulsive acquisition, and compulsive buying in part one. Part two includes a review of biological, cognitive behavioural and developmental and social aetiological factors in hoarding. Part three considers the meaning of possessions, both in terms of beliefs about possessions and emotional attachment to them. Lastly, key conceptual and methodological gaps are identified and the usefulness of a qualitative, data-driven approach to the development of hoarding and the meaning of possessions is outlined.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This first part of this chapter outlines the methodology used in this thesis, namely Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM). It also considers ontology, epistemology and reflexivity issues. The second part

of this chapter outlines the methods used in setting up the study, collecting and analysing data for both phase one (initial sampling) and phase two (theoretical sampling).

Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life

Following a summary of the grounded theory model developed within this thesis, which consists of two major categories (*Managing possessions* and *Managing life*) and two processes (*Struggling to manage* and *Trying to overcome hoarding*) each with their own subcategories, this chapter begins outlining the empirical findings. Chapter four outlines the categories of *Managing possessions* and *Managing life* and their integration. These categories provide an outline of the key phenomenon (*Managing possessions)* involved in the struggle to manage, and the context in which it occurs (*Managing life*).

Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage

This chapter outlines the core phenomenon of the grounded theory herein: the process by which participants struggled to manage their possessions, moving from situations where they were able to manage possessions to those where this became difficult and, in some cases, impossible. *Struggling to manage* consists of four subcategories: *Struggling to "get into an admin role"*, *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*, and *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed*. The first two subcategories outline struggles with emotional aspects of possessions, their management and their relationship to life events. The final subcategories consider the role of life events, particularly when those occur cumulatively, and other aspects of life which can lead to *Becoming overwhelmed* and unable to manage possessions, life, or both.

Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding

This chapter outlines the processes whereby some participants, particularly those with more severe hoarding behaviours, attempted to overcome their hoarding. Three subcategories are presented: *Resisting temptation*, *Formal and informal support*, and *Building a life beyond the hoard*.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

The thesis concludes with a discussion of key limitations, the original contribution made by the research, and directions for future research. Important directions for future research include the development of a questionnaire scale using the grounded theory model as a conceptual framework, and further theoretical refinement of the model using quantitative and qualitative methods.

1.6. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some of the key developments in the field of hoarding research, particularly related to the addition of hoarding disorder into the DSM-5. It has outlined the prevalence, impact and key comorbidity factors in HD. Several methodological and conceptual issues have been identified, including the relative lack of qualitative studies and the under-researched nature of some key constructs such as emotional attachment. A qualitative, theory generation approach has been proposed as a method of overcoming some conceptual and methodological limitations still in the field. Chapter Two: Literature Review, will provide an outline of important evidence related to the development of hoarding behaviours and the meaning of possessions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As previously stated in Chapter One: Introduction and Background, hoarding disorder (HD) has been given status as a distinct diagnostic entity in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013) and with it an acknowledgement of the distress and dysfunction which can be caused by severe hoarding. Hoarding also has an impact beyond the individual, affecting families and communities (e.g. Wilbram et al., 2008; Frost et al. 2000). A recent meta-analysis (Postlethwaite et al., 2019) of the prevalence of hoarding suggested a pooled prevalence rate, primarily from studies in Europe and the US, of 2.5% of the population. Although the wide-ranging impacts of HD make it important to study in its own right, the importance of studying hoarding behaviours before they reach the level of a disorder has also been acknowledged (Steketee & Frost, 2014b).

This review is divided into three parts. Part one: Related constructs considers several behaviours and disorders which have overlap with HD: severe domestic squalor, compulsive acquisition, and compulsive buying. Differences between these and HD will be outlined, and the role of impulse control difficulties in compulsive acquisition and compulsive buying will be considered. Part two: The aetiology and development of hoarding considers a range of factors in the development of hoarding behaviours. Part three concerns research related to the meaning of possessions, an important consideration in this field.

Before commencing with the literature review proper, the rationale for a narrative rather than systematic or scoping review is outlined, and the lack of quality assessment of studies is considered.

2.1. Format of the literature review

This section outlines some considerations regarding the format of the literature review, including the decision not to conduct a systematic or scoping review, and the lack of quality assessment of studies considered in the review.

The approach to literature (and to the research process in general) in grounded theory is very different to that of traditional research models which have strictly defined hypotheses, research questions and aims from the outset of a study. Systematic and scoping reviews fit well with this tradition. However, they are less compatible with GTM. For further consideration of the role (and contentious timing) of the literature review in grounded theory, see Chapter Three section 3.1.4: Approach to the literature review.

A systematic review was not undertaken for this project due to the incompatibility of systematic review methodology and grounded theory methodology. GTM is an emergent methodology which requires a reflexive and creative approach to data analysis techniques (Charmaz, 2008), an approach

which extends to the research process itself (Charmaz, 2008). Thus, the literature searching strategies one employs should also be emergent and flexible, as grounded theory literature reviews are written in light of the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). Systematic review methodology requires careful consideration at the outset of inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies, for example using the PICO format (Population, Intervention, Comparisons, Outcomes; Thomas et al., 2021). Although systematic reviews can use an iterative process and can be modified, it has been suggested that researchers in health sciences and psychology should aim to comply as closely with their original systematic review protocol as possible (Perestelo-Pérez, 2013). It is difficult to see how determining this level of specificity in advance would be possible with a data-driven method such as GTM. Such a review, if it were adopted, would likely have to be delayed until the theory was fully finalised, a decision with practical implications given the timescale of a PhD thesis, especially as conducting a systematic review can be a lengthy process (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Methodologically this would also be difficult, as writing is part of the analysis process (Charmaz, 2006), so it is to be expected that writing both the theory and literature review could yield further theoretical insights. Within the strict boundaries of a systematic review there does not appear to be the flexibility in which to review such new and potentially theoretically relevant literature unless it meets the review criteria.

A scoping review provides more flexibility than a systematic review, however these can also present problems for a grounded theorist. In comparison with a systematic review, a scoping review may be more consonant with GTM, as it is possible to use an iterative process of developing search terms as one becomes more familiar with the literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This process could potentially be used in a GTM study as the theory becomes more refined. Arksey and O'Malley (2005) identify several purposes of a scoping review: a kind of rapid review that can allow researchers to identify the scope of research in a given area; as a preliminary step to determine the usefulness of a full systematic review; the summary and dissemination of findings; and as a means of identifying research gaps. Scoping reviews in a grounded theory context could be useful for the first and fourth purposes, and for some grounded theorists may be fruitful and rigorous ways of surveying the literature. However, this would depend upon their perspective on the timing of the literature review and their view of previous literature, as both scoping the research area and identifying research gaps would likely be done early in the research process. Some grounded theorists (e.g. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) caution against reviewing literature before some independent analysis has been done of the data, and Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that use of the literature can result in simply reiterating existing perspectives rather than developing new knowledge.

As scoping reviews are broad in their coverage of literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), this is potentially contradictory to the notion of using literature at the beginning of a GTM study in a strategic and discriminating way, as suggested by Henwood and Pidgeon (2012). With regard to the work in this thesis, as there are no other constructivist GTM studies on hoarding, and several sources suggested the importance of new theoretical perspectives in hoarding (for example the British Psychological Society's Division of Clinical Psychology (BPS DCP; 2015)), the usefulness of a grounded theory perspective on this area was apparent from the beginning of the project without a thorough survey of literature. Thus, it was not necessary to conduct a scoping review to identify gaps in the literature. Regarding the ability of scoping reviews to identify the scope of evidence in a particular area, as the specifics of the theoretical model in grounded theory are derived from data, a broad knowledge of relevant evidence before data collection was not necessary and contradicted the idea that one should let the review be guided by the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, before data analysis commenced it was not necessary to conduct a scoping review as none of the purposes of such a review needed to be met.

A scoping review may be possible after some data analysis has been completed, however like systematic reviews, scoping reviews require synthesising evidence related to a "defined area or field" (Colqohoun et al., 2014, p. 1294). Grounded theory literature reviews do not necessarily have such defined fields and it can be necessary to survey literature in other substantive areas (Charmaz, 2006). These concerns raise the question of whether this would require refinement of the scoping review research question, an additional research question, or a smaller scale search of databases and other relevant resources outside of the scoping review strategy. It appears that the same problems exist with scoping reviews as with systematic reviews in GTM, namely the importance of clearly defining and specifying the studies to be included in reviews, the areas to be considered, and the research questions to be answered by the review. Although both systematic and scoping reviews can involve iterative processes and a degree of flexibility, the degree of flexibility required in GTM literature review and search strategies to evolve with the theory is greater than that of systematic and scoping reviews.

The aims of GTM reviews include positioning the grounded theory in context with extant research, identifying and critiquing the most relevant prior studies, and demonstrating gaps in knowledge and how the grounded theory answers them (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, within the context of a grounded theory study, a narrative literature review was sufficient to achieve the purpose of a GTM literature review in this instance.

Regarding quality assessment of the literature, systematic reviews are most closely associated with quality appraisal (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Thus, the reasons for not undertaking a systematic review also apply to why a formal quality assessment of studies was not undertaken, as this is not generally a feature of a more traditional literature review. Instead, in a grounded theory study, critique and assessment of the literature comes primarily from the perspective of the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). I thus opted to use my theory to frame critiques of the existing literature. As the theory which developed in this thesis is a holistic one that considers the life context of the person based on in-depth qualitative interviews, the most relevant criticisms of the literature base are the individualistic focus of the cognitive behavioural model, and the narrow focus on a restricted range of concepts in quantitative studies. These critiques set the scene for a need to move beyond the cognitive behavioural approach and the benefits of the more in-depth qualitative exploration of the participants' experiences.

Similarly to Daudt et al. (2013)'s consideration that quality assessment was less of a concern as their scoping study was part of a wider research programme, quality assessment is less of a concern as grounded theory studies focus on the data and theoretical insights gained (which come from systematic procedures, such as line by line coding). Thus, while quality assessment is important, it is arguably less of a concern than when studies (and their conclusions) are solely based on prior literature. In this case, a literature review which is not systematic – and which does not formally assess the quality of evidence – may lead to researchers basing their study design on flawed conclusions (Snyder, 2019). With the delayed literature review approach that one can adopt in grounded theory studies, this is less of an issue as research questions are based on broad exploration of phenomena rather than being tied to a specific evidence base.

Several conditions and behaviours have overlap with hoarding behaviour, including severe domestic squalor, compulsive buying, and compulsive acquisition. This part of the review will consider these three related constructs and how they differ from HD, with attention to impulse control difficulties in compulsive acquisition and compulsive buying.

2.2. Part one: Related constructs

2.2.i. Severe domestic squalor

Severe domestic squalor, i.e. squalid conditions occurring in the home rather than in a public space (Snowdon et al., 2012) is tentatively suggested to occur in around 1 in every 1000 elderly people, and one quarter of this rate in younger people (Norberg & Snowdon, 2014). Severe domestic squalor can be defined as conditions in a home which are so unclean that they would be considered unacceptable across different countries and cultures, and which put people at significant risk

(Snowdon et al., 2012). Characteristics of severe domestic squalor include dust, dirt, grease, rotten food, disorganised clutter and accumulated objects (sometimes extending to ceiling height), and even animal or human waste (Snowdon et al., 2012).

Although hoarding can result in unsanitary living conditions, for example infestations of rodents and insects if spaces cannot be cleaned (Brakoulias & Milicevic, 2015), hoarding disorder (HD) and severe domestic squalor are conceptually distinct. The prevalence of hoarding in severe domestic squalor is varied (Snowdon et al., 2007); while HD and severe domestic squalor can co-occur, this is not always the case. For example, Halliday et al. (2000) referred to houses which lacked clutter and were even described as being sparsely furnished but exhibited clear signs of severe domestic squalor such as surfaces covered by thick layers of "dirt, dust and rotten food" (Halliday et al., 2000, p. 884). The amount of overlap between HD and severe domestic squalor is not known due to the lack of assessment for squalor in hoarding prevalence studies (Norberg & Snowdon, 2014). Mataix-Cols (2012) notes though that the prevalence of severe domestic squalor in people with HD appears to be less than that of severe domestic squalor in people who hoard due to medical conditions or severe psychiatric disorders.

A further complicating factor appears to be the differing ways in which hoarding has been conceptualised in studies of severe domestic squalor. Researchers have thus attempted to distinguish between the accumulating behaviour seen in severe domestic squalor and the behaviours exhibited in HD. Norberg and Snowdon (2014) suggest that where hoarding/accumulation of possessions occurs in severe domestic squalor, it is not purposeful. Therefore, careful assessment of why objects are retained is important in distinguishing between hoarding and severe domestic squalor (Norberg & Snowdon, 2014). The objects accumulated in severe domestic squalor situations also involve "refuse, dirt and rubbish" (Norberg & Snowdon, 2014, p. 147) whereas objects hoarded by people with HD are often similar to those accumulated and saved by non-hoarders (e.g. Mogan et al., 2012). These can include papers, clothing, and some idiosyncratic objects such as scabs and old medication (Mogan et al., 2012). The latter were suggested to be reflective of a form of fusion of person and object which was also seen in the tendency of hoarders to keep more objects with handwriting on them than other groups (Mogan et al., 2012). Thus, even where some items potentially characteristic of squalor are hoarded, there are possible reasons behind this saving behaviour. However it is important to note that while this study gave participants the opportunity to add their own saved items to a list, participants who saved squalor-related items may have been too embarrassed to include them, and the list did not include them (Mogan et al., 2012). Some previous research has suggested that when items such as rotten

food, nails and faeces are hoarded, this is more common in cases of OCD-related hoarding than HD (e.g. Pertusa et al., 2008).

A further difference is that people living in severe domestic squalor do not always exhibit distress about the removal of their possessions (Norberg & Snowdon, 2014). However, difficulty discarding possessions due to the perceived need to save them or distress at discarding them is a core feature of HD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) which is necessary for a diagnosis. Possessions which are saved in HD, although they may be described as of little to no value to others (Frost & Hartl, 1996; APA, 2013), are nevertheless viewed as valuable in some way by those who hoard them. Although "value" is a subjective notion, a distinction has been made in the literature between this purposeful hoarding of items with perceived value and the accumulation of rubbish, termed "syllogomania" (Clark et al., 1975) which can be seen in severe domestic squalor. Some suggest that this term be preferred in cases of severe domestic squalor where there may be accumulation of rubbish, to further differentiate this from hoarding (Snowdon, et al., 2012), however Mataix-Cols (2012) cautions against this as the term lacks construct and predictive validity. Nevertheless, the reasons for accumulating excessive amounts of objects in HD and severe domestic squalor appear to be different, with a purpose for accumulating in hoarding that can be absent in cases of severe domestic squalor. Reasons for hoarding include sentimental, instrumental, and intrinsic value for items (Furby, 1978; Kellett, 2007) and several studies have investigated motives for acquiring and saving objects in HD (e.g. Dozier & Ayers, 2014; Frost et al., 2015), further suggesting a difference between hoarding and purposeless accumulation of rubbish and dirt. However, it is also acknowledged that there will be overlap between hoarding and severe domestic squalor (Snowdon et al., 2012). Thus, it is important to systematically assess both conditions in studies (Norberg & Snowdon, 2014) to determine why such an overlap exists. It may be that squalor occurs as a result of hoarding, as in situations where homes cannot be cleaned due to the accumulation of objects, or there may particular reasons why squalor-related objects are saved, when severe domestic squalor does occur with HD (Norberg & Snowden, 2014).

2.2.ii. Compulsive acquisition

It has been suggested that the term compulsive acquisition has been used interchangeably in the literature with compulsive buying (Kellett and Bolton, 2009) and excessive acquisition (Steketee & Frost, 2003). Thus, differences between these phenomena are not always obvious in the literature. For example, Steketee and Frost (2003) describe compulsive acquisition as one of the features of compulsive hoarding; the term excessive acquisition is often used in this way (e.g. APA, 2013). Excessive acquisition is a specifier for HD and is defined by excessive acquisition of possessions that are not needed and for which there is a lack of space available (APA, 2013).

It has previously been suggested that compulsive acquisition is a broader construct than compulsive buying (Frost et al., 2002), and that compulsive acquisition of free items, hoarding, compulsive buying and possibly kleptomania may also be part of a bigger construct or disorder related to attachments to possessions (Frost et al., 2009). Of these behaviours, compulsive buying has received most attention in the literature. Several scales measure compulsive buying while only one, the Compulsive Acquisition Scale (CAS; Frost et al., 2002), measures compulsive acquisition more generally (Frost & Hristova, 2011). The CAS measures the "extent to which individuals acquire and feel compelled to acquire possessions" (Frost et al., 2002, p. 205), suggesting that compulsive acquisition has both behavioural (acquisition) and motivational (feeling compelled to acquire) components. Kellett and Bolton (2009) also further differentiate compulsive buying and compulsive acquisition in terms of the kinds of items acquired. In compulsive acquisition the range of objects is greater and appears to have no unifying category (Kellett & Bolton, 2009), whereas in compulsive buying specific things appear to be the focus. This may be due to the desire of compulsive buyers to be part of an in group or to bolster self-esteem through objects (Kellett & Bolton, 2009).

2.2.ii.a. Compulsive buying and HD

McElroy et al. (1994) proposed diagnostic criteria for Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD) and a cognitive behavioural model of compulsive buying has also been proposed (Kellett & Bolton, 2009). CBD centres around an inappropriate preoccupation with buying or shopping, or inappropriate buying or shopping impulses (McElroy, 1994). This is indicated by frequent, irresistible, intrusive and/or senseless preoccupations with buying; buying more than one can afford or frequently buying items which are not needed, or shopping for longer than intended (McElroy et al, 1994). Buying behaviour causes marked distress, is time-consuming, has a significant impact on social or occupational functioning or results in financial problems (McElroy et al., 1994). Additionally, these episodes of shopping or buying behaviour must also occur outside of the experience of manic or hypomanic episodes (McElroy et al., 1994).

Regarding compulsive buying and HD, the key difference appears to be the relative emphasis on core features of each phenomenon. Acquisition is a core feature of compulsive buying, but excessive acquisition is currently a specifier in HD, thus, it is not an essential diagnostic feature. Core features of HD (difficulty discarding and clutter which impedes the use of active living areas for their intended purpose) are also not central to CBD. For example, Lejoyeux and Weinstein (2010) in a review of studies suggest that a key difference between compulsive buying and other behaviours, including hoarding, is the focus on the *buying process*. Items bought during compulsive buying are not used but can be hidden or even thrown away. Given the importance of difficulty discarding in HD, it is difficult to see how acquisition followed by the voluntary discarding of objects could fit with this. For

those who buy compulsively, the items bought may have little value or significance once acquired, as the key feature appears to be the buying process rather than the outcome (Lejoyeux and Weinstein, 2010; Müller et al., 2015). However, although possessions which are hoarded may be deemed to be of little or no value (APA, 2013), emotional attachment to possessions has been observed in hoarding and is part of the cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Thus, a key difference between compulsive buying and HD is the relative importance of difficulty discarding, excessive acquisition and clutter. Within CBD acquisition (in the form of buying) takes precedence, but in HD it is difficulty discarding and clutter which are central to the phenomenon.

However, there is overlap between compulsive buying and HD. It is possible for people to have symptoms of both HD and compulsive buying, and questions have been raised about what to do in this instance, for example giving two diagnoses (Frost et al., 2009). This section will briefly consider the role of compulsive buying in hoarding and hoarding in compulsive buying. Links between compulsive buying and hoarding have been examined in student samples, in self-identified hoarders, and in participants with HD. Frost et al. (1998) found a significant positive correlation between scores on the Hoarding Scale and the Compulsive Buying Scale (CBS; Faber & O'Guinn, 1992) in a student sample. In a second study reported in their paper, the authors found that hoarders from a self-help group also reported more compulsive buying, suggesting that compulsive buying can be a feature of hoarding behaviour in both groups (Frost et al., 1998). More recently, studies have found that between 59.1% (Frost et al., 2013) and 61.1% (Frost et al., 2009) of participants who meet criteria for clinically significant hoarding on the Hoarding Rating Scale-Self Report (HRS-SR; Tolin, Frost, Steketee & Fitch, 2008) also met criteria for compulsive buying (using the CAS buying subscale). Thus, some participants who hoard also appear to buy compulsively, although other forms of excessive acquisition are also evident in hoarding.

In an attempt to overcome shortcoming of studies using self-report measures, Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) assessed comorbidity in hoarding participants who met criteria for HD (diagnosed by use of the Hoarding Rating Scale-Interview (HRS-I; Tolin et al., 2010) and requiring a rating of moderate or greater severity of difficulty discarding, clutter and acquisition). They found that 60.8% of participants with HD also met criteria for compulsive buying, a figure similar to previous studies, while only 12.8% of participants with OCD also met criteria for compulsive buying. Unlike previous studies, compulsive buying was measured with the Minnesota Impulsive Disorders Inventory (MIDI; Christensen et al. (1994), cited in Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011)). Taken together, these studies suggest that compulsive buying behaviours are a feature of hoarding behaviour in both clinical and non-clinical samples, however it is important to note two issues with compulsive buying in hoarding. The first is that compulsive buying is only one form of compulsive acquisition in hoarding, and the

construct also includes excessive acquisition of free things and stealing. The second, common to considerations of acquisition in hoarding generally, is the possibility that self-reported compulsive buying problems in those who hoard may be under-reported. This will be discussed further in section 2.2.ii.b. Compulsive acquisition and HD.

Regarding hoarding in compulsive buyers, Frost et al. (2002) conducted the first investigation of hoarding and acquisition of free things in a compulsive buying sample and found that compulsive buying participants not only had significantly higher scores than a control group on the Hoarding Scale, but also higher scores on the CAS-Free and CAS-Buy subscales. This suggested an overlap between compulsive buying and compulsive hoarding. However, the authors concluded that while at the time almost all people who hoarded compulsively were thought to also buy compulsively (e.g. Frost et al., 1998), not all the compulsive buying participants endorsed compulsive hoarding. This finding has been supported by more recent investigations of hoarding in compulsive buying. In a study by Müller et al. (2007), at least 25% of their compulsive buying sample did not endorse hoarding, and around 50% of participants scored similarly to control participants on the Saving Inventory-Revised (SI-R; Frost et al., 2004) clutter and difficulty discarding subscales. Similarly, Möllenkamp et al. (2015) found that while 100% of participants who had comorbid hoarding and compulsive buying met cut off criteria for HD on the SI-R, no participants in the compulsive buying only group did. The association with hoarding and compulsive buying in the study by Müller et al. (2007) was primarily due to the SIR-Acquisition subscale (Müller et al., 2007), supporting the idea that a key difference between compulsive hoarding and compulsive buying and acquisition is the presence of difficulty discarding and clutter. To qualify for a diagnosis of HD, difficulty discarding must be present, however it does not have to be present in compulsive buying or compulsive acquisition alone. Thus, as suggested above, the overlap between HD and compulsive buying and acquisition appears to lie in whether the acquisition behaviours are accompanied by difficulty discarding and clutter. It also appears that compulsive buying in hoarding is more common than compulsive hoarding in compulsive buying, although more work should be done in this area.

2.2.ii.b. Compulsive acquisition and HD

Compared to compulsive buying, compulsive acquisition generally has received less attention in the literature, although some studies suggest that hoarding behaviours may be present in kleptomania. For example, Grant and Kim (2002) found that 12 out of their 22 participants with kleptomania also hoarded the items they stole. However, these researchers did not assess whether the participants had comorbid HD. It appears that no studies as yet have considered comorbid HD in a sample of participants with diagnosed kleptomania.

Only a handful of studies focus on compulsive acquisition more generally in comparison to compulsive buying, most in the context of hoarding. Several of the studies cited above (e.g. Frost et al., 2009; Frost et al., 2011; Frost et al., 2013) also considered compulsive acquisition of free things and stealing. Early findings from Frost et al. (1998) indicated that participants from a hoarding self-help group reported more frequently picking up both rubbish and others' discarded objects than non-hoarders. Frost et al. (2009) found that CAS-free scores also correlated positively with hoarding, impairment and clutter, and that scores on the HRS-SR and CIR were higher in groups who had high scores on acquisition measures compared to those who showed no excessive acquisition (check this). Frost et al. (2009) also found that 57.4% of hoarding participants scored above the mean of community controls on the CAS-Free, and Frost et al. (2013) found that 35.8% of their hoarding participants met criteria for excessive acquisition of free things. With regards to participants diagnosed with HD, Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) found that 59.9% of their HD participants met criteria for compulsive acquisition of free things (measured by a Compulsive acquisition module added to the MINI) compared to only 10.6% of their non-hoarding OCD sample. These findings suggest that compulsive acquisition of free things may be less common in those who hoard compared to compulsive buying. Although kleptomania and stealing have been regarded as being less frequent than other forms of acquisition (e.g. Frost et al., 2013), Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) found that 9.9% of their sample met criteria for kleptomania. Thus, it appears that the excessive acquisition of free things and, to a lesser extent, stealing, play a part in hoarding behaviour in at least some people who hoard.

Regarding acquisition problems as a whole (buying, acquiring of free things, and stealing), Frost et al. (2009) found that 85.5% of their participants with clinically significant hoarding behaviours had some form of acquisition problem at a moderate or greater level. Frost et al. (2013) found that 59.6% of their participants met criteria for excessive buying, free acquisition, or both forms of acquisition, and 27.1% met criteria for both. Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) found that 78.3% of participants met criteria for an "acquisition-related impulse control problem" (Frost et al., 2011, p. 877); 40.1% met criteria for two, and 6.1% met criteria for all three: compulsive buying, acquisition of free things, and kleptomania.

However, assessing the full extent to which compulsive acquisition (in the form of buying, acquiring free things and stealing) is present in hoarding is problematic. Although previous studies have suggested that between 59.6% (Frost et al., 2013) and 85% (Frost et al., 2009) of people with clinically significant hoarding or HD will report excessive acquisition, family members' reports of excessive acquisition have been higher. For example, in the Frost et al. (2009) study the endorsement of excessive acquisition from family members was 94.7%. This discrepancy may be due

to family members overestimating the extent to which their hoarding relative acquires items or may be due to an underestimate on the part of the person who hoards.

One explanation for this potential underestimate centres on the use of avoidance strategies to prevent acquisition, a problem which also makes assessing the true scale of excessive acquisition (including compulsive buying) in hoarding difficult (Frost et al., 2009; Frost et al., 2013). Previously unidentified excessive acquisition problems that come to light in therapy may be due to the efforts of hoarding clients to avoid buying cues such as sales or certain shops (Frost et al., 2013; Frost & Hristova, 2011). Thus, they may not identify and report problems with excessive acquisition due to these means of controlling their urges to acquire (Frost et al., 2013). Estimates of excessive acquisition vary and the true extent of excessive acquisition in hoarding participants may not be known, at least not without careful assessment of present and past acquisition and attempts to resist the urge to acquire objects. Only one extant study (Frost et al., 2013) involves asking participants about these aspects. They found that 69.1% of participants did report having such problems; altogether, 87.5% of participants endorsed either a previous or current acquiring problem.

From the foregoing evidence it can be suggested that while compulsive acquisition and HD can overlap, there is a distinction between forms of compulsive acquisition and HD in terms of the core features of the latter in particular. Although hoarding can be present in compulsive buying, and compulsive acquisition in various forms can be (and by the extant evidence often *is*) present in hoarding, it is not essential to HD in the way that difficulty discarding and clutter are. Additionally, more work needs to be done to clarify the types and extent of compulsive acquisition in HD and whether the discrepancy between self-reported acquisition problems and those observed by clinicians and family members can be clarified by more nuanced assessment of acquisition problems.

2.2.ii.c. Impulse control difficulties in compulsive buying and compulsive acquisition

As previously stated, there is less research on compulsive acquisition of free things and stealing in comparison to compulsive buying. However, impulse control difficulties have been suggested in both compulsive acquisition and compulsive buying. For example, Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) conceptualised compulsive acquisition of free things as an acquisition-related impulse control problem in their study, in line with kleptomania and compulsive buying. Kleptomania, characterised by “recurrent failure to resist impulses to steal objects that are not needed for personal use or their monetary value” (Simon et al., 2020, p. 44), is considered an impulse control disorder (APA, 2013). However, the status of compulsive buying as an impulse control disorder is complicated, as is the distinction between compulsive and impulsive behaviour. Researchers have debated whether CBD is

an impulse control disorder, an obsessive-compulsive related disorder, or a behavioural addiction (Racine et al., 2014) and this debate does not yet appear to be resolved.

However, research has found links between compulsive buying and impulsivity or impulse control problems, suggesting that these do have a role to play in this behaviour. Studies on impulse control problems include those assessing comorbidity with other ICDs (e.g. Zander et al., 2016; Harvanko et al., 2013) and studies of impulsivity in participants with compulsive buying. For example, higher levels of trait impulsivity (Black et al., 2012) and higher impulsivity scores have been found in compulsive shoppers (Filomensky et al., 2012). Nicolai and Moshagen (2018) found that the propensity to compulsively buy was associated with the perception of time elapsing more slowly, a measure of behavioural impulsivity. Billieux et al. (2008) also found a significant positive correlation between specific facets of impulsivity (scores on the urgency, premeditation, and lack of perseverance subscales of a French version (Van der Linden et al., 2006) of the UPPS Impulsive Behaviour Scale; Whiteside & Lynam, 2001) and compulsive buying. However, when the authors controlled for age, gender, education level and depression, only urgency significantly predicted compulsive buying (Billieux et al., 2008).

Taken together, these findings suggest that impulse control difficulties generally are involved in compulsive buying behaviour, and that specific facets of impulsivity could be associated with compulsive buying. For example, high urgency has been related to "poorer ability to deliberately suppress buying impulses" (Weinstein et al., 2016, p. 1003). However, it is important to note that impulsivity as a construct has various definitions (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001) and that ICDs are heterogeneous (Potenza et al., 2009), thus it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the role of impulse control difficulties in compulsive buying. No studies of which I am aware specifically assess the different components of compulsive buying (e.g. urges, behaviours, and emotions before and after buying) and their association with impulsivity.

Although impulse control difficulties have been considered in compulsive buying, and impulse control difficulties appear to be central to kleptomania given its status as an impulse control disorder, there is little work on impulse control in the compulsive acquisition of free things. Studies which do consider compulsive acquisition in this way appear to do so primarily in the context of hoarding. Thus, while there are differences between compulsive acquisition and hoarding, it is necessary to look to the hoarding literature for information on impulse control problems and acquisition. Frost, Steketee, et al. (2011) found that rates of kleptomania and compulsive acquisition were higher in the HD sample compared to the non-hoarding OCD sample. This may suggest similar impulse control problems underpinning compulsive acquisition generally to those seen specifically in

compulsive buying (for example the inability to resist urges to buy). 78% of the sample had at least one acquisition-related impulse control problem, 41% had two, and 6.1% had three, but no other impulse control problems were higher in this group compared to the OCD group (Frost, Steketee, et al., 2011). This finding suggests that in participants with HD, impulse control issues may be restricted to acquiring objects, whether by buying or acquiring them for free (including by stealing).

Timpano et al. (2013) suggest that acquisition in hoarding may involve impulse control difficulties, as these are characterised by experiencing tension before performing an action and a sense of relief or pleasure afterwards (Maier, 2004). They note the observation by Steketee and Tolin (2011) that people who hoard also report experiencing pleasure or relief after acquiring and saving (Timpano et al., 2013). In their sample of US and German undergraduate students, Timpano et al. (2013) found that in the US sample, the high hoarding group had significantly higher scores on total, attention, and motor impulsivity (measured by the Barrett Impulsivity Scale (BIS; Patton et al., 1995)). However, compulsivity (measured by non-hoarding OCD symptoms) and impulsivity were both significant and independent predictors of acquisition as measured by the SI-R. In the German sample, although the number of participants who met criteria for clinically significant hoarding was small (8% of the sample), these participants had higher levels of total impulsivity and higher scores on urgency and lack of perseverance on the UPPS scale (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). Similarly to the US sample, impulsivity and compulsivity were equally strong predictors of acquisition and of other hoarding symptoms as measured by the German Compulsive Hoarding Inventory (GCHI; Müller et al., 2009), a modified version of the SI-R. These findings suggest that acquisition may involve some impulse control problems, particularly in responding impulsively when feeling negative emotions (urgency) and in an inability to stay on task (lack of perseverance). The former may be fairly easy to link to acquisition, particularly when considering previous suggestions that people who hoard may acquire as a way of managing negative feelings (Tolin, 2011) however the latter form of impulsivity appears difficult to connect to acquisition. Timpano et al. (2013) suggest that this might relate to difficulty with decision making which then results in acquiring. It is important to note that this study did not specifically consider different types of acquisition, thus it is not possible to identify whether impulse control problems relate to compulsive buying, acquisition of free things or stealing.

A key problem in evaluating studies of impulse control in compulsive buying and compulsive acquisition is the conceptualisation of both compulsive and impulsive behaviour. Although the terms compulsive buying and compulsive acquisition are used, the extent to which acquisition behaviours are compulsive or impulsive is inconclusive. Part of this problem could be the way in which compulsivity is conceptualised. It has been previously noted that the term compulsive behaviour has several definitions (Luigjes et al., 2019) outside of the OCD literature, where compulsions are clearly

defined as repetitive mental or physical acts designed to neutralise or reduce distress associated with obsessions (Maier, 2004). Some definitions appear very similar to those of impulse control disorders, for example O'Guinn and Faber (1989) define compulsive behaviour as "different repetitive behaviours driven by an irresistible urge and ultimately harmful to the individual" (p. 148). Impulse control disorders, as described above, are characterised by a drive to perform a particular action or failure to resist this drive, even if harm may come to the person or others (Maier, 2004). It is not currently clear from the literature on compulsive acquisition and compulsive buying whether the behaviours involved are compulsive, impulsive or a mixture of both.

Taken together, results on impulse control difficulties in compulsive buying and compulsive acquisition appear to suggest a relationship between both impulsivity generally and individual facets of the construct. However, it is difficult to determine the exact role of impulse control difficulties in compulsive acquisition and compulsive buying due to potential conceptual overlap in the definition and phenomenology of impulsive and compulsive behaviours, and the multifaceted nature of impulsivity as a construct. Additionally, compulsive acquisition of free things appears to have been studied primarily within the hoarding literature, making it difficult to assess the role of impulse control problems in other contexts, particularly with regard to compulsive acquisition more broadly.

More work should therefore be done using clear definitions of compulsive and impulsive behaviour with multifaceted approaches to measuring impulsivity and considering the role of various forms of compulsive acquisition (including measures of past acquisition, acquisition avoidance and resistance strategies, and perhaps family or clinician ratings of acquisition problems). It would be useful to do such studies with samples of hoarding and non-hoarding participants to investigate whether acquisition is related to impulsivity in the general population or specifically in those who hoard. Such work would hopefully clarify the relative contribution of compulsivity and impulsivity, and the influences of impulse control difficulties in various forms of compulsive acquisition.

The remainder of the literature review will consider various perspectives related to the development of hoarding behaviour and the meaning of possessions. While various factors in hoarding aetiology including biological, cognitive behavioural, and developmental have been studied, the most widely researched model comes from a cognitive behavioural perspective (Frost & Hartl, 1996). The model originally included information processing deficits, erroneous beliefs about the nature of possessions, emotional attachment to possessions and behavioural avoidance. Its expansion in more recent years (e.g. Steketee & Frost, 2014a) has included consideration of a range of personal and family vulnerability factors.

The model has been described as one of both aetiology and maintenance of hoarding. Although much research has been conducted on the components of the model, it was originally a tentative model of hoarding which has since become a "theoretical cornerstone" (Kellett & Holden, 2014, p. 126) in the literature. There have been calls for further theoretical perspectives to be explored (e.g. BPS DCP, 2015) and augmentations to the model have been suggested (e.g. Kyrios et al., 2018). Such advances suggest a need for theorising beyond cognitive behavioural approaches, as useful and influential as these have been. A broader conceptual perspective on hoarding would enhance what is already known about the role of social, developmental and life experience factors in hoarding behaviours.

Despite a growing number of studies in recent years on hoarding, there are several methodological limitations and gaps and some concepts which remain under-explored. This review will outline several aetiological approaches to hoarding behaviour, including the cognitive behavioural model. It will then critically evaluate research related primarily to this model, highlighting where our theoretical understanding of hoarding behaviour can be augmented, particularly with the use of qualitative methodologies, of which there is a relative dearth in this area. The cognitive behavioural model is of primary focus here due to its relevance to the objectives in the thesis of developing new theoretical and conceptual understanding of hoarding from a qualitative perspective. The model developed herein is a holistic one which accounts for a variety of practical, social and developmental factors in hoarding behaviour but does not include genetic or neurobiological aspects. In line with the constructivist grounded theory approach of a literature review which serves the needs of the developing theory (Charmaz, 2014), psychological and social developmental influences on hoarding will be the primary focus of this section of the review. Thus, in-depth consideration of genetic and neurobiological factors in the aetiology of hoarding behaviours is beyond the scope of the thesis, although these will be briefly considered.

2.3. Part two: The aetiology and development of hoarding

This section considers several lines of research related to the development of hoarding behaviours: biological, cognitive behavioural and social developmental factors. It begins with a short summary of genetic and neurobiological research and outlines in depth the cognitive behavioural model in both its original (Frost & Hartl, 1996) and expanded forms (Steketee & Frost, 2014a). This section concludes with a consideration of developmental and social factors which have also been implicated in the development of hoarding: early experiences, attachment, and trauma.

2.3. i. Genetic explanations for hoarding

Several lines of enquiry on the generic underpinnings of hoarding have been pursued. Family, sibling and twin studies have been conducted, and a small number of studies on potential candidate genes and chromosomes.

Evidence from family studies in a review by Hirschtritt and Matthews (2014) appeared to suggest a genetic component to hoarding, as first-degree relatives of people with hoarding behaviours had higher rates of hoarding symptoms compared to controls (Hirschtritt & Matthews, 2014). A study of patterns of familial hoarding comparing participants with HD to those with OCD and a non-clinical control group found higher rates of hoarding in first-degree relatives of participants with HD (Steketee et al., 2015). Steketee et al also found a gender difference; participants in all groups reported having mothers and sisters with higher rates of saving, difficulty discarding and acquiring. It could not be determined whether familial patterns of hoarding symptoms were based on shared genetics or environmental modelling of hoarding behaviours (Steketee et al., 2015).

Genetic epidemiology studies suggest tentative evidence for a genetic basis to hoarding, given an increased likelihood of having a first-degree relative with hoarding symptoms, a higher concordance rate for MZ versus DZ twins, and evidence for a genetic pattern of transmission from studies considering multiple generations of families (Hirschtritt & Matthews, 2014). When considering specific genetic factors such as candidate genes which may play a part in hoarding, the results are more tentative. Hirschtritt and Matthews (2014) concluded that although there were some regions of chromosomes linked with hoarding, samples of participants with OCD or TS make the results hard to generalise, and these studies did not "reach the standard, accepted level of significance for gene-finding or gene-testing studies" (p. 173). It is difficult to find genetic studies specifically related to hoarding disorder other than the twin studies by Iervolino et al. (2009; 2011) reviewed by Hirschtritt and Matthews (2014).

A more recent study of twins aged 15, 18 and 20 suggested that while hoarding symptoms (measured by a modified version of the HRS-SR) can be heritable over adolescence and young adulthood, heritability can decrease over time (Ivanov et al., 2017). Ivanov et al. suggested that the effect of shared environmental factors was described as negligent except for female twins aged 15. The authors suggest that this pattern of findings indicates that "dynamic developmental etiological effects may be operating across the lifespan" (Ivanov et al., 2017, p. 1) as hoarding could be explained by genetic factors up to age 18 but the impact of shared environmental factors was limited to one time period. The idea of dynamic and developmental effects across the lifespan suggested by Ivanov et al. also indicates that various factors may be at work in influencing hoarding

behaviour. Questions thus arise about the development and maintenance of hoarding behaviours beyond the age of 18. Current perspectives on this point to cognitive behavioural influences. However, several additional social and developmental factors have been implicated in hoarding (e.g. Kyrios et al., 2018; Landau et al., 2011). Thus, a more holistic perspective on hoarding would provide further important detail on the aetiology and maintenance of hoarding behaviours.

2.3. ii. Neurobiological explanations of hoarding

Slyne and Tolin (2014) reviewed neurobiological evidence for hoarding. Neuroimaging studies of participants with OCD and hoarding found differences in brain regions related to reinforcement, decision-making, learning, memory, and which "control behaviour at the level of motivation" (Slyne & Tolin, 2014, p. 181). However, as these studies included participants with OCD, Slyne and Tolin argued that it cannot be determined whether the results would generalise to people with HD. Studies of participants with HD suggest differences in brain regions associated with evaluating reinforcing and punishing stimuli, motor control, executive functioning, and memory, among others (Slyne & Tolin, 2014). It has been argued that abnormal activity in the insula and anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), the latter associated with assessment of emotion and "emotion-regulated learning" (Stevens et al., 2011, p. 122) suggest "abnormalities in identifying the emotional significance of a stimulus, generating appropriate emotional response … regulating the affective state at baseline and during personal decision-making" (Slyne & Tolin, 2014, p. 182). Such findings suggest that emotional processing has a role in decision-making.

Slyne and Tolin (2014) conclude that results from neuropsychological test results are mixed, although they note that problems with sustained attention and memory in HD appear to have the most robust evidence. Noteworthy is the idea that impairment in the Iowa Gambling Task might be specific to participants who also have OCD (Slyne & Tolin, 2014). This would fit with the observation that decision-making is most impaired in those who hoard when related to personally relevant decisions such as their own possessions (e.g. Luchian et al., 2007; Tolin et al., 2009) and the importance of context, such as environment (Crone & Norberg, 2018), emotional valence and salience/meaning (Steketee & Frost, 2014b).

Although there is evidence emerging for the existence of cognitive deficits in hoarding, for example in attention and decision-making, there is still much work to be done to determine the nature of such impairments and whether they represent general deficits or more specific ones related to possessions and emotionally relevant situations.

2.3. iii. Developmental and social factors in hoarding aetiology

Several developmental and social factors have been linked to the onset of hoarding, particularly traumatic and stressful life events (e.g. Landau et al., 2011). A distinction has been drawn between characterological hoarding (with no identifiable trigger for onset) and traumagenic hoarding (which does have an identifiable trigger) (Kellett et al., 2010), thus there may be different hoarding trajectories depending upon the underlying causes of the behaviour. This part of the review considers potential developmental and social influences on hoarding, including early experience, attachment, and traumatic and stressful life experiences.

2.3. iii. a. Early experiences

This section focuses on the impact of childhood experiences in hoarding (for example abuse and neglect) and considers the role of attachment, primarily studied using adult attachment measures. Research on early experiences and attachment point to abuse, neglect, anxious attachment and warmth in the family as potential influences on hoarding behaviour.

Hoarders in qualitative studies have described experiences of abuse, including sexual abuse, and having possessions destroyed (Kellett et al., 2010; Orr et al., 2019). Although neither study formally assessed participants for HD, both studies included participants who had received intervention or assessment for hoarding (Orr et al., 2019) or whose homes (bar one participant who declined to be visited) revealed significant amounts of clutter preventing use of spaces for their intended purposes (Kellett et al., 2010). Parental attitudes and emotional suppression have also been mentioned, with general descriptions of parents who were “strict, rejecting and authoritarian” (Kellett et al., 2010, p. 145), and links made between childhood experience and hoarding (Kellett et al., 2010; Orr et al., 2019). In a study including clinical and non-clinical cohorts, Kyrios et al. (2018) found that low levels of warmth within the family were reported by groups of clinical hoarders both with and without OCD. This was a significant predictor of hoarding severity.

Descriptions of abuse and the destruction of possessions are also consistent with studies investigating trauma in clinical hoarding (Landau et al., 2011; Hartl et al. 2005) and general population samples (Kehoe & Egan, 2019). Participants with HD (with and without comorbid OCD) were more likely to report having a possession taken from them against their will in childhood, which had been “severely distressing” (Landau et al., 2011, p. 200). Further data seemed to suggest that in some cases hoarders felt they lacked privacy or feelings of ownership over possessions in childhood. Landau et al. (2011) suggest that this and the experience of having possessions taken against their will could result in an increased concern with control over possessions. A higher need for control over possessions in those who hoard has been implicated in several studies and

conceptualisations of hoarding (e.g. Steketee et al., 2003). However, the direction of relationship between possessions-related experiences in childhood and hoarding is not clear. Landau et al. (2011) suggest that it could be that people with existing hoarding tendencies may feel more upset by people moving or touching their things, as might be common in childhood when parents tidy children's rooms. Alternatively, certain childhood experiences may prompt a desire to hoard (Landau et al., 2011).

While results on material deprivation in childhood are mixed, experiences of emotional deprivation may be more relevant and are suggested as an area for future study (Landau et al., 2011). Evidence from a recent study found that emotional abuse, along with physical neglect, was a significant predictor of hoarding symptoms in a non-clinical sample after controlling for depression and anxiety (Kehoe & Egan, 2019).

By using qualitative methodologies, Kellett et al. (2010) and Orr et al. (2019) could explore participants' views about the influence of childhood and other experiences on their hoarding behaviours, giving richer detail than that provided by quantitative studies. Taken together, these studies suggest that adverse experiences in early life, including neglect and abuse, certain parental attitudes and a lack of warmth in the family, can influence hoarding behaviours.

2.3. iii. b. Attachment

Insecure (anxious and avoidant) attachment is generally associated with hoarding and with specific facets of hoarding, e.g. discarding and acquiring. The relationship between attachment and acquiring has also been found to be mediated by other variables, specifically anthropomorphism and distress intolerance in participants displaying at least subclinical levels of acquisition (Norberg et al., 2018). Higher scores on both anxious and avoidant attachment have been found in participants with HD (Grisham, Martyn, et al., 2018) compared to those without psychological disorders, and higher attachment anxiety was found to be a significant predictor of hoarding in a non-clinical sample (Neave et al., 2016). Thus, attachment problems may be related to hoarding in both clinical and non-clinical samples. However, it is important to note that participants with other psychological disorders also had high scores on measures of insecure attachment (Grisham, Martyn, et al., 2018). Therefore, attachment problems may not be specific to hoarding, but instead form a transdiagnostic aetiology factor. These can be thought of as influences which both occur within different disorders and can act as maintaining mechanisms or risk factors (Egan et al., 2011). Given that attachment may represent a transdiagnostic factor in hoarding and other disorders, it may be difficult to ascertain the specific impacts of attachment difficulties on hoarding, particularly when participants also have comorbid disorders.

Medard and Kellet (2014) found a significant relationship between attachment avoidance and discarding in a group of self-identified hoarders whose clinical hoarding status was verified by scores on the SI-R of 41 or above. An increase in attachment anxiety resulted in a stronger inverse relationship between perceived social support and hoarding. The authors suggest that this may mean that problematic attachments with people lead to problematic attachments with possessions. Avoiding discarding possessions was suggested to be due to the "non-threatening, unchangable [sic] and predictable" (Medard & Kellett, 2014, p. 632) nature of these in contrast to relationships with people which may include "ambivalence, dependence and conflict" (p. 632). It may be the case that it is safer to form strong attachments to possessions rather than people.

As the studies discussed above use measures of adult attachment, it cannot be determined whether these are patterns of attachment formed in childhood or relate to threats to attachment security in adulthood which have caused formerly secure attachments to destabilise and thus strengthened attachment to possessions. In a study of older adults Steketee et al. (2012) found no differences between clinical hoarding (assessed by moderate or greater levels of clutter and scores on the SI-R of over 30[2]) and non-hoarding groups in their attachments to family members in childhood. The authors suggest this may not be a vulnerability factor for older hoarders, which could be due to forming other, secure relationships. When considering the relationship between childhood adversity, attachment and hoarding (Kehoe & Egan, 2019) it may be that childhood adversity has an impact on attachment which follows through the lifespan. This may then result in stronger attachments with possessions, which then contribute to hoarding. Such developmental trajectories would be useful to explore, either using prospective, longitudinal studies, or in interviews with participants who hoard focusing on how their behaviours have developed.

2.3. iii. c. Traumatic and stressful life experiences

Traumatic and stressful events have been implicated as a vulnerability factor in hoarding. Compulsive hoarding participants (according to the Frost and Hartl (1996) definition and assessed by a telephone screening) reported a larger range and higher frequency of traumatic events (Hartl et al., 2005). Hoarders were also significantly more likely to have experienced at least one traumatic life event compared to non-hoarders (Cromer et al., 2007). The most severe hoarding symptoms in the study by Cromer et al. were observed in those hoarders who had experienced at least one traumatic life event compared to those who experienced no trauma. However, it is important to

[2] One participant in this study scored 25 on the SI-R but was included due to interviewers' ratings and photographs of clutter in their home confirming that they were a hoarder (Steketee et al., 2012). A lower score on the SI-R than some studies (e.g. Medard and Kellett, 2014) was due to the use of the lower bound score in Frost et al. (2004).

note that in the study by Cromer et al. (2007) participants had OCD, although they also included a hoarding subsample who scored in the top 25% of the SI-R, endorsed both Yale-Brown Obsessive-Compulsive Scale (Y-BOCS; Goodman et al., 1989) hoarding questions and reported hoarding as their most prominent OCD symptom on the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV-TR (SCID; First et al., 2001) OCD module. Severity of hoarding was also measured using the SI-R, giving two ways to measure hoarding in the study. Hoarding has been particularly related to traumatic events involving interpersonal violence (Tolin, Meunier, et al., 2010), having things taken by force, forced sexual activity, and physical rough handling (Hartl et al., 2005).

Landau et al. (2011) studied links between hoarding, traumatic/stressful life events, and material deprivation. Participants with HD (with and without comorbid OCD) reported more traumatic life events than a control group and an OCD-only group. Frequency of traumatic life events was also positively correlated with hoarding severity. Over half of hoarding participants linked their first hoarding symptoms with a stressful life event (specific and more long-term trauma), and Landau et al found that clinically significant symptoms were linked with environmental factors in many hoarders. However, the events themselves were classified as 'neutral' by the researchers. Thus, it may be that trauma can initially trigger hoarding behaviours, but a wider range of life events can push them into the clinically significant range. Example life events were "living alone, moving to a smaller home, inheriting deceased parents' possessions, or becoming settled in one place" (Landau et al., p. 201). Examining the content of these suggests that all involve the home in some way, and in some cases change in social status. Changes in social status, among others, were found to influence hoarding behaviours in an older adult sample (Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013).

Previous studies have primarily used psychometric scales and statistical analyses to investigate links between trauma and hoarding. Landau et al. (2011) used semi-structured interviews to explore a temporal relationship between hoarding and trauma, but such interviews were not the primary focus of the study. Few studies have been able to investigate what having a traumatic experience may mean for a person who hoards, and the meaning which possessions may come to have for them in light of such experiences. Researchers have speculated that possessions may represent safety whereas people do not (Hartl et al., 2005), especially as Hartl et al. note that traumatic events experienced by hoarders appear to involve sexual and physical abuse. However, such interpretations are based on results of extant studies. Deeper exploration of participants' experience in qualitative studies would shed further light on the relationships between hoarding and a variety of relevant aetiological factors. Additionally, this may help in understanding how trauma and related experiences such as loss may link to hoarding symptoms in different age groups, a suggestion for future research (Steketee & Frost, 2014b).

Some studies have also investigated the relationship between trauma/stress and specific aspects of hoarding (Timpano et al., 2011). Shaw et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between acquiring, saving, and trauma in an undergraduate sample using an experimental design. Acquiring more was associated with experiencing more traumatic events generally, and specifically those related to physical and sexual trauma, and "general disasters" (Shaw et al., 2016, p. 56). The latter was a broad category involving experiences such as witnessing a serious injury or death, serious accidents and man-made or natural disasters. However, the findings of this study only partially support those of previous studies. Clutter was only marginally associated with traumatic experience despite an association between clutter and trauma in a previous study (Timpano et al., 2011), also in an undergraduate sample.

Although traumatic and stressful life events have been implicated in hoarding, there are few studies which focus on life experiences generally and their relationship to hoarding. Although Steketee and Frost (2014a) note in their clinician's guide to treating hoarding that various aspects of life context such as busy working lives and health problems can contribute to hoarding and impede treatment, the wider life context of hoarding has not yet been fully explored. Eckfield and Wallhagen (2013) identified three core categories in a study of hoarding behaviours in older adults (aged 65+): changes in health status, changes in social context, and changes in home environment. Changes in health status contributed to clutter and difficulty dealing with the hoard due to reduced mobility and energy levels. Changes in social context included living alone, inheriting possessions, and changes in social roles. Accumulating possessions could provide a sense of purpose missing from elsewhere in life which Eckfield and Wallhagen suggest would previously have been fulfilled by jobs or parenthood. Their analysis also suggested that in losing spouses, participants could potentially lose a trusted other to help make decisions. Changes in home setting included accumulating possessions over time and the impact of moving home, which could be an opportunity to discard possessions in earlier life which diminished as participants aged (Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013).

Eckfield and Wallhagen (2013) concluded that some social processes are beneficial for people with HBs and others are not. Living with others who can help to make discarding decisions is beneficial, whereas inheriting possessions can make HBs worse. Such conclusions have useful applications, for example giving recommendations for those who work with older people such as helping them make social connections, develop new skills, and adjust to new social roles. This study is also beneficial in identifying the social context of hoarding behaviour. Cognitive behavioural approaches are primarily individual, locating behaviour such as compulsive hoarding in the individual, for example in terms of categorisation deficits, problematic attachments to possessions, or personality traits. Studying social processes allows for a wider picture, accounting for the broader range of influences on people who

hoard. However, in only focusing on one age group, the above study does not allow for the study of social processes in hoarding in a wider range of participants.

2.3. iv. Cognitive behavioural approaches to hoarding

This section will consider a key theoretical approach to the development of hoarding, the cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014). Additional theoretical perspectives on hoarding (e.g. Kellett, 2007; Bream & Forrester, 2013; O'Connor, 2016) also expand upon cognitive behavioural understanding of hoarding.

Kellett's site security model of hoarding (Kellett, 2007) applies an evolutionary perspective to various hoarding cognitions and is summarised more fully in section 2.3.iv.f. The vicious shamrock model of Bream and colleagues (e.g. Bream & Forrester, 2013) considers the ways in which thoughts, feelings and behaviours can form vicious circles, focusing on clutter as central to hoarding with three belief dimensions related to hoarding. O'Connor's (2016) psychoanalytically oriented approach considers the meaning of hoards and hoarding.

The original cognitive behavioural model of hoarding produced by Frost and Hart (1996) considered information processing (categorisation/organisation, memory, decision-making), erroneous beliefs about the nature of possessions, and behavioural avoidance. Modifications to this model have been primarily documented in the clinical literature so appear targeted towards creating formulation models for treatment of individuals. The most recent revision (Steketee & Frost, 2014a) consists of a general conceptual model including difficulties with information processing and attachment towards and beliefs about possessions, as in the previous model. However, it expands to include a range of personal and family vulnerability factors, the meaning of possessions for people who hoard, positive and negative emotional reactions, and learning processes and their influence on hoarding behaviours. Steketee and Frost (2014a) proposed that therapists "should include special vulnerabilities, information processing deficits, meanings of possessions and emotional experienced (sic) during efforts to acquire, organise and remove clutter" (p. 39). The emphasis on these components of the model suggest that these are viewed as its key factors, at least in the formulation of individual models for use in therapeutic interventions.

Table 1 presents the key components of the original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) and the expanded cognitive behavioural model presented by Steketee and Frost (2014).

Table 1

Comparison of Components of the Original and Expanded Cognitive Behavioural Models of Hoarding

Original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996)	Expanded cognitive behavioural model (Adapted from Steketee & Frost, 2014a)
Information processing	**Vulnerability factors**
Categorisation Decision-making Memory	Information processing (perception, attention, memory, categorisation, decision-making) Early experiences Core beliefs (unlovable, unworthy, helpless) Personality traits (perfectionism, dependency, anxiety sensitivity, paranoia) Mood (depression, anxiety) Comorbidity (social phobia, trauma, health problems)
Emotional attachment	**Beliefs/attachment**
Hypersentimentality Pure sentimentality Possessions as safety signals	Beliefs about possessions (instrumental value, intrinsic beauty, sentimental value) Beliefs about vulnerability (safety/comfort, loss) Beliefs about memory (mistakes, lost information) Beliefs about control
Beliefs about possessions	
Control Responsibility	
Behavioural avoidance	**Emotional reactions**
	Positive emotions (pleasure, pride, joy, excitement) Negative emotions (sadness/grief, anxiety/fear, guilt/shame, anger)
	Hoarding behaviours
	Clutter Acquiring Difficulty discarding, saving

Note: Column two on the expanded cognitive behavioural model adapted from the conceptual model diagram in Steketee & Frost (2014a), p. 17.

Several components are given expansion in the model, including information processing, emotional attachments and beliefs about possessions. New features are also presented, including early experiences, positive and negative emotional reactions, personality traits, and comorbidity factors. The model and its components presented above are expanded upon further in advice about how to develop idiosyncratic conceptual models for treatment of hoarding. For example, although

behavioural avoidance is not represented in the 2014 model above, expansion of the components of the model in Steketee and Frost (2014a) include the concept of avoidance as part of learning processes. In Steketee & Frost's advice for case formulation in hoarding using the expanded model, they suggest that saving objects acts as a form of negative reinforcement which allows hoarders to avoid the negative emotions provoked by discarding.

This section of the review thus focuses on cognitive and emotional aspects of the model as they are given prominence by Steketee and Frost (2014a) and are most relevant to the grounded theory of hoarding developed in this thesis. This is also consistent with recent suggestions that information processing difficulties, attachment to possessions, beliefs about the nature of possessions, and difficulties with mood are "etiologically significant factors" (Kyrios et al., 2018, p. 311) in hoarding. This section begins with consideration of information processing problems in hoarding, followed by a discussion of beliefs and emotional attachment which reviews studies related to the meaning of possessions.

2.3. iv. a. Attention

Clinical researchers' experience suggests that people who hoard report problems with attention. Such problems include being unable to complete tasks, finding it difficult to keep their attention focused, disorganisation and procrastinating (Frost and Hartl, 1996; Hartl et al., 2005). Hartl et al. (2005) suggested that organising possessions involves "a broad attention span" (p. 274), therefore inattentiveness could present a barrier to being able to organise possessions, thus contribute to clutter. Studies of attention in hoarding have included self-reported difficulties in attention, potential comorbidity with ADHD, and performance on attention-related tasks, with one study (Hallion et al., 2015) investigating a possible causal relationship between inattentiveness and hoarding.

Evidence for the role of attention in hoarding is mixed, with studies using different measures and participant groups, although Tolin et al. (2018) note that the area of sustained attention has the most robust evidence. Group differences in attention have been found when using various measures of attention, including spatial span and continuous performance tasks, as well as in self-report measures. Participants who met criteria for compulsive hoarding performed worse in forward recall spatial span tasks (Grisham et al., 2007) than clinical and control groups, and have also scored within population norms (McMillan et al., 2013), although in the MacMillan et al. study performance in backward recall spatial span was better than expected. Tolin et al. (2011) found that participants with HD had difficulties with sustained attention measured with the continuous performance task; of all domains of neuropsychological function assessed, this was the one in which many participants

with HD showed impairment. Self-report studies suggest that people who hoard have problems with attention, for example Hartl et al. (2005) found that participants who met criteria for compulsive hoarding (Frost & Hartl, 1996) had higher scores on the inattention and impulsivity subscales of the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Symptoms Scale (ADHDSS; Barkley & Murphy, 1998).

Other studies have found no differences in participants with and without hoarding (e.g. Sumner et al., 2016; Moshier et al., 2016; Baldwin et al., 2018). Sumner et al. (2016) and Mackin et al (2016) found no differences in participants who met DSM-5 criteria for HD and non-hoarding groups on measures of attention. When comparing self-report and observable attention deficits, Moshier et al. (2016) found no difference in attention in participants with OCD and HD, however the hoarding participants had higher scores on the ADHDSS inattention subscale. Baldwin et al. (2018) found that although participants who met criteria for HD measured by the HRS-I (Tolin et al., 2010) had more self-reported difficulties with attention, they did not show a neuropsychological marker associated with inattention commonly seen in those with ADHD. Thus, it may be the case that deficits in attention are shown most acutely when participants report their own perceptions of their attention issues.

Based on mixed results from studies of the origin of attention problems in those who hoard, more work needs to be done in this area to clarify whether the deficits which clinicians observe stem from underlying neuropsychological deficits or other factors.

2.3. iv. b. Memory

Initial ideas about memory deficits in hoarding were primarily based on Frost and Hartl's (1996) clinical experience working with those who hoard. Frost and Hartl suggested two primary issues with memory: a lack of confidence in memory leading to a reliance on objects as visual cues to make up for this, and an overestimation of the importance of remembering things. For example, one of their hoarding clients kept newspapers as she thought she would not remember the information they contained and believed that remembering information was essential. Thus, Frost and Hartl argued that keeping the newspapers meant she could compensate for her poor memory and allowed her the feeling that she had the information even if she had not actually read the newspapers. Frost and Hartl also suggested that an important driver for such behaviours was hoarders' belief that everything had to be remembered. The overestimation of the importance of remembering things was potentially related to catastrophising the consequences of forgetting, fear of making mistakes, and perfectionism (Frost & Hartl, 1996). According to Frost and Hartl then, forgetting item-related information was potentially a mistake which must be avoided as it may represent failure and cause anxiety.

Frost and Hartl (1996) proposed two underlying mechanisms for concerns about memory: an underlying memory deficit akin to that associated with compulsive checking (Sher, Frost & Otto, 1983), or a compensation for a lack of confidence in memory. However, the notion of a memory deficit underlying compulsive checking has been questioned, for example with the advent of a cognitive model which emphasises responsibility to prevent harm and concerns that this harm has not been sufficiently dealt with (Rachman, 2002). This suggest that rather than underlying memory deficits, checking in OCD can be explained by cognitive interpretations of the individual's sense of responsibility to prevent harm, how likely they believe that harm to be, and how serious they anticipate the harm to be (Rachman, 2002).

Frost & Hartl (1996) suggested that checking rituals in those who hoard could be related to a lack of confidence in memory. Evidence for an underlying deficit in memory was unavailable at the time of the original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) however the authors suggested that this memory deficit could be related to the idea that hoarders see a large number of objects as important. Although most people would be concerned about remembering important objects, Frost and Hartl argue that if many things are considered important, this places a high burden of remembering on the individual who hoards.

Memory problems were also linked to aspects of disorganisation (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Their clinical experience with hoarders suggested the importance of visual cues. One of their clients used coloured cards to mark the location of important possessions in their hoard and another expressed concerns that she felt she had lost items which were not in sight. Frost & Hartl (1996) thus suggested that the need for visual cues was related to hoarders' beliefs that they would not be able to remember their objects unless they either kept them or fully documented their associated information.

Much like research on attention, some studies focus on hoarders' confidence in and beliefs about memory, and others on observable memory deficits. Beliefs about memory were therefore included as one of the factors in the Saving Cognitions Inventory, a measure of hoarding-related beliefs (Steketee et al., 2003). Literature on hoarding-related beliefs is reviewed in section 2.4.i of this chapter.

Grisham and Baldwin (2015) suggested that there was evidence for memory biases in hoarding, but that the evidence for deficits in verbal and visual memory is less clear. Woody et al. (2014) similarly argued that memory-related issues in hoarding are only clearly articulated for *beliefs* about memory rather than actual performance. Thus, according to Woody et al., *confidence* in memory may be a key factor rather than actual performance. However, it may be that specific memory deficits

underpinning hoarding have not yet been uncovered or tested. Most recently Tolin et al. (2018) suggested that there were mixed results for studies of impaired memory although they argued that existing studies did provide some corroboration for the idea of memory impairment in hoarding.

So far, the reviewed literature has covered quantitative research findings. The small but growing qualitative evidence base on hoarding behaviours yields a very different understanding of memory in hoarding. Participants' descriptions of their objects and their meaning suggests a strong sensory memory linked with objects which is not captured by literature on cognitive deficits in memory, or even in beliefs about memory. Quotes such as "when I see that chair I'm back in the kitchen. …. just a very happy feeling. She made me feel good . . . when I see the chair … I can't bear to throw it away" (Participant four, Kellett et al., 2010, p. 147) and descriptions of emotions felt when listening to records from younger years as well as the associated memories (Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010) suggest this experiential aspect to memory. Although these could point to attempts to retain objects as compensation for observable or perceived memory deficits, the experiential way they are described points to something deeper. If pure memory cues were the impetus for saving, participants' accounts would likely focus on being unable to remember the object if it were discarded rather than being able to almost feel in the present what was felt in the past.

Elsewhere objects are described by functional hoarders (defined as those who classified themselves as hoarders but were able to form relationships with others) as being "a historical link to a time and a memory … we throw away our memory" ("Joseph", Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010, p. 13) and a way of retaining memories of relationships with others. The idea of objects as tangible reminders of relationships, time periods and triggers for emotion suggest a strong and physical relationship with possessions which goes beyond cognitive deficits, thus research should also consider experiences beyond the cognitive behavioural approach. Viewed from this perspective, objects are imbued with meaning and importance, a factor which is not yet fully considered in studies which are primarily quantitative in nature.

2.3. iv. c. Decision-making

The original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) proposed several ideas related to potential decision-making deficits in those who hoard. These were related to both general indecision and specific aspects of decision-making which appeared to be different in hoarders compared to non-hoarders. Case studies of compulsive hoarders had previously suggested problems in decision-making (Shafran & Tallis, 1996) and Warren and Ostrom (1988) proposed that fear of making mistakes was a driver for hoarding behaviour, although their article did not focus on compulsive or clinically significant hoarding. Empirical evidence which suggested an association between hoarding,

indecision and perfectionism led Frost and Hartl (1996) to propose that perfectionism and indecision caused avoidance of making decisions, which then led to hoarding. Specifically, scores on the Concern of Mistakes Subscale of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Inventory (Frost et al., 1990) found by Frost and Gross (1993) in undergraduates and self-identified hoarders and a correlation between hoarding and indecision found by Frost and Shows (1993) in an undergraduate sample.

Specific aspects of decision-making were related to probability judgements of the potential future use of items, the consequences of discarding, and a kind of cost-benefit analysis which appeared unique to hoarders. Frost and Gross (1993) found that while people who hoarded saved many of the same kinds of things as non-hoarders, the volume of possessions they kept was larger. Thus, drawing on work by Furby (1978), Frost and Hartl (1996) suggested that hoarders saw more things as valuable, both in terms of their sentimental and instrumental value, i.e. usefulness (Furby, 1978). The potential usefulness of items was then said to drive decisions to keep them, however questions are then raised about why this might be the case. Frost and Hartl (1996) proposed several answers. Firstly, hoarders may make erroneous judgments of the possibility of future use of an item compared to non-hoarders, or that perhaps they simply decide to keep more than do non-hoarders.

However, if hoarders' probability judgements of future use do not differ from non-hoarders and are thus not driving decisions to keep more items, the question arises about what *is* driving such decisions. Frost and Hartl (1996) suggested that hoarders may see more negative consequences in discarding an item or may believe that if they get rid of an item, they will never be able to reacquire it, which the authors linked to a potential lack of self-efficacy. The inability to reacquire something may also link to the observation that hoarders view more things as unique, which for Frost and Hartl also has implications for categorisation. Another belief related to the value of items was the idea that an item's value may change over time. Frost and Hartl (1996) suggest that even though an item may not be valuable now, this may change, and thus things are not thrown away.

The consequences of discarding items were not well-articulated by those who hoarded, however, Frost and Hartl (1996) proposed some suggestions. Firstly, an exaggerated sense of responsibility related to both objects and people who may need them. Secondly, a possible compensation for experiences of material deprivation in the early years although empirical research at the time (Frost & Gross, 1993) did not support this assertion. Lastly it was proposed that feelings of loss might drive hoarding behaviours, with hoarding being an attempt to avoid negative feelings provoked by loss (Frost & Hartl, 1996).

Finally, Frost and Hartl (1996) detailed a thought process akin to a cost-benefit analysis which was specific to hoarders, where they suggested that primary concern for hoarders was the cost of discarding the item, rather than the cost of saving it or the benefits of discarding it. Thus, in Frost and Hartl's model, decision-making in hoarders could be said to be biased towards concerns over discarding rather than a balanced view of costs and benefits of both discarding and keeping.

Empirical evidence for decision-making deficits in hoarding is mixed. A general pattern suggests that when studies include more general decision-making tasks, such as gambling tasks or money-related decisions, there are no observable differences between hoarding participants and those who do not hoard in those defined as having compulsive hoarding according to the Frost and Hartl (1996) criteria (Grisham et al., 2010) and participants with HD (Tolin & Villavicencio, 2011; Levy et al., 2019). However, some studies do suggest differences between hoarders and non-hoarders. For example, different patterns of brain activation in participants with compulsive hoarding (Tolin et al, 2009) and HD (Tolin et al., 2012). Slower reaction times in discarding, acquiring and control tasks for participants with HD also suggest a general difference in decision-making (Levy et al., 2019). There is also a noticeable difference in how those who hoard perceive their decision-making abilities.

Self-report studies find that participants with high scores on hoarding measures also have high scores on the evaluative concern element of perfectionism in non-clinical samples (Frost & Gross, 1993; Burgess et al., 2018) and self-identified hoarders (Frost & Gross, 1993). Participants with HD avoided decisions, brooded about them (Siev et al., 2019) and feared making mistakes (Siev et al., 2019). Avoiding decisions was also associated with higher scores on hoarding measures in a non-clinical sample (Burgess et al., 2018). Participants who self-identified as having severe hoarding problems reported more issues with decision-making than their spouses and children, and indecision correlated with an earlier age of onset of hoarding (Frost, Tolin, et al., 2011). These studies would suggest that there are certainly differences in the way that hoarders view their decision-making capacities.

Studies which use hoarders' own possessions find more consistent results. Participants with compulsive hoarding (Tolin et al, 2009) and HD (Tolin et al, 2012) took longer to decide to shred their own possessions. Both compulsive hoarding participants (Wincze et al., 2007; Grisham et al., 2010) and non-clinical hoarding participants ("packrat" students; Luchian et al., 2007) took longer to sort objects, especially their own. Activation of a brain region related to punishment during discarding also supports the idea that discarding is perceived as aversive by people with HD (Tolin et al., 2009). The results suggest that deficits may be specific to processes such as sorting, where hoarders take longer, and even more specifically related to their own possessions, which are imbued with

meaning. This is supported by an observation by Preston et al. (2009) that decisions are "based more on the subjective, perceived value and usefulness of objects" (p. 434) rather than pure economic reasoning. However, it is important to note that although Preston et al. (2009) concluded that the same variables appeared to affect decision-making in non-clinical and clinical populations, their study used an undergraduate sample.

Mixed results from studies on decision-making suggest that while there may be neurocognitive deficits underpinning hoarding, these deficits may be related to specific circumstances and contexts, e.g. those which have the most emotional valence and relevance to those with HD: decisions with their other possessions and in their own homes.

2.3. iv. d. Categorisation/organisation

Frost and Hartl (1996) originally proposed an approach to categorising which underpinned hoarding behaviours, involving creating more categories comprised of fewer items. This was drawn from observations of those with OCD. Difficulties with structuring and categorising information had been observed in participants with OCD (Reed, 1985), specifically around creating more complex concepts. The consequences of this are that people with OCD needed more information to make decisions as the concepts they used were more detailed than those of people without the condition. An underinclusive categorisation style was proposed in OCD, whereby more categories are created containing fewer items (Reed, 1969a, b). Such a style was observed when participants with OCD created more categories when asked to sort words into piles (Persons & Foa, 1984).

Frost and Hartl (1996) proposed several consequences of an underinclusive categorisation style in hoarders. Firstly, a need to consider all attributes of possessions before discarding it, as each object is unique and complex, thus cannot be discarded. Secondly, as possessions are viewed as unique, they also cannot be organised or categorised. An example in their paper is of the way hoarders treat their books. If a book is being read and the hoarder is interrupted, they will not return the book to the shelf as it is currently being read, thus it is just put down somewhere. When other books are consulted, they are also not returned to the shelf, so are just put somewhere in the home, which Frost and Hartl noted led to piles of books accumulating. Thus, in their model clutter was suggested to be indicative of an idiosyncratic and temporal organising system with too many categories, rather than a lack of any kind of system. The authors also noted that the hoarders they worked with frequently engaged in a practice of picking up items, looking at them, and putting them down somewhere without organising or discarding them. They coined the term "churning" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 345) to describe such behaviour. Frost and Hartl (1996) suggested that churning was an attempt to find an item which could be easily categorised, not an easy task if items are all considered

unique and if, as had also been observed in their work with hoarders, items increased in value once they were seen again.

According to Frost and Hartl (1996), another consequence of underinclusive categorisation in hoarders and the resultant disorganisation which occurred was the mixing of important and unimportant items. Insights from Frost and Hartl's clinical work with hoarders suggested that a further difficulty when considering piles of items including both important and unimportant objects was that hoarders found it difficult to make judgements of value. The most recently seen things would become more valuable, which Frost and Hartl noted made it harder still to discard items en masse.

A further consequence of the underinclusive categorisation style was difficulty organising items which contained multiple sources of information (Frost & Hartl, 1996). It was suggested that if an item contained two sources of information, hoarders would find it hard to categorise the item under either heading but would not cross-reference the information as they would consider this too onerous a task. Thus, Frost and Hartl suggested that the item would be put in a pile rather than organised anywhere. Finally, a process akin to the cost-benefit analysis in decision-making (described in section 2.3.iv.c: Decision-making, page 42) also affected categorisation (Frost & Hartl, 1996). They noted that hoarders appeared to make decisions based solely on the value of a possession rather than how it fit into the context of their lives.

Thus, the suggestion of an underinclusive (Reed, 1969a, b) categorisation style in people who hoard, in which concepts are more detailed and thus categories smaller, had several consequences in the cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996). As items were considered unique, they could not be categorised which led to the accumulation of clutter. This categorisation style also created a kind of idiosyncratic organisational system which, while potentially having a kind of internal logic, contributes to clutter in various ways.

The ideas proposed by Frost and Hartl (1996) about categorisation in hoarding have been studied using a variety of tasks, including using participants' own possessions, index cards marked with participants' possessions, and standardised tasks. Results thus far are inconsistent, although it does appear that people with hoarding tendencies take longer to complete sorting tasks and feel more anxiety about them (Woody et al., 2014). Both Grisham et al. (2010) and Wincze et al. (2007) found that participants classed as compulsive hoarders experienced more difficulty when sorting their own possessions in comparison to impersonal items. Such findings echo some of the results on decision-making, where deficits could be seen more clearly when hoarders' own possessions were involved (Steketee & Frost, 2014b).

However, it is important to note that some studies (e.g. Luchian et al., 2007) have also found general categorisation differences in hoarding and non-hoarding participants beyond those found when hoarders sort their own possessions. “Packrat” students (non-clinical hoarders) in a study by Luchian et al. (2007) took longer to complete a sorting task involving 20 low cost items and generated more categories. However, differences in categorisation of personal possessions versus others’ possessions suggests a possible difference in the meaning of possessions for those who hoard, with less meaningful items, i.e. those belonging to others, being more easily sorted. Thus, while problems in categorising objects have been observed both in empirical studies (e.g. Grisham et al., 2010; Wincze et al., 2007) and in clinical practice (e.g. Frost & Hartl, 1996), more work is required to understand exactly what is happening during hoarders’ attempts to sort, organise and otherwise manage their possessions, and the importance which the meaning of such possessions plays in these efforts.

A potential criticism of the basis on which Frost and Hartl (1996) developed the notion of an underinclusive categorisation style is that this part of their model drew heavily on studies of participants with OCD. The underinclusive style was observed in people with OCD and translated to hoarding. Given the separation of OCD and HD as diagnostic entities, the concept of an underinclusive categorisation style underpinning hoarding requires further study. An observation made by professional organisers in a paper by Kilroy-Marac (2019) may provide a partial answer; disorganised clients they had encountered literally did not know how to sort, i.e. to put like with like. It may be the case that people who hoard also do not know how to sort, which opens up possibilities for finding out why this might be case beyond a certain categorisation style. This observation may also link to one made by Frost and Hartl (1996) about saving and discarding: their hoarding clients appeared not to know what people normally saved or discarded. A lack of knowledge or understanding of what people do with their possessions may be one factor underpinning hoarding behaviour.

As with decision-making problems, issues with categorisation and organisation may reflect underlying neurocognitive deficits in HD (Tolin et al., 2011) but may be particularly relevant to hoarders’ own possessions and situations in their own homes. Notably of the four domains of information processing implicated in hoarding (Frost & Hartl, 1996), both decision-making and categorisation have direct relevance to interactions with possessions, as decisions need to be made about possessions and categorisation systems applied to them. The apparent importance of emotion and context to both areas appears to point to a role for the meaning of possessions and of decision-making, and the importance of discovering what is happening when hoarders try to sort and organise their possessions.

2.3. iv. e. Emotional aspects of hoarding

In addition to information processing deficits underpinning hoarding behaviour, the role of emotional experiences has been given prominence in the cognitive behavioural model, particularly in its more recent revision (Steketee & Frost, 2014a).

A range of emotional states have been suggested as possible factors in hoarding, including positive and negative emotions. Steketee and Frost (2014a) suggested that positive and negative reinforcement of hoarding could occur through positive feelings about possessions, and avoiding negative emotions related to discarding (BPS DCP, 2015). Behavioural avoidance has been considered part of compulsive hoarding since the original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996), however avoidance can also be cognitive (BPS DCP 2015; Kellett et al., 2010). Cognitive avoidance can involve perfectionism and fantasising about ideal living space (Kellett et al., 2010). Self-identified compulsive hoarding participants (almost all of whom had clutter which impeded their living space during a home visit) avoided making decisions due to the perfectionism around discarding. In the absence of an ability to attain a perfect level of order in their home, one of Kellet et al.'s participants lived in chaos instead. Fantasising involved not only perfect future homes, often minimalist in style, but also future times when participants would be able to be organised (Kellett et al., 2010).

Frost and Hartl (1996) include multiple references to the emotional states of hoarders. Intense and strong emotional reactions to discarding are highlighted, with hoarders described as comparing getting rid of an item to losing a close friend (Frost and Hartl 1996). One quoted hoarder is described as saying, while in tears, "I feel like I want to die" (p. 348) after putting an item in a box to sell. Although this intense reaction was short-lived, it illustrates how difficult discarding can be for people who hoard. Such emotional reactions are described as one driver of the behavioural avoidance seen in hoarders. Frost and Hartl (1996) suggested several reasons for avoiding discarding. One may be linked to uncomfortable feelings of loss and thus the desire to avoid the harm in such feelings by avoiding discarding. Avoiding harm is also linked to feelings of responsibility for preventing such harm. An additional source of fear to be avoided in Frost and Hartl's model is the fear of making mistakes. A source of fear, anxiety and potential anger is others touching or moving possessions, which may be motivated by concerns that the item will be damaged or lost. Greenberg's (1987) case histories paper also includes example of patients with compulsive hoarding becoming angry when others interfere with their things, although it should be noted that this paper was written in the context of obsessive-compulsive hoarding, thus may be related to OCD rather than HD proper. A final potential fear is that of material deprivation, and while the empirical evidence appears lacking on experiences of material deprivation as a motivating factor in hoarding, *fear* of such deprivation

has been suggested by later researchers to be important in assessment (Kress et al. 2016). This fear was found to influence hoarding behaviours in some participants (Gordon et al., 2013), for example higher scores on the material deprivation subscale of the Beliefs About Hoarding Scale (BAH; Gordon et al., 2013) in both the compulsive hoarding only and OCD with hoarding groups. Thus, there is a strong role for emotional attachment, fear, anxiety and possibly anger in the original cognitive behavioural model as drivers for hoarding.

Mood factors and emotional states in hoarding are given a great deal of prominence in a review of psychological models by Kyrios (2014), linked to both aetiology and maintenance. “Anxiety, grief, loss, sadness, guilt, frustration, confusion, anger and paranoia” (Kyrios, 2014, p. 209) are common negative emotions linked with acquiring, saving and difficulty discarding. Acquiring is associated with ways to manage negative moods, as in compulsive buying, a suggestion supported by Tolin (2011) who describes hoarders who talk about feelings of excitement and achievement when acquiring items. Tolin describes some hoarders as engaging in compulsive behaviours designed to regulate negative emotions, and notes that fear can occur while attempting not to acquire items or result from thoughts about not acquiring items. These may be fears of missed opportunities (Tolin, 2011).

However, using acquisition to manage negative mood is suggested to be a short-term strategy, and problems including interpersonal and financial difficulties can result in vicious cycles (Kyrios, 2014). Positive reinforcement from feelings including excitement, joy, and fondness is described as maintaining acquiring and saving. Negative emotions such as anxiety, guilt and discomfort prevent people with hoarding problems from discarding their items, a behaviour pattern which Kyrios notes is not seen in collectors. Although Kyrios (2014) does not define what is meant by a collector, a useful distinction between collecting and hoarding is made by Nordsletten and Mataix-Cols (2012), who also note that collecting has been defined in various ways in the relevant literature. These authors make some suggestions for differences between collecting and hoarding, including noting that collections have focused content, specific themes and an organised structure. Further, collecting does not seem to be associated with social impairment, distress or clutter (Nordsletten & Mataix-Cols, 2012).

These ideas support previous work on the relationship between discarding and emotion. For example, Tolin (2011) describes how, although anxiety is associated with discarding, many hoarders instead talk about grief-like reactions to the idea of discarding. There may be a relationship between specific emotions and hoarding cognitions, for example strong emotional attachment may drive feelings of grief when getting rid of items, whereas feelings of responsibility may drive feelings of

anxiety when discarding. More qualitative work in this area would help us to understand how various thoughts, feelings and beliefs of people who hoard may be linked.

Somewhat related to acquisition and emotion, Raines et al. (2016) assessed the factor structure of the SI-R in a general clinical sample (including participants with HD) and found that rather than a single Acquiring factor, acquisition could be broken down into Acquire-Urge and Acquire-Distress. Acquire-Urge consisted of items assessing the strength of participants' urges to acquire, the frequency with which they felt compelled to acquire something they see, and the frequency with which they acquired such things. Acquire-Distress items measured the degree of control participants had over urges to acquire, their level of distress or discomfort if unable to acquire a desired possession, their level of distress or upset about their acquiring habits, and the extent to which their saving or compulsive buying behaviours caused subsequent financial difficulty.

Despite somewhat contradicting previous factor analytic studies suggesting that acquiring was a single factor, Raines et al. (2016) note that their findings are consistent with other studies which find that people who hoard shop when feeling negative emotions such as isolation and upset, in a bid to deal with these emotions (e.g. Cermele et al., 2001). However, the Acquire-Urge dimension was not necessarily associated with positive emotion. Raines et al. (2016) therefore suggest that more work needs to be done to assess the link between acquiring based on urges and positive emotions. Given that the items in the SI-R for acquisition refer to, for example, urges to acquire and discomfort when not acquiring items, it is not surprising that there was little association between acquiring and positive emotion when this measure was used. These items appear to be tapping into a concept akin to compulsions, unwanted urges to perform actions rather than active choices, therefore the use of more inclusive measures of emotions related to hoarding may be required.

The emotional states of hoarders have been implicated in several studies and reviews related to the development of hoarding, with both positive and negative emotions driving hoarding behaviours, e.g. acquiring and avoiding discarding possessions. However, the treatment of emotion in the cognitive behavioural model has been criticised, for example in its consideration of emotions as drivers of behaviour in a kind of causal chain (Taylor et al., 2018). Less consideration has been given to the way in which those who hoard respond to and use their emotions, i.e. emotion regulation, an omission which is being addressed in recent work (e.g. Taylor et al., 2019). Such further consideration of emotion in hoarding demonstrates the need to focus further on the emotional lives of hoarders, as does a recent study which found different profiles of emotions in self-identified hoarders (Postlethwaite et al., 2020). In the latter study clinical hoarding status was verified by

scores on the SI-R and Clutter Image Rating Scale (CIR; Frost et al., 2008) and only those participants whose scores reached clinical cut-offs were included (Postlethwaite et al., 2020).

2.3. iv. f. The site security model of hoarding behaviour (Kellett, 2007)

An addition to cognitive behavioural perspectives which incorporates evolutionary influences comes from the site security model of hoarding (Kellett, 2007). This model addresses the lack of evolutionary hypotheses in hoarding research and synthesises biological and psychological perspectives on hoarding in a range of species, including humans.

The model draws parallels with larder hoarding in non-human animals, which involves preparing and maintaining a secure store for resources which can be returned to. Kellett (2007) uses the term "secure site", as the idea of a larder suggests food hoarding, yet in human hoarding the range of things which are hoarded goes far beyond food. For people who hoard, the secure site is the home or room where items are hoarded. Such sites provide psychological safety, with objects also "represent[ing] a potent symbol of psychological safety" (Kellett, 2007, p. 415). In the site-security model distress when others try to remove possessions is understood as a potential infringement on the secure site which the person who hoards has previously maintained, and a threat that cherished possessions will be lost.

In this model, hoarding is viewed as an adaptive strategy which is based on the resource potential of objects (Kellett, 2007), their ability to act as exclusive resources, a term coined by Vander Wall (1990) to refer to the idea of giving value or importance to an object, which increases the likelihood that the object will be hoarded (Kellett, 2007). The resource potential of possessions is related to Furby's (1978) characterisation of intrinsic, sentimental and instrumental value for objects, and to various hoarding cognitions. Intrinsic value refers to valuing objects because of their inherent characteristics, for example beauty. Furby uses the term sentimental value to refer to emotional attachment to objects, and objects valued for their instrumental value are seen to be useful. Thus, the resource potential of objects comes from their status as unique in some way (intrinsic value), emotional attachments to them (sentimental value) and their potential usefulness (instrumental value) (Kellett, 2007). So long as items have resource potential, they are not discarded and hoarding cognitions such as "If I were to ever throw this away …. I would not be able ever to replace it, it is unique" (Kellett, 2007, p. 418) help to maintain this perception of resource potential. Thus, in Kellett's site security model, hoarding behaviours develop from and are maintained by perceptions of resource potential and hoarding cognitions.

Although the model considers both potential evolutionarily selected behaviours and the intersection of these with life experience to produce hoarding behaviours, it places more emphasis on the

evolutionary and cognitive behavioural aspects of hoarding behaviour. Kellett (2007) suggests that hoarding literature would benefit from separating activities such as churning (a term coined by Frost and Hartl (1996) to describe hoarders' behaviour in picking up items, examining them and putting them down elsewhere) from outcomes such as cluttered homes. Such an argument also suggests that a focus on actions and processes could be fruitful in addition to cognitive behavioural and evolutionary perspectives.

2.3. v. Part two conclusions

Various aetiological factors have been proposed in hoarding. Genetic and neurobiological research suggests a role for biological factors in hoarding, although much research is necessary in this area. Cognitive behavioural understanding of hoarding suggests that potential information processing deficits underpin hoarding, although neuropsychological testing in this area yields mixed results. The introduction of developmental and social factors such as attachment and traumatic experiences suggests a need to consider a wider range of factors. In addition, the preponderance of quantitative studies in the field means a focus on hypothesis testing of specific aspects of these aetiological factors, such as the relationship between hoarding symptoms and frequency or incidence of traumatic events.

A small but developing qualitative evidence base yields new conceptual understanding of some components in the cognitive behavioural model. For example, studies by Kellett et al. (2010) and Cherrier and Ponnor (2010) suggest a nuanced and embodied experience of objects and memory in those with hoarding behaviours. Objects may indeed be memory cues, as indicated by the cognitive behavioural model, and are also potentially much more. Vivid descriptions of the ability for possessions to take one back to a particular time and place suggest layers of meaning for possessions.

Eckfield and Wallhagen's (2013) Straussian grounded theory of growing older with hoarding behaviours suggests that social context plays a role in the development of hoarding behaviours as people age. Analogous to suggestions to study hoarding behaviour before it reaches the level of a disorder (Steketee & Frost, 2014b), applying a similar approach to a wider range of participants would gain valuable insight into the role of social context in hoarding behaviours beyond this age group.

This part of the review has considered several biological, cognitive and social developmental aetiological factors in hoarding. Part three will consider the meaning of possessions for those who hoard. The potential importance of the meaning of possessions is indicated not only by the inclusion of beliefs about possessions and related phenomena in the original and expanded cognitive

behavioural models (Frost & Hartl 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014a), but in some studies of information processing. For example, findings that decision-making and categorisation are affected by context, including the emotional valence and salience of possessions (Steketee & Frost, 2014b).

2.4. Part three: The meaning of possessions

The meaning of possessions can be broadly divided into two related concepts: beliefs about possessions (sometimes referred to in the literature as saving cognitions), and emotional attachment to possessions. In Furby's (1978) consideration of possessions and possession in human beings, three categories of meaning were proposed: instrumental, sentimental, and intrinsic. Instrumental value relates to possessing items because they have a use or allow for an opportunity. Sentimental value refers to the memories and emotions related to objects. Intrinsic value refers to object themselves as examples of perfection, beauty or other characteristics. Although this work was not hoarding-specific, several theoretical formulations of hoarding have drawn on Furby's (1978) work (e.g. Frost & Hartl, 1996; Kellett, 2007).

The original cognitive behavioural model of hoarding proposed that beliefs about possessions related to control and responsibility (Frost & Hartl, 1996). The expanded version of the model (Steketee & Frost, 2014a) included several belief dimensions, and expanded even further on the potential meanings of possessions in considering formulation models for individual treatment. It appears that the empirical literature has lagged such clinical insights in this area, as only a handful of studies contain in-depth findings related to the meaning of possessions (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010; Orr et al., 2019; Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010).

2.4. i. Beliefs about possessions

The original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) proposed three belief dimensions in hoarders, referred to as erroneous beliefs about the nature of possessions: beliefs about control, beliefs about responsibility for possessions, and beliefs regarding the necessity for perfection.

Hoarders were hypothesised to desire a greater degree of control over their possessions than non-hoarders (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Empirical evidence supported this assertion (Frost et al., 1995), as participants with hoarding tendencies (undergraduate students and self-identified "chronic savers or packrats" (p. 899) were less willing to share their possessions or let other people touch or move them. This finding was consistent with previous suggestions that hoarders had strong emotional reactions to others interacting with their possessions (Warren & Ostrom, 1988). Several explanations were given for these findings: a relationship with emotional attachment to possessions, so that touching or moving possessions is like touching the person, or possibly a relationship with objects as

safety signals (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Frost and Hartl suggested that having others touch or move possessions means that they may no longer be safe.

Frost and Hartl (1996) suggested that hoarders have an "elaborate sense of responsibility" for possessions (p. 349). Beliefs about the nature of responsibility for possessions focused on two main aspects: responsibility to meet a future need, and to prevent harm coming to possessions (Frost et al., 1995). Frost et al. suggested that concern for meeting a future need was reflected in the idea that things would be useful under certain circumstances, and thus must be kept until the need for them arose, whether in the present or the future. This was supported by the idea that people who hoard carried more 'just in case' items (Frost & Gross, 1993). These feelings of responsibility to meet future need meant that hoarders felt the need to buy items which were on sale and were reluctant to discard things which may be needed in the future (Frost & Hartl, 1996). According to Frost and Hartl, feelings of responsibility for preventing harm coming to an item were suggested to be driven by emotional attachment and the attribution of human-like characteristics to objects. Research by Frost et al. (1995) suggested that protecting possessions was like protecting the self. Frost & Hartl (1996) proposed that this could be due to the value of objects as safety signals, and perhaps explained the ease with which hoarders could give away or donate objects compared to throwing them away. This preference for discarding methods which did not involve throwing things was itself attributed by Frost and Hartl to hoarders' fear of damage to or loss of their possessions and concerns about others touching or moving their possessions.

Finally, a set of beliefs related to the necessity of perfectionism were identified by Frost & Hartl (1996). These focused on what was possible and what one should be expected to do. Frost and Hartl provide examples from their clinical work, including a woman who felt the need to save old newspapers, and whose concerns about discarding focused on two aspects. One was the observation that she had not read everything in the newspapers and another related to her feeling that she would not be able to remember the things she had read in sufficient detail. Other examples Frost and Hartl noted included needing to check junk mail in case something was missed. Frost & Hartl (1996) suggested two underlying beliefs in these example behaviours, related to the idea that being unable to achieve a particular standard represents a form of failure which is to be avoided. First, that perfection is possible, i.e. reading everything, and secondly that it is possible to remember everything. They suggested that being unable to do both things is thus a form of failure, so keeping objects allows the person to postpone feeling the negative emotions associated with such failure. Additionally, they suggested another potential source of failure in the need to check junk mail, the failure here being that of not capitalising on missed opportunities.

Although this aspect of the model provided several useful hypotheses about the underlying beliefs in those who hoard, it did not go further in probing why these beliefs might have arisen. Its cognitive behavioural focus perhaps places these questions outside of its remit, however as it focuses on beliefs related to hoarding, it locates such problematic, "erroneous" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 341) beliefs in the individual. Questions arise, unanswered by this model, of *how* such beliefs have formed, and what has happened to the individual to allow for such beliefs. There appears to be an underlying strand of high and potentially even unrelenting standards in the beliefs of hoarders, for example beliefs related to perfectionism and the importance of remembering things (Frost & Hartl, 1996). It is as if those who hoard hold themselves to a standard which would be impossible for any individual to achieve, leading to saving objects and clutter. Such high standards are likely to have developed from somewhere, suggesting the importance of additional aspects of the person's life context, for example early experiences of abuse and strict parenting which may have shaped such beliefs (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010).

In terms of the specific items hoarded, Mogan et al. (2012) explored this aspect of hoarding phenomenology in hoarders with HD and with OCD and control groups. They used a Savings List consisting of various items and space for participants to fill in extra objects. People who hoarded saved more in terms of both quantity of items and the type of items. However, many items, such as clothes, books, receipts and "personal and sentimental objects" (Mogan et al., 2012, p. 309) were saved by all groups. The hoarding groups collected more items with handwriting, and some idiosyncratic items were added to the Saving List by these groups, including old medication and scabs. Mogan et al. (2012) suggested that the former could be due to a kind of fusion between the person and object, and the latter due to hoarders potentially having a "deep-rooted "self-connectedness" to things" (Mogan et al., 2012, p. 309) although the authors also note that this could be due to an underinclusive categorisation style where some items are seen as unique rather than part of the original categories in the list. However, an underinclusive categorisation style would not explain *why* these things are hoarded, whereas a feeling of self-connection to things could. Although there were similarities in the types of items included, there were some differences in the items which were kept by the hoarding group, which may indicate a different relationship with possessions which bears further exploration. The use of the Saving List also means that the reasons for saving these items are not fully explored, an omission which could be addressed using qualitative exploration of the meaning of possessions.

People who hoard are hypothesised to desire greater control over their possessions, for example endorsing statements such as "I like to maintain control over my possessions" (Steketee et al., 2003). Such work again echoes the work of Furby (1978) who linked possessions and control, for example

suggesting that we value objects when we can control their use, and that being able to control items thus increases feelings of efficacy and confidence (Steketee et al., 2003). Frost et al. (1998) also suggested that the desire to maintain control and be prepared were motives for hoarding.

Responsibility for possessions is linked to control over them, although the two concepts have also been measured separately (e.g. Steketee et al., 2003). Feelings of responsibility for using an item properly and for its wellbeing are suggested to be important to people who hoard (Steketee et al., 2003). Various other aspects of responsibility also developed from qualitative analyses by Cherrier and Ponnor (2010). Functional hoarding participants described how they felt responsibility towards items, towards future generations, and towards the environment. The latter also links to the desire to avoid waste. Responsibility towards items in this study included participants defining themselves as having "caretaker" roles, accumulating and caring for possessions which can be passed on to the right person or given to the right place. A further aspect of responsibility focused on participants keeping objects safe in their homes until they were passed on, with one participant describing his objects as being "like you're [sic] children" (Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010, p. 18). Finally, participants' concerns about throwaway consumer society and preferences for reusing and recycling objects suggested a responsibility towards the environment.

Some beliefs about responsibility thus tie into concerns around waste avoidance. Participants with HD cited waste avoidance and the information content of items most highly as reasons to save items (Frost et al., 2015). Avoiding waste was described as "the strongest and most consistent predictor of hoarding symptoms" (Frost et al., 2015 p. 58) however the authors note that there is little about beliefs related to waste avoidance in the extant literature. A handful of qualitative studies have considered waste avoidance. These suggest that avoiding waste includes a responsibility to future generations to teach about wastefulness and ensure that possessions which are given away are not wasted (Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010). Environmental concerns also potentially drive the desire not to waste things, with some hoarding participants describing their dislike of a throwaway society (Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010) and high scores on measures of environmental consciousness in people with hoarding tendencies (Frost et al., 1995).

The cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) includes the idea that people who hoard lack confidence in their memory. Objects are therefore suggested to serve as memory cues. Such objects are not discarded for fear that the associated memories will be lost. As highlighted in section 2.3.iv.b: Memory, findings from qualitative work (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010; Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010) suggests an embodied and emotional connection with possessions. The emotional connection

experienced suggests that objects are not merely cues for memory, but are richer in meaning, although given the relative lack of qualitative studies, this meaning is yet to be fully explored.

Several time-related meanings have also emerged from the literature on hoarding. Melamed et al. (1998) suggest in a theoretical paper that objects can be particularly meaningful, especially for older people as the objects also age. Such objects may be related to the person's past, or to loved ones who have died. The authors also make a connection between hoarding and collecting, where collecting can be viewed as a way of gaining reassurance that the older person still has a future where the things collected will be needed. Participants in Cherrier and Ponnor's (2010) study also described much on the meaning of possessions related to time: preserving the past, conserving for the future, enjoying the present. Objects could serve as an emotional connection to the past, a way of securing an uncertain future, and a way to enjoy the present, with some hoarding participants describing their acquisitions as adventure.

2.4. ii. Emotional attachment to possessions

The term "emotional attachment" is used with various meanings and constructs in the literature (Kellett & Holden, 2014). Despite this inconsistency, emotional attachment to possession is one of the components of the cognitive behavioural model of hoarding (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Emotional attachment is suggested to be greater in people with hoarding tendencies (e.g. Frost & Gross, 1993) and a motivation for hoarding in people who met criteria for HD (Pertusa et al., 2008). Originally emotional attachment consisted of considering items as part of self and hypersentimentality (Frost & Hartl, 1996), however other components of emotional attachment have been studied, for example anthropomorphising possessions and gaining comfort from possessions.

In the cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) case studies, anecdotal evidence and empirical studies suggested a strong emotional attachment to possessions in those who hoarded. For example, Frost and Hartl suggested that possessions were viewed as having human-like qualities and were thought of as extensions of self. They also cited evidence that compulsive hoarders had strong emotional reactions to anyone touching, moving or using their things (e.g. Greenberg, 1987). Frost et al. (1995) also found that hoarders felt violated when others interacted with their things, as if they had "lost control of their environment" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 347). Self-identified hoarders also had high levels of emotional attachment to possessions and reported more saving for sentimental reasons in a study by Frost and Gross (1993). This was supplemented by evidence from Frost et al. (1995) which suggested two different types of emotional attachment to possessions. The first concerned the importance of objects as part of self and as reminders of "meaningful past events" (Frost & Hartl, 1996, p. 347). Thus, according to the authors, discarding these objects could

be like losing a friend. Secondly, objects had the potential to act as safety signals. Frost and Hartl (1996) give the example of a hoarder they worked with who described how she wanted to go home and gather her "treasures" (p. 347) around her after a difficult day. Frost and Hartl suggested that the objects brought comfort, perhaps especially during stressful times. Objects therefore were associated with comfort and safety, so discarding them meant a threat to such feelings (Frost & Hartl, 1996). The authors also observed that buying objects could fulfil a similar function of providing comfort and safety, although there was no extant data on any relationship between compulsive shopping and hoarding at the time the model was formulated (Frost & Hartl, 1996).

While emotional attachments can be felt by anyone towards their possessions, it is argued that people who hoard have strong attachments towards a larger range of possessions, and towards those which may be deemed of little or no use (Kellett & Holden, 2014). In a qualitative study, compulsive hoarding participants described strong attachments to objects, for example viewing many objects with great sentimental value, and anthropomorphising objects (Kellett et al., 2010). In a review of emotional attachment in hoarding, Kellett and Holden (2014) suggest that while there is evidence for higher levels of emotional attachment in people who hoard, of moderate quality, more research is required to explore the "characteristics and nature" (Kellett & Holden, 2014, p. 120) of this emotional attachment, both in terms of developing the underlying concept and testing.

Research on emotional attachment to possessions has some inconsistencies. Although emotional attachment is a core feature of the original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996), and strong emotional attachment has been described as a feature of hoarding, some studies suggest that this may not be a driver for all hoarding behaviours. For example, although OCD and community control groups cited saving for emotional reasons as their most frequent motive for saving items in a study by Frost et al., (2015), this was not the case for the HD group in the study. Given the prominence of emotional attachment in the hoarding literature, this bears further examination. One possible explanation for this contradictory finding lies in the relationship between what is hoarded and why it is hoarded.

It is also possible that there are different profiles of hoarding, much like the distinction between instrumental, sentimental and intrinsic saving/hoarding (Furby, 1978; Kellett, 2007), a suggestion which is supported by the potential heterogeneity of hoarding as a phenomenon (Postlethwaite et al., 2020) and findings which suggest a dimensional latent structure of hoarding (Timpano et al., 2013). A recent study (Postlethwaite et al., 2020) using Q-methodology, a hybrid qualitative-quantitative approach, indicated four clusters of participants with clinically significant hoarding behaviours who differed in the expression of their emotional lives with possessions. Some

participants were emotionally overwhelmed by their hoarding and found discarding and addressing hoarding difficult due to the anxiety and stress associated with both. Another group were focused on social emotions, feeling concerned about the impact of their hoarding on their relationships. A third group were concerned about the usefulness of items and felt guilty about wasting potentially useful objects. Postlethwaite et al. found that a fourth and final group were emotionally attached to objects, finding them comforting and feeling that objects were extensions of themselves.

Such findings related to the heterogeneity and thus complexity of the emotional lives of those with hoarding tendencies may explain why some participants would endorse sentimental reasons for saving while others would not (Frost et al., 2015). Participants who endorsed sentimental saving possibly had emotional experiences akin to the object-affect fusion group (Postlethwaite et al., 2020) who demonstrated some characteristics associated with emotional attachment (i.e. possessions as part of self and sources of comfort; Frost & Hartl, 1996). Participants who may not endorse sentimental saving potentially have more in common with the object complexity group (Postlethwaite et al., 2020), who valued objects for their usefulness but did not endorse attitudes consistent with emotional attachment such as feeling that objects are part of themselves. Despite not all participants in the study by Postlethwaite et al. agreeing with statements related to emotional attachment, they did nevertheless all experience some form of emotion related to their hoarding. It may be the case then that there is a relationship between what is hoarded, why it is hoarded, and the emotions experienced as a result of hoarding and its related behaviours, i.e. difficulty discarding, saving, and clutter.

Frost and Hartl's (1996) conceptualisation of emotional attachment included the notion of possessions as part of self. The relationship between self and possessions has been theorised and explored by several researchers as far back as William James (1890), who suggested that the self extends beyond our physical body to include important figures in our lives and our possessions. Furby (1978) suggested that possessions are an extension of self and allow us to express individuality. Belk's notion of the extended self included possessions; he summarised components of the extended self as "body, internal processes, ideas, and experiences, and those persons, places and things to which one feels attached" (Belk, 1988, p. 141). A variety of perspectives and lines of evidence were reviewed related to the importance of possessions in the extended self. Belk (1988) concluded that possessions are used to help us "learn, define, and remind ourselves of who we are" (p. 160). Belk argues that throughout the lifespan our possessions can allow us to express ourselves; remind us of important events, people and accomplishments; and potentially confer a kind of immortality. Accumulating possessions gives us "a sense of past and tells us who we are, where we have come from, and perhaps where we are going" (p. 160). Thus, for Belk, possessions form an

important aspect of self which fulfil several functions, some of which have also been explored in the hoarding literature. For example, Yap and Grisham (2019) found an association between using possessions as repositories of autobiographical memories and SI-R difficulty discarding scores in a non-clinical sample, and Frost & Hartl (1996) proposed that possessions were part of self, thus discarding them could feel like losing a cherished friend.

Brien et al. (2018) suggest that gathering and maintaining a hoard is a way of avoiding "working through emotions and experiences" (Brien et al., 2018, p. 274), and that hoarding could involve a form of splitting, where all the hoarder's good points and potential are projected into their objects. For example, they may view objects as related to their creativity or ability to fix things. Findings related to the link between self and possessions also echo the idea of a strong sense of self-connection in people who hoard (Mogan et al., 2012). This close relationship between self and possessions may explain why discarding is so difficult and suggest ways to help those who hoard, for example developing other aspects of the self and working towards changing one's lifestyle and habits.

2.4. iii. Part three conclusions

These findings suggest that the concept of emotional attachment, and indeed the emotional relationship with possessions in general, is complex and nuanced, requiring further study. The use of Q-methodology, a novel one in hoarding research, adds useful nuance to our understanding of the emotional underpinnings of hoarding. Methodologies which use in-depth interviewing can further add to the research base by allowing people with hoarding tendencies to elaborate further on their emotions and experiences. It has been suggested that more qualitative methodologies are employed, specifically in the study of emotion regulation (Postlethwaite et al., 2020). The same argument can be made for hoarding generally given the useful contributions which qualitative approaches have made to the existing quantitative literature base.

Meanings of possessions generally are complex and multifaceted, however the relative lack of qualitative research on the value of possessions in hoarding means that such complexity has been explored in a broad way with various hypotheses and theoretical ideas regarding the meaning of possessions coming from primarily psychometric studies. The extant research has given us reasons why people with hoarding tendencies might value, acquire, and save possessions, and why their value for possessions might drive avoidance of discarding them. What it does not yet do is provide a great deal of depth in these complex issues. Thus, the question of why people who hoard have such strong relationships with their possessions has not yet been sufficiently answered.

2.5. Overall conclusions

From the foregoing review there are several methodological and conceptual gaps in the current hoarding literature related to the development of hoarding behaviours and the meaning of possessions. The cognitive behavioural model of hoarding (Frost & Hartl, 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014a) has received the most research support and attention. Although recent studies support the basic ideas of information processing problems, beliefs about possessions and attachment to possessions as significant to hoarding (Kyrios et al., 2018), there are still some potential issues with the model.

The original cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996) implied that problems in hoarding related primarily to the individual, for example in considering erroneous beliefs about possessions and problematic attachment to possessions. Such individual interpretations of hoarding persist into the present day, with attachments to possessions described as "maladaptive" (Kyrios et al., 2018, p. 311) and beliefs still described as "erroneous" (Kyrios et al., 2018 p. 311). The implications of such language are that hoarders' relationships with their possessions, and potentially their consequential distress and dysfunction, arise from individual problems in thinking and relating to objects.

The original model did not address *how* such beliefs and behaviours arose. While it may not have been within the scope of the original article to do so, relying as it did on the extant research of the time, recent descriptions of hoarding still suggest that deficits and problems exist with the way hoarders relate to possessions. However, beliefs, behaviours and relationships do not develop in a vacuum. A focus on the individual and their beliefs and behaviours in the here and now does not account for how the person arrived at their difficulties beyond considering how information processing, beliefs and attachments may have resulted in hoarding. It has also been noted that when further aetiological factors are included, these are still distal vulnerabilities for hoarding in comparison to the proximal factors: beliefs about and attachment to possessions, information processing, emotional responses, and hoarding behaviours (Wheaton, 2016).

The inclusion of additional influences in an augmented cognitive behavioural model which considers the role of attachment difficulties (Kyrios et al., 2018) supports the notion of moving beyond pure cognitive and behavioural influences. While the study by Kyrios et al. (2018) considered the importance of psychosocial factors, it only included attachment and childhood experiences. Although these are important for considering some aspects of social context, a somewhat neglected area in hoarding research, the development of hoarding behaviour across the lifespan has not been considered in detail. Grounded theory has previously been fruitfully used to explore the impact of social context on hoarding as people age (Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013). Additionally, research has

suggested that traumatic and stressful life experiences can both trigger and exacerbate hoarding behaviours (e.g. Landau et al., 2011; Tolin, Meunier, et al., 2010). These studies suggest the potential importance of life events and transitions within the development of hoarding behaviours.

In considering potential aetiological factors related to hoarding, psychometric and experimental studies are useful for developing an understanding of which variables are associated with hoarding. However, as they use set numbers of questions and responses, or carefully controlled conditions within laboratories, the boundaries of how far concepts can be explored are somewhat narrow. Thus, these studies can only consider a small number of concepts and their quantitative relationships to one another, rather than undertaking in-depth studies of the complexities of such concepts. For example, studies of traumatic life events have found that people who hoard report greater frequencies of traumatic events (Cromer et al., 2007), and specific types of trauma such as interpersonal trauma have also been associated with hoarding (Tolin, Meunier, et al., 2010). However, the meaning of such traumatic events and how hoarding behaviours can be attributed to the experience of such events have not yet been fully elucidated. For example, Shaw et al. (2016) suggest that interviews would be a useful way of gaining knowledge about experiences of trauma. Interviews are one way to explore the complexities and nuances of the relationship between traumatic experiences, their meaning, and hoarding behaviours.

Additionally, while studies utilising psychometric measures such as the Saving Cognitions Inventory (SCI) and closed questions such as those exploring motives for saving and acquiring (Dozier & Ayers, 2014; Frost et al., 2015), provide detail of whether certain hoarding cognitions are associated with hoarding behaviours, they do not allow for elaboration by participants. Thus, we are not fully hearing the voices of those with hoarding behaviours in these studies, as the domains of interest in the scales and questions are determined by the researchers and allow for a limited range of responses in limited detail. This is a necessity of such studies as statistical analyses require such responses however this does not allow for depth.

There is a small but growing qualitative literature base on hoarding which attempts to provide this rich detail and depth about participants' lives. These studies can yield new understandings of concepts such as memory. For example, the cognitive behavioural model posits that both memory deficits and beliefs about memory can drive saving behaviours, including the idea that objects can act as memory cues. Findings from previous qualitative studies (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010; Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010) suggested a more experiential and embodied understanding of memory, with objects being related not only to memories but to their associated physical sensations and experiences. Additionally, waste avoidance, a predictor of hoarding cognitions (Dozier & Ayers, 2014; Frost et al.,

2015) suggested as an area of further research (Timpano et al., 2020) has been explored fruitfully in qualitative studies. Such exploration allows for further ideas for future testing, as well as an understanding of what is important to those who hoard about the objects they value, keep and struggle to discard. These perspectives are invaluable and there have been calls for more studies using qualitative approaches due to the ability to focus on the person (Singh & Jones, 2012). Additionally, when participants tell us about the meaning of their possessions and how such meanings impact upon their hoarding behaviour, we gain an insight into what this may be like and how to formulate more potentially ecologically valid paradigms for use in quantitative studies. Thus, an important aspect of a qualitative approach is the ability to explore concepts in depth using participants' own words and experiences. Not only does this attempt to place the person at the centre of the analysis, as argued by Singh and Jones, it also allows for deeper understanding of the underlying conceptual features of hoarding behaviour. Taking a qualitative approach can thus address some of the limitations in quantitative self report and experimental studies.

Research findings such as those on emotion and motives for discarding and saving suggest a nuanced relationship with possessions which has not yet been fully explored in the literature. Much research on hoarding is correlational, meaning that the nuances of potential causes, conditions and consequences of hoarding behaviours also remain unexplored for the most part. Such possibilities tend to be explored after quantitative studies have been completed, and while this sets the scene for future work, some qualitative approaches are able to explore new possibilities within single studies. GTM is particularly useful for exploring such areas, as multiple perspectives can be explored and nuances of meaning and process can be investigated through concurrent data collection and analysis and in-depth coding procedures.

Given the foregoing limitations in the existing literature base on hoarding, the following questions arise to be answered from a qualitative perspective:

1) How do hoarding behaviours develop?
2) What is the meaning of possessions for those who hoard?

There are several potentially appropriate qualitative approaches which could be applied to study these research questions. Perhaps the most appropriate to answer questions related to the development of behaviours and questions of meaning is grounded theory methodology (GTM) previously used in its Straussian form (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to study hoarding and aging (Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013).

First developed over fifty years ago (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), GTM has undergone several revisions. A more recent approach, constructivist GTM (e.g. Charmaz, 2000), deals with process, actions and the ways in which people construct and understand their social worlds. The constructivist GTM perspective has not been used to study hoarding as far as I am aware, making it novel within the hoarding research base. Its focus on processes and actions allows for an understanding of the development of hoarding behaviours, and its use of rich data (Charmaz, 2014) means that participants' perspectives and views on their hoarding behaviours and the meaning which their possessions have for them can be explored. Thus, it is an ideal method for adding to the existing qualitative research base and addressing the aims of this thesis: to extend existing conceptual understanding of the meaning of possessions and the development of hoarding behaviours.

2.6. Summary and conclusions

In the above sections I have reviewed the extant literature, identified several key limitations in the research knowledge base framed as research questions, and have suggested an appropriate methodology by which these questions can be answered. The next chapter, Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods, explores GTM and its applicability to the study of hoarding behaviour in more detail. It reviews the key versions of the methodology and tracks the development of GTM from its beginnings in Sociology in the 1960s to the constructivist variant used in this thesis and provides a justification for the use of GTM in the study of hoarding behaviour. The following chapter also details the research methods used in data collection and analysis in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

At the end of the last chapter a case was made for conducting a GTM study to explore the development of hoarding behaviour and meaning of possessions for those who hoard, based on a critical evaluation of literature in the field. Here the methodological approach used in the thesis, grounded theory methodology (GTM), will now be outlined in more detail. This chapter is split into two sections detailing methodology and methods. Section one, Methodology, begins with an outline of my epistemological and ontological position which has guided the research. After a short introduction to GTM there follows a review of the history and development of this methodology. Key philosophical and technical differences between the three main variants of GTM are discussed. The methodology section concludes with a justification for the use of GTM generally, and specifically its constructivist variant.

Section two, Methods, details the recruitment, data collection and analysis methods used for phase one and two of the study: initial and theoretical sampling.

3.1. i. Ontology and epistemology

This section will outline the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research. Strong positions such as that of positivism (which posits one external reality which can be found with the application of correct methodology) and relativist approaches which argue that there is no external reality, with concepts as relative and the social world as enacted through language do not appear persuasive to me. The existence of one external reality to be discovered with correct methodology is not one which I am convinced by, as it fails to account for the range of perspectives which comprise an individual's lived experience or a social group's lived reality. This view ignores the context in which people live, for example, their historical, cultural and social setting, as well as their society's level of knowledge and technological development, all of which influence what we can know and how we can know it.

However, the view that there is no external reality is also not one which I find persuasive, nor the view that reality is enacted by language. I believe this is too narrowly focused on discourse, thus ignores other aspects of the world in which we live. My view is closest to the idea that an external reality may exist but cannot be accessed directly, as our knowledge is dependent upon the context in which we live. Thus, our cultural, social and historical perspectives influence what we view and how we understand it. I cannot discount the possibility of an external world as I believe human knowledge is too fallible and contextual to make definite claims about the existence or non-existence of an external reality. Therefore, I have found myself more convinced by positions which take a middle ground approach to questions of the nature of reality and how we can best study it.

After surveying a range of ontological and epistemological positions, I found myself most closely allied to critical realist ontology. Critical realism posits that access to an external reality is mediated, and that reality is comprised of layers. Fleetwood (2005) describes an entity as real if it "*has causal efficacy; has an effect on behaviour; makes a difference*" (p. 199, italics in original). In this approach, there are physical and non-physical modes of reality. Physical reality is comprised of artefactually and materially real entities. The former are created by humans (examples given by Fleetwood include cosmetics or computers) while the latter exist independently of human thoughts, words and actions about them, such as mountains or trees (Fleetwood, 2005). Ideally real entities which are purely conceptual, such as theories, discourses and beliefs, are non-physical, as are socially real entities. These are defined as depending upon human activity, with *"practices, states of affairs or entities ... such as caring for children ... or social structures in general"* (p. 201) as examples. Thus, within this framework, there are purely discursive entities (ideally real) and extra-discursive entities such as social practices and structures, which can be argued to exist outside of discourses about them (Fleetwood, 2005). Therefore, the critical realist approach understood in this way does not deny the existence of constructed aspects of reality (as the positivist approach does) but does not restrict itself to only these constructed aspects of reality. The critical realist approach outlined herein is the closest to my ontological position, and therefore I have adopted this approach.

At first glance, critical realism may appear incompatible with constructivist GTM, as constructivist research is often argued to have an underlying relativist ontological position (e.g. Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Willig (2016) argues that it is possible to adopt a critical realist ontological position with a relativist epistemological stance taking account of multiple perspectives and the constructed nature of certain phenomena. Constructivist GTM is given by Willig as an example of this kind of research. This assertion is supported by Charmaz (2008) who suggests that all forms of GTM have an underlying realist ontology, although she suggests that constructivist GTM has a relativist epistemology (Charmaz, 2017). "The world" for Charmaz is assumed to be real, but interpretable in a variety of ways (Charmaz, 2008), i.e. people's worlds are constructed but within limits placed upon them by historical and social conditions. Additionally, although Charmaz (2000) distinguishes between constructivist and objectivist versions of GTM, she observes that "whether you judge a specific study to be constructivist or objectivist depends on the *extent* to which one tradition or the other informs its key characteristics" (Charmaz, 2014, p.235).

Thus, one need not adhere to every single tenet of constructivist or objectivist GTM. My approach is situated more towards the constructivist viewpoint. These ideas are consistent with the critical realist ontological framework outlined above and my own position on knowledge and the nature of reality. From critical realist ontology as outlined by Fleetwood (2005) I take the view that there may

be a real world existing beyond the way in which we construct it, consistent with the ontological realism of constructivist GTM. From Charmaz's approach to GTM, I take the view that there are a variety of ways to construct the world, a multiplicity of perspectives, and a commitment to reflexivity (Charmaz, 2017). I also take from social constructionism generally the view that knowledge is situated within a historical and cultural context, which also sits with the critical realist notion of our knowledge of the world as mediated rather than accessed directly. Therefore, I believe there is little tension between these two approaches; a constructivist GTM perspective can be harmoniously aligned with a critical realist ontology.

Having explained my ontological and epistemological positioning in relation to my chosen methodology, in the following section I will outline GTM and summarise the various approaches to this methodology. Differences between each version will be discussed.

3.1. ii. Grounded theory methodology (GTM)

GTM was first formulated by the sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967). Their aims were twofold: to introduce a new methodology for the development of theory, and to establish qualitative research as rigorous and systematic. Over the past 50 years various researchers, including Glaser and Strauss themselves, have developed and modified the original format of GTM. In their later writings Glaser and Strauss diverged in their methods, with Glaser adhering closely to the original tenets of GTM, and Strauss adopting new techniques and guidelines in his collaborations with Juliet Corbin (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

A constructivist strand of GTM has also developed, primarily with the work of Kathy Charmaz (1990; 2000). The constructivist approach aims to combine the original version of GTM with methodological and epistemological developments drawn from wider debates in qualitative research over the last forty years. Charmaz (2008) refers to this as "reconstructing grounded theory with 21st-century methodologies" (p. 403). Each version of GTM has its own epistemological foundations and techniques for coding and analysing data, although there are commonalities in all versions. All focus on the development of theory from data, the use of coding and memo writing, and concurrent data collection and analysis. The history of these versions of GTM and their key differences will now be outlined, starting with the original version established by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

3.1. ii. a. The original formulation of grounded theory methodology: Glaser and Strauss

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), a grounded theory consists of categories and their properties, and the relationships between them (either hypotheses or general relationships). Categories are "conceptual elements of the theory" and properties are "conceptual elements of a category" (p. 36). In addition to setting out the definition of a grounded theory and its components,

Glaser and Strauss also outlined a set of flexible techniques to allow grounded theories to be developed. These include the constant comparative method, theoretical sampling, and concurrent data collection and analysis procedures.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) outlined four stages of the constant comparison method: coding, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory. The first stage, coding, involves coding incidents for categories, then generating properties of these categories by constant comparison. Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) provide definitions of categories and properties, they do not define what is meant by an “incident”. However, from their writing it could be inferred that an “incident” is a meaningful event in the data. Charmaz (1990) similarly does not provide a formal definition of what an incident is but potentially adds another dimension to the idea of incidents, as those meaningful pieces of data which appear to illuminate something of importance to participants. Her examples of incidents in her data were those related to issues which appeared to “loom large” (p. 1168) for the participants.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that coding can be done on the margins of the data but can be more elaborate, such as on cards, although they do not describe how this would work in detail, perhaps so that analysts can use their own coding methods without being constrained by too many prescriptions. When coding, analysts can use *in vivo* codes or constructs from their own disciplines (Glaser, 1978). Glaser defines in vivo codes as verbatim quotes or derived from participants’ own words. The second stage of the constant comparison method is to integrate categories, i.e. to relate them in different ways. In this stage incidents in the data are compared to properties of the categories developed from comparisons made in stage one. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that using the constant comparison method allows researchers to determine the boundaries of both the theory and its categories (stage three). Thus, there will be fewer concepts and categories needed in the theory as the grounded theorist can identify "underlying uniformities" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110) in categories or properties. At the fourth stage of the constant comparison method, the grounded theorist can write up their theory.

Theoretical sampling differs from other sampling methods as it is driven by the needs of the developing theory. The aim of this form of sampling is to collect further data to expand upon developing concepts (Boychuk Duchsher & Morgan, 2004). Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) definition of theoretical sampling contains two aspects: collecting data to generate theory through concurrent data collection, analysis and coding, and making decisions about where and who to sample next. Initial sampling in GTM involves a general research problem or subject, and a general perspective to guide the researcher, but concepts from pre-existing theory do not guide sampling. For example,

Glaser and Strauss (1967) initially argued that grounded theorists should ignore the theoretical literature on their study topics so their developing theory is not “contaminated” (p. 37) by concepts which may lack relevance. Issues such as the place of literature reviews in grounded theory studies, and the influence of researchers’ perspectives, have been the subject of much debate (e.g. Ramalho et al., 2015; Glaser, 2002). My approach to the literature review is outlined in section 3.1.4 of this chapter.

Although originally collaborators, Glaser and Strauss diverged in their views and approaches in their later work. These iterations came to be known as Glaserian and Straussian GTM (Stern, 1994). Glaserian GTM stresses the emergence of theory (Glaser, 2002). His approach puts the constant comparison method and theoretical sampling at the forefront (Glaser, 2002), and his approach to existing theory has also remained consistent. Glaser (1978) advocates beginning a GTM study with as few preconceptions as possible. Two coding stages are suggested. First, an initial substantive coding phase of analysing the data, and a theoretical coding stage involving memo writing. Memo writing itself is considered so central to GTM that Glaser argues that anyone claiming to do GTM without writing memos is not actually employing the methodology. Memos are written when and where ideas strike and are defined as “the theorising write up of ideas about codes and their relationships" (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). In the Glaserian approach, the resultant theory is conceptual, abstract and distant from data (Glaser, 2002), and GTM is positioned as an approach which can use any epistemological stance depending on the data collected.

Strauss's version of grounded theory includes a variety of additional techniques for analysis and more consideration of the researcher's role in the generation of theory. In common with Glaser, Strauss and Corbin (1998) stress the importance of data and the development of theory from the analysis of such data. The following section will consider the Straussian version of GTM in more detail.

3.1. ii. b. Straussian grounded theory methodology

This section will outline the main tenets of what became known as Straussian GTM (Stern, 1994), and summarise the key differences between this variant of GTM and its original and Glaserian counterparts.

The notion of integrating concepts into an explanatory framework is given precedence in the definition of theory in the Straussian iteration of GTM (given in table 2, pages 75-76). This definition does not stray far from the original statement of grounded theories as categories, properties and relationships. However, the techniques which are adopted, and the underlying epistemology differ in several important ways from the original version of GTM.

In addition to line-by-line coding advocated by Glaser (1978), Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest using microanalysis of individual words, and axial coding. This includes asking questions such as why, where, and how and looking for relationships between concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Further coding strategies in Straussian GTM include open and selective coding. Open coding aims to generate categories and properties and allows the grounded theorist to see variation in them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that in selective coding, the aim is to refine and integrate the theory. Throughout each coding stage, the grounded theorist will code for processes, defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as the ways in which actions and interactions evolve. Glaser (1978) suggested that coding with gerunds can "bring out process and change" (p. 94), using action words instead of coding for themes wherever possible. The Straussian approach also advocates the use of memo writing, and Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest several additional techniques which can be adopted if the analysis warrants them.

In developing theory, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that eventually one 'core' concept will be developed, a stance also adopted by Glaser (1978). In Straussian GTM the core concept can be thought of as a main theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They go on to elaborate that this concept will generally be relevant to all participants but will also demonstrate variation through the properties and dimensions in each category. Glaser (1978) describes the core concept as a core variable or core category and suggests that this main theme will consist of the primary issue which participants see as of concern to them. Glaser (1978) notes that the core concept could also be a pattern of behaviour in the area being studied.

A key difference between the Glaserian and Straussian approaches is in their epistemology. Glaser's emergence-focused approach positions researchers as objective collectors of data, particularly in his claim that "the data is what it is" (Glaser, 2007, para 4). In the Straussian approach the notion of objectivity is criticised as it is acknowledged that objectivity is not practical. The focus is on the "interplay between researcher and data in both gathering and analysing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 58). Thus, a degree of self-consciousness and self-awareness in one's own use of prior knowledge and experience is emphasised in the Straussian approach, making the role of researchers in collecting and analysing the data recognisably more active in this form of GTM.

3.1. ii. c. Constructivist grounded theory methodology

Having outlined the key facets of the Glaserian and Straussian approaches, the constructivist variant of GTM will now be outlined and its similarities and differences to the Glaserian and Straussian approaches discussed.

Charmaz's approach to GTM includes points of similarity and departure from the approaches of Glaser and Strauss. She adopts a specific epistemological position, constructivism, which extends the notion of researcher interplay with data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), although Glaser (2002) views GTM as epistemology-free. Methodologically Charmaz suggests the adoption of various analytic strategies including axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) but retains the flexibility of Glaser's method by cautioning researchers to improvise analysis techniques to serve the development of theory (Charmaz, 2008). Thus, the constructivist approach can be viewed as a methodological nod to both originators of GTM but with a commitment to a specific epistemological position. Charmaz's grounded theory approach is first described as social constructionist (Charmaz, 1990), and later constructivist (e.g. Charmaz, 2000). As social constructionism is an umbrella term for several approaches, this section will outline general principles of social constructionism before emphasising those elements of the social constructionist approach adopted in Charmaz's formulation of GTM.

Social constructionism

Social constructionism is an umbrella term and as such it has been argued that there is no single definition (Burr, 2015). However, Burr (2015) defines as social constructionist any approach which adheres to one or more of the following four principles. First, taken-for-granted knowledge is questioned and considered critically rather than being accepted as representing objective facts about the world. Secondly, knowledge is positioned in its cultural and historical context. Third, knowledge and truth are the products of social processes and interactions. Given this last assumption, the fourth and final essential social constructionist principle is that the actions we engage in are dependent upon our understanding of the world (Burr, 2015). Edley (2001) gives a useful definition of socially constructed aspects of the world as those which are "accomplished in the hurly-burly of ordinary, everyday interactions" (p. 433) as opposed to those which exist in an external reality beyond how they are discussed and manifested in social action and interaction.

Charmaz describes constructivist GTM as a method which "assumes relativity, acknowledges standpoints, and advocates reflexivity" (Charmaz, 2008, p. 409). Thus, she takes some aspects of social constructionism but does not adhere to the "radical subjectivism" (p. 409) which she ascribes to some social constructionists. She clarifies her position further by suggesting that she views the social world as being constructed but under certain limits. Charmaz (2017) stresses the relativist epistemology underpinning the constructivist GTM approach and summarises further the influence of social context, reflexivity and multiple perspectives. She argues that constructivist GTM involves "acknowledging … multiple standpoints, roles and realities" (Charmaz, 2017, p. 299) of researchers and participants, engaging in a reflexive approach to one's self and the research process and paying

attention to “language, meanings and actions” (Charmaz, 2017, p. 299). Additionally, a constructivist GTM analysis should be situated in its historical and social context. Thus, constructivist GTM can be seen as taking from the social constructionist approach a consideration of multiple perspectives; the social, cultural and historical contexts in which knowledge is produced; a commitment to reflexivity; and a relativist epistemology, while assuming the existence of a “real” world which constrains *how* knowledge is constructed.

Charmaz’s (1990) original social constructionist approach involved considering the constructions of both research participants and researchers. Defined within her paper, participants’ constructions are their “creation of taken-for-granted interactions, emotions, definitions, ideas and knowledge” (p. 1161). Researchers’ constructions are those disciplinary constructions developed by “studying ... people’s constructions” (p. 1161). Charmaz argues that these constructions are viewed as real by those who experience them and are reflective of a person’s understanding of their experiences and situations. Thus, it could be said that participants constructions of their world are seen in what they say (and perhaps do not say), and researcher’s constructions are created by their engagement with their research area and reflect their understanding of how participants construct their worlds. Charmaz’s approach has been refined since her 1990 paper, although some similarities remain in each iteration of the constructivist revision of GTM. Similarities include the linking of facts and values, and the epistemological position that the researcher is always embedded within the research: “the theory … cannot stand outside of the researcher’s view” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239).

A significant difference between earlier versions of grounded theory, particularly the Glaserian variant, and Charmaz’s approach, is the conceptualisation of “discovery”. In the Glaserian approach, discovery of theory is based on emergence. The notion of emergence has been strongly stressed in Glaser’s writing, with the theory itself emerging using the constant comparison method, with little to no emphasis on the researcher’s own views or ideas. However, for Charmaz, it is the researcher’s understanding of the data which is discovered (Charmaz, 1990). Although both Glaser and Charmaz emphasise the importance of the participant’s perspective, Glaser (2002) argues that applying a specified epistemological position blurs this with analyst’s concerns rather than remaining open to what participants say.

Glaser acknowledges that researchers bring their own perceptions to the research process, but his view is that this is biased and that once we do enough analysis, those biases are ironed out and “conceptual reality” (Glaser, 2002, para 31) shines through. He also advocates for researchers writing field notes about their own experience and using this as another source of comparison (Glaser, 2002). Such an approach could be viewed as a formalised version of reflexivity. The

distinction between Charmaz's views and Glaser's appears to be whether the researchers' view can be separated – eventually – from the analysis by using GTM techniques, or whether researcher views and perspectives will always be an artefact of research no matter how much analysis is conducted and how we treat those perspectives.

Instead of stressing the emergence of theory through constant comparison, constructivist grounded theory positions "data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239). Such creation of data and analysis is reflected in the emphasis for social constructionist GTM on the interaction between researchers and their data. The analysis is viewed as co-constructed, and results are shaped by how the grounded theorist uses their method, and the questions they bring to data. Charmaz (1990) argues that the concepts which a grounded theorist brings from their discipline will prompt them to look for certain things and ask certain questions about the data. A social constructionist research approach means looking at how participants' experiences develop and change, and how consequences arise. Thus, there is a focus on process which is consistent with previous versions of GTM (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Charmaz (2000) suggested that there are key techniques in GTM, including concurrent data collection and analysis; a two-stage coding process; the use of comparisons; writing of memos as an intermediate stage between coding and the final theory; theoretical sampling, and "integration of the theoretical framework" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 511). Charmaz (2014) also advocates the use of gerund coding for process, similarly to Glaser (1978), and line-by-line analysis. Such analysis allows the researcher to stay close to the data and remain grounded in what participants say and do, as well as promoting a critical and analytical view of the data instead of accepting participants' statements at face value (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (2006) suggests using additional coding practices such as axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) if grounded theorists prefer a more structured framework. However, she cautions that the use of axial coding can "cast a technological overlay" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63) over the data, potentially at the expense of flexibility and openness to data. Charmaz (2008) argues that one of the principles of constructivist GTM is to "treat the research process *itself* as a social construction" (p. 403, italics in original). From this principle, she argues that grounded theorists adopting the constructivist approach cannot simply apply techniques and analysis strategies to their research as if following a recipe. Instead, a constructivist approach to GTM involves constructing both the analysis methods and the product of the analysis, paying attention to questions and insights which develop, and improvising one's research strategies (Charmaz, 2008). Thus, the constructivist approach emphasises flexibility through engagement with the data and emerging analyses over the adherence to specific coding techniques and practices.

Although debate about grounded theory is sometimes fierce, for example, Glaser's (2002) argument that constructivist GTM is "a misnomer" (para 1), and that such versions of GTM are actually different methods, referred to as qualitative data analysis[3], it would appear that there are more similarities with the versions of GTM than there are differences. All try to develop an integrated conceptual framework of categories and their properties which explain (Glaser, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or provide an abstract understanding of a phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014). The main difference would appear to be the view of data and researchers in each version of the methodology. Glaser views data as separate from the researcher, and theory as emerging through the application of GTM techniques and openness to what arises. Strauss and Corbin, while making statements like "the data themselves do not lie" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 45) as if data reflects an objective truth, acknowledge the role of the researcher in the analysis more than Glaser. They also adopt more techniques with that data. Charmaz's approach takes the epistemological stance of Strauss and Corbin (1998) further, with researchers viewed as active co-constructors of theory. It retains the flexibility of Glaser's approach with an emphasis on being guided by the emergent research process rather than relying on specific techniques, and improvisation of methods (Charmaz, 2008). The constructivist approach of Charmaz (2014) is the one I have adopted for these reasons.

3.1. ii. d. Grounded theory methodology in psychology: Henwood and Pidgeon

Although the roots of GTM lie in sociology, it has also been adopted in different fields, including psychology. This section will summarise the approach of Henwood and Pidgeon to adopting GTM in psychology as I have taken several recommendations from their work, particularly their approach to the literature review.

Henwood and Pidgeon's approach to grounded theory is centred in naturalistic inquiry, with criticism of both the hypothetico-deductive approach to theory testing and the idea of pure induction (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992; Pidgeon, 1996). Theory is generated as opposed to discovered as in their view the notion of discovery implies a researcher looking for what already inherent in the data in a "dispassionate" manner (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, p. 102), whereas generation is a more active process. Pidgeon (1996) also refers to an explicitly constructivist slant in their use of GTM, citing Charmaz (1990) as potentially the most clearly developed account of this version of the methodology (Pidgeon, 1996), involving the acknowledgement that researchers have (and need to have) perspectives to work from. Such perspectives include a store of sensitising concepts from the

[3] Glaser differentiates classical grounded theory as a specific method in his critiques of constructivist and other versions of GTM. For Glaser, grounded theory is focused on "conceptualization of latent patterns" (Glaser, 2002, para 9) and constructivist GTM is a revision of the methodology which focuses instead of aspects of qualitative data analysis (QDA) such as a focus on accuracy and description, where the focus on GT is on the data

school of thought to which they subscribe, and their own experience (Charmaz, 1990). Experience and disciplinary knowledge form part of the interplay between researchers and data which is viewed as key to theory generation (Pidgeon, 1996).

Grounded theory is described in terms of the theory "generated in the course of the close inspection and analysis of qualitative data" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, p. 103) but also encompasses the methodology-specific strategies promoted by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The constant comparison method and theoretical sampling are identified as key strategies separating GTM from other qualitative methods such as content analysis (Pidgeon, 1996).

The constant comparison method is defined as looking for differences and similarities in "data, cases and concepts" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, p. 104), including negative case analysis. Negative case analysis involves the analysis of data which does not fit with the developing theory, rather than ignoring or discarding it (Morse, 2007). Negative case analysis can help the researcher both challenge their assumptions about the data and the developing analysis and form part of the constant comparison method (Pidgeon, 1996). In a grounded theory analysis, one begins with data and proceeds through the development of descriptive codes, to more developed concepts and finally theoretical ideas (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) stress that during the research process ideas will be refined, moving from perceiving "unstructured chaos" (p. 104) in the data in the initial stages, with a variety of concepts being developed, to more focus as the categories themselves are developed. A number of analytical strategies help to achieve this focus, such as theoretical saturation (defined as "coding of instances until no new examples of variation are found" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, p. 103), memos to document ideas throughout, integrating categories, and theoretical sampling: gathering more data when necessary.

Having summarised the main versions of GTM this chapter will now provide a justification for the use of grounded theory generally in the thesis, and more detail on why constructivist GTM has been chosen. The discussion will draw on personal and methodological reflexivity to do this.

Table 2 (overleaf) shows some of the key differences between the three main versions of grounded theory outlined herein.

Table 2

Summary of Differences and Key Features of Glaserian, Straussian and Constructivist GTM

	Glaserian/Classical GTM (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002; Glaser, 2007)	Straussian GTM (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)	Constructivist GTM (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2014)
Definition of theory	"A set of carefully grounded concepts organized around a core category and integrated into hypotheses … [which] explains the preponderance of behavior in a substantive area with the prime mover of this behavior surfacing as the main concern of the primary participants" (Glaser & Holton, 2004, para 41)	"A set of well-developed concepts related through statements of relationship which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).	An interpretive understanding of a phenomenon which focuses on process and "making the study of action central" (Charmaz, 2006, p.9), and acknowledges researchers' subjectivity (Charmaz, 2014).
Approach to the literature review and prior knowledge	Postpone until some analysis undertaken, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ignore literature so theory cannot be "contaminated" by existing but non-applicable concepts (p. 37). Researchers are not blank slates, but Glaser & Strauss, 1967) caution against using prior knowledge and especially existing theory, unless these fit the developing grounded theory. Literature as another source of data.	A variety of uses for technical and nontechnical literature at various stages, but stress use of literature to enhance theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Researchers bring knowledge from their own disciplines and professions and have their own theoretical perspectives which influence what they look for.	Use literature review to serve needs of the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006). Can do some literature review, e.g. to satisfy review boards, and let it "lie fallow" (Charmaz, 2006) while data is collected. Previous knowledge and literature as a source of "sensitising concepts", but always focus on data over previous ideas.
Epistemology	GT claimed to be ontology and epistemology-free (and the adoption of an epistemological position before data collection is data forcing) (Glaser, 2002). This makes positivist assumptions that researcher and data are separate.	Elements of both postpositivism and constructivism (Mills et al., 2006). Theory as "generated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Acknowledge the role of researchers in interpreting what participants say, thus neither purely constructivist nor positivist. Very little in their own work sets out a definite epistemological stance (Mills et al., 2006).	Constructivist. Underlying realist ontology (Charmaz, 2008) but a relativist epistemology (Willig, 2016; Charmaz, 2017). GTs are co-constructed rather than emerging from data.
Analysis: coding procedures	Gerund coding. Coding "families" (Glaser, 1978). Theoretical coding (links to coding families).	Open, selective, axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical coding.	Gerund coding. Code for actions (allows focus on process.) Initial and focused coding. Additional coding practices if necessary (Charmaz, 2014).

	Glaserian/Classical GTM (e.g. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 2002; Glaser, 2007)	**Straussian GTM (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)**	**Constructivist GTM (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2014)**
Analysis: memos and additional techniques	Write memos when ideas strike (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Adopt few additional analytical strategies.	Write different memos at different times e.g. technical and code notes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Additional techniques, e.g. consequential-conditional matrix (Strauss and Corbin, 1994).	Write when ideas strike and use memoing strategies creatively and flexibly. Charmaz (2014) provides ideas and strategies for memo writing.
Essential/common features of grounded theory	Remaining open to data, i.e. not applying preconceptions (including epistemologies) until data has been collected and a decision made on what kind of data it is (Glaser, 2002). Openness and trusting in emergence make grounded theory. Use of constant comparison method and theoretical sampling.	The grounding of theory in data through the interplay of theory and data; constant comparison; asking theoretically oriented questions; theoretical coding; development of theory (Strauss &Corbin, 1994)	Researchers using all forms of GTM despite differences will "begin with inductive logic, subject our data to rigorous comparative analysis, aim to develop theoretical analyses" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 14).

3.1.2. The justification for grounded theory methodology

The primary reason for choosing GTM as the methodology for this research was its ability to generate theory, the main goal of this thesis. There are several other elements of GTM which make it useful for this study of hoarding behaviour, namely the focus on process and the use of qualitative data.

As previously stated in the introduction and outlined in the literature review, although the cognitive behavioural model of hoarding (Frost & Hartl, 1996) was originally proposes as a tentative working model, it has become a "theoretical cornerstone" (Kellett & Holden, 2014, p. 126) of hoarding research. Therefore, much previous research has focused on testing hypotheses from this model (Frost & Hartl, 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014a). It appears that in hoarding research we find ourselves in a similar situation to that which Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally described in Sociology, i.e. a small number of theories and a focus on hypothesis testing at the potential expense of conceptual development. For example, in hoarding research emotional attachment has been conceptualised and measured in a variety of ways (Kellett & Holden, 2014) which makes it difficult to understand what exactly is meant by this concept. Thus, Kellett and Holden argue that this concept could be thought of as underdeveloped, although it is a key component of the cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014a). Given the development of categories with their properties in the various forms of GTM (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2014), this methodology can allow for rich conceptual development and an understanding of the properties of these concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

GTM offers a way to approach the need for additional theoretical perspectives on hoarding by conducting research in an inductive way and developing theory from data. A GTM approach is beneficial for two reasons. GTM can suggest appropriate theoretical perspectives, offering flexibility as it is possible to see not only new perspectives, but also to assess which extant theory, or combination of theories, is most applicable to the topic area. Such a process would be beneficial as several candidate theories have been suggested as relevant to hoarding, including attachment theory and systemic theory (BPS DCP, 2015). An open-ended theory development approach such as GTM allows for a variety of perspectives to be considered in a study rather than testing hypotheses from one theory only. Charmaz (2015) supports the idea that GTM can help to identify new theoretical perspectives using abductive reasoning, described as involving consideration of all theoretical perspectives and explanations for surprising findings. Using a data-driven approach is beneficial as there is relatively little qualitative work on hoarding behaviour. Being guided by the data allows for the in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and the meaning they construct from them, rather than interview questions directed towards prior identified theoretical constructs.

A GTM analysis will almost inevitably yield new concepts or new approaches to existing ones (Glaser, 1978), further strengthening its ability to answer the call for additional theoretical perspectives. Charmaz (1990) goes further, linking the social constructionist stance and the GTM approach, arguing that using GTM "necessitates developing, refining, revising and transcending concepts … Often, a social constructionist stance elicits a fresh look at existing concepts." (p. 1165). Such an approach is ideal both for the study of hoarding, where new theoretical perspectives would be beneficial and for a PhD which requires an original contribution to knowledge.

The focus on process in GTM and its use of qualitative data also make it useful for studying hoarding. Hoarding behaviour can be viewed as a process of accumulating possessions and finding it difficult to discard them, particularly when considering the severe hoarding situations that can characterise hoarding disorder (HD). Additionally, the observation that hoarding progressively worsens over each decade of life (Ayers et al., 2009) strengthens the idea of a process of accumulation, saving and difficulty discarding with a potential variety of causes and conditions. However, when focusing on clinical compulsive hoarding or HD, the endpoints are emphasised (Brien et al., 2018) rather than possible intermediate steps towards these endpoints. Studying hoarding as a process allows for a range of perspectives, and the recruitment of participants with different levels of hoarding behaviours. Thus, a range of potential causes, conditions and consequences of hoarding behaviours can be explored.

It has been suggested that investigating the subjective experience of people who hoard is one way to address the meaning of hoarding and the emotional underpinnings of the behaviour (Brien et al., 2018). This has been done by those authors using a psychoanalytic framework, arguing that a psychodynamic model of hoarding was indicated but not fully explicated by previous research. GTM assumes no *a priori* theoretical position, instead developing a conceptual understanding of a phenomenon by collecting and analysing rich data. Thus, it allows for the exploration of subjective meaning without the requirement to reveal any specific underlying theoretical perspective.

3.1.3. The justification for the constructivist approach to GTM

As previously stated in the overview of GTM, various approaches can be adopted, each with their own epistemological positions and views of data and theory. I chose constructivist GTM (Charmaz, 1990; 2000; 2014) as it was the best fit for me as a researcher in terms of epistemology and working methods, and for hoarding as a topic. This section of the thesis will provide a rationale for my choice of constructivist GTM and its applicability to the topic.

The constructivist approach to GTM addresses process as a key aspect of a grounded theory. Charmaz (2014) defines process as "unfolding temporal sequences that may have identifiable

markers with clear beginnings and endings and benchmarks in between" (p. 17). Key aspects in the constructivist approach to GTM include "examining process, making the study of action central" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 9). Thus, the centrality of process and action to constructivist GTM make it both useful and appropriate for studying hoarding as a process.

Other specific aspects of the constructivist approach to GTM which are applicable to the study of hoarding behaviour are a focus on language, the situating of phenomena in larger social structures, and consideration of multiple perspectives. Constructivism allows researchers to enquire into participants' definitions of ideas and terms used, and to examine assumptions and implied meanings (Charmaz, 2006). The idea of looking at participant definitions and language is important as people who hoard may feel misunderstood and marginalised (Kellett et al., 2010), so there is a need to investigate their own understanding of their situation. It is also important as perspectives on hoarding behaviour can vary. For example, it is argued in some of the hoarding literature that people who hoard lack insight (e.g. Tolin, Fitch, et al., 2010). However, it has been suggested that lack of insight can be understood as different ways of conceptualising the problems which can occur when someone hoards (BPS DCP, 2015). The BPS DCP note that an individual may acknowledge a problem with possessions but may see their main issue as one of storage rather than hoarding. In-depth interviews which attend to the various interpretations of experiences and actions can help to focus on the person who hoards and perhaps help to understand more about how they perceive their lives and what they may need in terms of help.

Constructivism also suggests that our actions are embedded in larger structures (Charmaz, 2006), a position with which I strongly agree. Hoarding as a phenomenon is influenced by contextual factors, for example, age-related social factors (Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013). Hoarding also has obvious social and even community effects if possessions spill onto neighbouring properties. People who hoard are likely to interact not only with their loved ones but also the local community and possibly a variety of agencies. These social and economic factors need to be considered, so taking a constructivist approach, which considers the individual and their actions as embedded in larger structures, is appropriate. As there are various contextual elements to hoarding behaviour, this area particularly needs a holistic way of approaching the topic. Constructivist GTM, by attending to context, can provide a more holistic way to approach hoarding beyond cognitive and behavioural understandings of the phenomenon. A perspective which focuses too much on the thoughts and behaviours of the individual ignores these wider contextual factors, echoing criticisms of traditional approaches to psychology and clinical psychology (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1997). Additionally, hoarding research has proceeded along mainly quantitative lines, consistent with traditional

psychology, and qualitative approaches have been suggested as allowing for the examination of contextual issues in hoarding (Singh & Jones, 2012).

Finally, a constructivist epistemology considers multiple perspectives and therefore encourages researchers to attend to the constructions of participants and researchers. Hoarding is a phenomenon in which people exhibiting hoarding tendencies, those labelled as hoarders, their families, healthcare and other professionals, and the media may have very different views. These can represent multiple perspectives, such as that of the self-identified collector labelled as a hoarder by others, those who view accumulated possessions as fire hazards, and those who view the person with hoarding tendencies as lacking insight. Adopting a constructivist approach means that these multiple and sometimes conflicting perspectives and constructions can potentially be seen and accounted for.

An important consideration when adopting any version of grounded theory revolves around the approach to the literature review, summarised in Table 2 (pages 75-76). Therefore, I will now outline my own approach to the literature review.

3.1.4. Approach to the literature review

In practical terms, one aspect of the timing of the literature review concerns one's own degree of theoretical sensitivity and immersion in previous research. For those who have much experience and knowledge of background theory, delaying a literature review would not make sense as they would already have a store of conceptual knowledge to draw from. The rationale for delaying a literature review in grounded theory is based on the notion that concepts from literature may influence how researchers view their data. Thus, openness to the possibilities in the data is prioritised over extant concepts. However, if researchers are already immersed in a research area, it is hard to see how delaying a literature review would greatly benefit in bringing this focus on the data.

As I was relatively new to this research area, I considered several strategies for undertaking my literature review. My decision was ultimately based on balancing several key considerations: the needs of my research and requirements of my PhD such as needing a clear rationale for my study as well as a soundly-argued research question to address identified gaps in the research literature; my prior knowledge of the area; and consistency with the constructivist approach which I had chosen. I adopted the strategy advocated by Henwood and Pidgeon (2012) of using the literature in a "discriminating" way (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2012, p. 468) at the early stages of my research to build a rationale, with a plan to conduct a more formal literature review based on the needs of my developing theory once some analysis had been conducted. My interpretation of this advice was to conduct an initial search of literature prior to data collection, involving seminal theories and papers

in the research area, plus review papers and recent studies, particularly those adopting a qualitative approach. The formal literature review undertaken after phase one analysis is detailed in Chapter Two.

Using the literature in this way allowed me to think about the most important questions to ask at various stages of my research, and to reflect on the purpose of the literature. My strategy was consistent with Charmaz's (2006) suggestion to delay the literature review and write this in the context of the developing theory. Ensuring that I considered seminal papers also meant that I would not be ignoring these, something which Charmaz (2006) cautions can happen when delaying the literature review. It was also consistent with one of Charmaz's (2006) purpose of a literature review, which is to identify gaps in the research base and give a rationale for how a grounded theory can fill such gaps. I was able to identify clear gaps in the research area, i.e. the relative lack of theorising about hoarding behaviours from alternative perspectives and a dearth of qualitative research, particularly GTM research, on hoarding behaviours.

3.1.5. Contextualising the findings: Substantive and formal theory

In grounded theory research a distinction is made between formal and substantive theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). Substantive theories are based on real world or empirical areas (Glaser, 1978), such as the process of reconstructing identity in people who are newly disabled (Charmaz, 2006). In contrast, formal theories are more conceptual (Glaser, 1978) and apply to a wider range of substantive areas. Glaser (1978) also makes a useful distinction between levels of abstraction in basic social processes that can also help to understand the difference between types of theory. Substantive theories apply to one particular area, general substantive theories can apply to several different substantive areas, and formal theory applies generally as it abstracted from all substantive areas (Glaser, 1978) and applies to different groups (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The theory developed in this thesis is a substantive one which conceptualises hoarding behaviour as a struggle to manage possessions and life, and a corresponding attempt to overcome hoarding in more severe situations. It is substantive as it has boundaries and specificity to this sample (predominantly white British participants with self-identified hoarding behaviours). It is not a general substantive theory (Glaser, 1978) of hoarding behaviour as this would require examination of the concepts developed herein in a wider range of situations (such as non-organic hoarding, organic hoarding and hoarding in participants with a confirmed HD diagnosis). Nor is the theory developed herein a formal theory of interactions and relationships with possessions in the general population, as in Furby's (1978) work on the meaning of possessions. Thus, the findings herein apply to one

participant group primarily located within one particular culture, and who self-identify as having hoarding behaviours. While there is scope to apply the processes and concepts herein to additional groups and develop more general substantive and possibly formal theory related to how people interact with the objects in their homes and how, when, and why they dispose of them, this level of abstraction is beyond the scope of the theory as presented here.

3.1.6. Summary and conclusion

This section outlined in detail the epistemological and ontological position which I adopted in this thesis. Three main approaches to grounded theory methodology (GTM) have been outlined and their similarities and differences discussed. Finally, I detailed the justification for using GTM generally and constructivist GTM specifically, and described my approach to the literature review, a key methodological consideration in GTM. The next section in this chapter concentrates on data collection and analysis methods.

3.2. Methods: Data collection and analysis

This section outlines the methods used in recruitment, sampling and data collection for phases one and two of the study (initial and theoretical sampling). It also outlines the data analysis procedures including coding and memo writing. This section is split into two parts covering the two phases of the study, starting with Phase 1.

3.2.i. Phase one: Initial sampling

3.2. i. a. Design

The first phase involved recruiting an initial group of participants with self-identified hoarding behaviours and conducting semi-structured interviews to develop tentative theoretical categories. An interview guide was designed for the purposes of the study and participants were interviewed either face to face, via Skype or over the phone.

Participants:

This section details the recruitment strategies and characteristics of the eleven participants who formed the initial sample.

Recruitment:

Several factors make those who hoard a potentially difficult to reach population. It is possible that people who hoard do not think of themselves as hoarding, viewing their behaviours instead as related to storage or organisation issues. Mataix-Cols et al. (2013) identify some people within the

hoarding population who are particularly difficult to recruit, namely those "low-insight individuals who may not necessarily self-define as hoarders or seek help" (p. 845). Another potential issue is feelings of shame and embarrassment over the condition of the home (Kellett et al., 2010) which may make some people who hoard reluctant to talk about their situation and therefore to participate in interviews. Due to these issues with reaching people who hoard, several recruitment strategies were employed to gain as much coverage as possible.

I designed a flyer (see Appendix A) including a list of six questions based on the DSM-5 criteria for hoarding disorder (HD), such as "Does the thought of discarding your possessions make you upset, distressed or worried?" As the thesis topic is hoarding behaviours more generally, participants did not need to have an HD diagnosis. Eligible participants were required to answer "yes" to two or more questions, and my contact details were included so potential participants could email or telephone for more details. Two questions were chosen as I felt that this would distinguish between people who did and did not have potential struggles with hoarding. Considering the content of the questions and their mapping to DSM-5 criteria for hoarding disorder, although there were fifteen possible combinations of "yes" answers to two questions, each potential combination would likely include at least one question related to distress and/or functioning related to hoarding, and either difficulty discarding or feeling the need to save items. Thus, a combination of any two questions would likely yield participants who had some degree of difficulty with their possessions but was not restricted to only those who would meet clinical criteria.

This approach allowed specific criteria and a specific set of characteristics while retaining a degree of flexibility. Such flexibility allowed me to recruit a range of people with different perspectives and behaviours related to the acquisition, retention and discarding of possessions. Flyers in community locations, adverts and online recruitment have also been used by other hoarding researchers (Steketee & Frost, 2014b). Steketee and Frost argue that these enable recruitment of participants outside of treatment-seeking clinical populations, which enables the study of a wider range of individuals.

The flyer was displayed in several locations such as charity shops, church halls and coffee shops in two cities in the Midlands, after gaining permissions from managers and supervisors of these premises. Flyers were also handed out to people who expressed an interest in the research and via networking contacts I made such as support group facilitators. These contacts did not recruit individuals with whom they worked, to ensure that nobody acted as a gatekeeper and that their relationship with individuals did not act as an inducement for those individuals to participate. However, one participant gave her details to a networking contact who told her about the study.

For online recruitment, I set up a page on the recruitment website 'Call for Participants' containing the flyer questions. Interested parties were invited to contact me through the website's contact system. This link and posts containing my flyer were also posted on social media (Facebook and Twitter). After an initial slow period of recruitment, ethical approval was sought and granted in February 2017 to pursue further recruitment avenues. These included use of the website OCD Action (www.ocdaction.co.uk) and web forums such as those on the website Help for Hoarders (www.helpforhoarders.com). I also was able to include adverts for my study on the websites www.hoardinguk.org and https://hoardingdisordersuk.org. I was unable to use the Help for Hoarders forum as it required login details in order to post so would not have been ethical to join and post for the purposes of recruitment.

Initial sampling procedures:

Potential participants who expressed interest in the study were sent an information sheet via post or email. This was a detailed document issued to all potential participants before their involvement in the study. After reading the sheet, they were invited to contact me to set up an interview to be conducted via their preferred communication method (face to face, Skype or telephone). Eleven participants were recruited for interviews to develop initial theoretical categories.

3.2. i. b. Participant characteristics

Eleven interviews generated 18.6 hours of data, with interviews lasting between 58 and 120 minutes. Each participant was given a pseudonym, used throughout the thesis to ensure anonymity. Seven participants were women, making a predominantly female sample. The mean age of participants was 45, the youngest participant was 32 and the oldest 65. All participants considered themselves to have hoarding behaviours to various degrees. Short profiles of the full sample can be found in Appendix D.

Dylan was interviewed twice as he contacted me after the first interview with further insights into his hoarding behaviour and volunteered for a follow-up interview. Although I had not planned for further interviews, I conducted the interview as I believed it could yield additional useful data and could be unethical to turn away a participant who clearly had more to say.

Table 3 (overleaf) shows the participant demographics for phase one of the study.

Table 3

Participant Demographics for Phase One Interviews.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Employment status	Marital status
Dylan	M	65	Retired/self-employed	Divorced
Tamara	F	57	Unemployed	Single
Lily	F	38	Student	Living with partner
Daniel	M	38	Employed	Married
Ava	F	39	Student	Married
Emma	F	42	Unemployed	Single
Natalie	F	37	Unemployed	Single
Antony	M	43	Self-employed	Single
Alan	M	49	Employed	Single
Yvonne	F	54	Employed	Living with a partner
Susie	F	32	Freelance	Living with a partner

3.2. i. c. The interview guide

This section will outline the procedures for writing the interview guide used in this study, as well as key question changes during data collection. For full versions of both the original and amended interview guides, see Appendices B and C.

The interview guide was constructed specifically for this study and included open-ended questions based on the research questions in Chapter Two as well as my developing theoretical sensitivity. This was gained from a previous study on hoarding I conducted for my MSc and a strategic literature search. Although I was relatively new to the topic area, my MSc dissertation explored the experiences of adult women with mothers who hoarded, and another MSc assignment focused on animal hoarding. For practical reasons while submitting my applications for PhD study and project approval, I was required to demonstrate understanding of the background literature and theory in my chosen field. Section 3.1.4: Approach to the literature review details the debate in GTM about background literature and its impact on theoretical sensitivity. Consistent with my strategic approach, background literature helped to inform the interview guide but was not used as a source of concepts to be applied to the participants' experiences.

While some grounded theorists (e.g. Glaser, 2002) argue for unstructured interviews with "passive listening" (para. 5) on the part of the grounded theorist, Charmaz (2006) suggests that semi-

structured interviews with an interview guide can be beneficial. She argues that interview guides can provide structure and allow the interviewer to focus on the participant and their answers rather than becoming preoccupied with what to ask next. When designing the interview guide, I utilised some scripting to signpost the topics to be discussed, particularly where those may be about more sensitive topics such as participants' living space and the development of their hoarding behaviours. Scripted sections of the interview guide also allowed me to develop familiarity with the questions and the structure of the guide.

The beginning of the interview guide included several questions so participants could become comfortable talking to me in a conversational way. The first section of the guide included questions on the things the participants owned, their terms for these things e.g. collection, hoard, treasures, etc., and their least and most favourite things. Part two included questions on how participants' hoarding behaviour began, how it changed over time, and some more sensitive questions around losing possessions and participants' living space. During signposting of potentially more sensitive topics, participants were reminded that they could give as much or as little detail as they were comfortable with. The final section allowed participants to tell me anything important to them which we had not covered and focused on bringing the interview back to a conversational level as well as ending on a positive note to try to minimise any distress.

The questions changed somewhat between interview five and six, as certain questions did not work in practice. Initially I left the question about how participants felt about the term "hoarding" until the middle of the interview due to the potential stigmatising effects of the term. However, it was difficult to navigate the interview without knowing participants' feelings about a term which described the key phenomenon under study. As the recruitment flyer specifically mentioned hoarding behaviours, I began to think that asking participants at the beginning of the interview about their preferred term would not have a negative impact on rapport nor make participants uncomfortable. In practice, this adaptation helped the flow of the interview as it allowed me to use participants' preferred terms from the outset. Participants were previously asked about the things they had in their homes rather than things they hoarded, which caused some misunderstandings, so the change in question order also helped to clarify what was being asked about.

A question about living space evolved from asking participants to describe their living space to asking them to describe a virtual tour of their home, starting from the front door. The change in this question allowed for more focus and an understanding of the participant's living space and how they used it. Previously I asked questions about the impact of hoarding on specific rooms, e.g. the kitchen and bathroom, which elicited closed answers without the rich data required for GTM (Charmaz,

2014). Such answers did not give an in-depth understanding of how participants interacted with their possessions in their homes. A key aspect of hoarding as a phenomenon is the impairment in living space (e.g. APA, 2013), so a further consideration with this line of questioning was that I did not want to "force" the data into preconceived categories. The living space tour question offered an alternative which gained rich data but was not based on asking specific closed questions which drew too much on my prior knowledge of hoarding.

3.2. i. d. Procedure: interviews

This section will outline the methods used in setting up and conducting the interviews, including my approach to interviewing and incorporation of the principles of constructivist grounded theory interviewing.

My perspective on interviewing is closest to Kvale's (1996) traveller metaphor whereby the interviewer aims to undertake a journey with the interviewee to develop an understanding of their perspective. Kvale contrasts this with a "miner" approach which places the interviewer in a role where they are mining participants for information. The traveller approach is more consistent with the aims of constructivist GTM, as it emphasises the construction of meaning and considers the influence of the researcher on the data (Kvale, 1996). In contrast, Kvale suggests that the miner metaphor reflects the idea that we find meaning in the data we collect and do not affect this in any way. Thus, the traveller approach is also more closely aligned to my epistemological stance whereby the researcher is actively involved in generating the data alongside the participant.

In setting up the interviews, participants who contacted me via telephone or email were sent an information sheet. Those who wished to participate after reading the sheet contacted me again and I arranged a convenient time and date for the interviews according to the participant's preference for face to face, telephone or Skype interviews. Five participants were interviewed in person at NTU, in a confidential meeting room or a purpose-built interview room. Three participants were interviewed via Skype and three were interviewed by telephone. Participants who opted for face-to-face interviews were given a consent form to read and sign on the day of the interview. Those interviewed via Skype and telephone were sent consent forms via email which they were asked to sign and send back to me prior to the interview.

Before each interview I allowed participants time for questions and reiterated key points on the consent form such as potential confidentiality breaches due to the disclosure of unsafe living situations. To facilitate fully informed consent, I asked participants to describe in their own words what they thought the study was about, what they would be asked to do, and the risks and benefits of participating. Finally, I gained verbal consent to proceed with the interview. I also explained two

aspects of the interview procedure: my note taking, and the inclusion of questions about participants' terms for various phenomena.

I elected to take notes to help me remember topics for follow up questions and explained this to participants at the outset of face to face and Skype interviews. Glesne (2006) suggests that participants' behaviour can be affected when they see researchers writing notes. When the researcher stops writing it may suggest to the participant that what they are saying is no longer of interest, and may, therefore, influence their responses (Glesne, 2006). Thus, my explanation to participants aimed to provide reassurance that I was writing in order to provide a memory aid and to allow the participant to express themselves without needing to interrupt the flow of their answers to ask prompting questions.

I also explained that I would ask participants the meaning of certain terms in order to gain an understanding of their views in their own words, following a suggestion by Charmaz (2014) to let participants know that some questions would involve exploring their meanings of terms and concepts. This ensured an emphasis on "the participant's definitions of terms, situations and events" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 95) consistent with the focus of constructivist GTM analyses.

3.2. i. e. Analytical procedures

This section outlines the analysis procedures undertaken in phase one, two stages of initial and focused coding and additional analytical techniques. These included writing memos (analytical notes) about the data and codes, and development of tentative categories with their subcategories and properties for use in phase two: theoretical sampling.

Initial coding

After transcribing my first interview I began initial coding, consistent with the idea of concurrent data collection and analysis in GTM studies. Initial coding proceeded line by line and used primarily gerund codes to focus on action and process, however in some cases thematic codes best summed up what was happening. I also used some *in vivo* codes where participants' words were particularly evocative and illuminating.

I used Charmaz's (2014) "code for coding" (p. 120) as a guideline, for example constructing short codes and preserving actions using gerunds. Keeping in mind key GTM questions such as "what is happening here?" (Glaser, 1978) also guided my coding. Coding notes were written in the margins of the interview transcripts while transcribing. Additionally, I created lists of codes for each fully coded transcript to allow me to track the development of my codes as the research progressed, in line with Charmaz's (2014) guidance to see all codes as provisional.

Focused coding

The focused coding phase involved re-reading the transcripts and initial codes and highlighting codes which best summarised what was happening in the data. I also wrote new focused codes which summarised the data where no extant initial codes did this. Once all focused codes were highlighted and written, I printed out lists of these codes and cut out each code. As there were lots of codes, I initially worked on each individual transcript, looking at which codes involved similar idea and processes and grouping these together for further analysis. These clusters of codes were given tentative labels, for example *(Recognition of) the Hoarding Process*[4] and were tabulated for each transcript so I could see which ideas occurred within and across transcripts. Some codes were not categorised at this stage, however as I progressed with this analysis I could see different codes which appeared to be standalone codes in individual transcripts but which could be combined with codes from other participants, so at this stage no codes were removed, again according to the idea that codes are provisional (Charmaz, 2014).

Memos

My first memos were written before data collection to attend to possible sensitising concepts. In GTM these can guide our thinking about the data collection but are distinguished from definitive concepts which can be used to "order and integrate data" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1165). As with all GTM concepts, sensitising concepts must earn their way into the theory (Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2014). This means that these concepts must reflect participants' concerns and follow from the data rather than being imposed upon it solely by analysts' impressions of that data.

Additional memos were written during interviewing and initial coding and I made coding notes in the margins of transcripts. These consisted of reflexive comments on points where I found myself empathising and agreeing with participants or identified points of departure. I also wrote comments about comparisons between participants and possible theoretical directions as well as some notes in a research diary. My first set of coding, memos and notes were sent to my supervisor for feedback.

Data analysis: Categorisation and final memo writing

Categorisation involved two processes. The first was to elevate focused codes to categories or subcategories, for example *Using objects as protection*. Originally a focused code from Ava's transcript, the idea of using objects as protection also encompassed other participants' transcripts

[4] Parentheses here represent the two aspects of this code, both the hoarding process and the participants' recognition of it. This was a very early code which thus had a broad focus.

For example, Emma described using objects as a literal form of protection when she felt vulnerable. *Using objects as protection* became a subcategory of *Interacting with items*.

However, some groups of codes were better explained by new category names. In these cases, such names were developed to reflect their underlying concepts. For example, *Managing life* was developed from various subcategories which focused on the ways in which participants attempted to cope with and navigate a variety of life situations, each with potential implications for their hoarding behaviours. These included undertaking demanding jobs or experiencing mental health difficulties. While there were references to the idea of managing in various ways which were suitable for future analysis, *Managing life* was not originally a focused code.

My final set of memos consisted of categorisation memos where I wrote about the code clusters I had identified, their similarities and differences, potential subcategories, dimensions and properties as well as theoretical sampling directions. I supplemented this with handwritten diagrams of the categories and their components, as I found that switching from narrative memos to diagrams helped my thinking progress and allowed for links between categories and subcategories. Charmaz (2014) also advocated the use of diagrams in GTM. I focused on those categories which appeared to be most salient to the research questions (the development of hoarding behaviours and the meaning of possessions). However, I did not remove or abandon any codes, keeping all code lists and memos for future reference if needed in phase two. The tentative categories and subcategories were documented in a table which was edited as the category structure was refined in memos and diagrams. The final version used to guide theoretical sampling is presented in Table 4 (overleaf).

Table 4

Summary of Tentative Categories Related to Research Questions from Phase One Data Analysis.

Research questions	**1) How do hoarding behaviours develop?**	**2) What is the meaning of possessions for people with hoarding behaviours?**

Tentative categories	- Childhood and family experiences
	- Loss
	- Thought processes
	- Managing possessions
	  o Sorting/organising/clearing
	  ▪ Pre-sorting/organising/clearing
	  ▪ Prompts and criteria (inc. decision-making)
	  ▪ Barriers including checking behaviours and decision-making
	  ▪ Doing the job
	  o Collecting
	  ▪ Building and maintaining collections (inc. conditions under which collections are started)
	  ▪ Collecting as a precursor to hoarding
	  ▪ The changing nature of collections
	  ▪ Feelings about collecting
	  o Resisting temptation (to acquire/buy)
	- Managing life
	  o Trauma
	  o Work stresses
	  o Life experiences
	  o Coping (inc. hoarding as coping)
	  o Health issues
		1) Valuing items:
		- Assigning levels of value (rubbish to things hoarded/kept to special/favourite items)
		- Recognising value (inc. seeing and realising potential)
		- Assigning types of value (inc. enjoying aesthetics)
		- The changing value of items
		2) Interacting with items:
		- Maintaining connection with others
		- Using objects to make up for lack
		- Using objects as protection
		- Documenting life (inc. preserving the past)
		- Giving objects an "existence beyond the mere physical" (Dylan)

3.2. ii. Phase 2: Theoretical sampling

3.2. ii. a. Design

During this phase, several categories related to the development of hoarding behaviours and the meaning of possessions and living space were developed. These were: *Managing possessions*, *Managing life*, *Valuing items*, *Interacting with items*, *Living in a Cluttered/messy/untidy Space*, *Ideal versus actual space*, and *Using and managing empty space*. These categories formed the basis of a new theoretical sampling interview guide. A further twelve interviews were conducted using this guide, including some new participants and some who had been interviewed as part of phase one. Data were analysed using initial and focused coding, memos and diagrams to develop theoretical sampling categories into the final grounded theory model presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

Participants

Recruitment

Recruitment avenues were similar to those previously employed in phase one. For online recruitment, I amended my Call for Participants study page, wrote a new blog post with additional details about the study, and shared both the blog post link and Call for Participants study link on social media (Twitter and Facebook). I also gained permission for my study details to be placed on the Hoarding UK and OCD Action websites. For offline recruitment I visited several places such as charity shops and coffee shops to display my flyers, seeking permission from managers and supervisors.

I contacted all previous participants and provided them with a new information sheet detailing the second phase of the study and set up interviews using the participant's preferred method (face to face, Skype or telephone) for those interested in participating again. Six potential participants contacted me between phase one and two expressing an interest in participating and were sent a follow-up email or telephone call with new information sheets.

Theoretical sampling procedures

I elected to interview those who had previously been interviewed as I felt they may have more to say either on the topics we had previously discussed or on ideas from other interviewees. I also chose to use the phase one flyer, as using this had allowed me to recruit participants with a range of relevant perspectives on the topic. Additionally, my theoretical sampling strategy was based primarily on new insights on topic areas rather than specifically from new participant groups.

3.2. ii. b. Participant characteristics

Twelve interviews generated 17.9 hours of data with interviews lasting between 60 and 130 minutes. Six participants (Hasan, Tara, Jeff, Rose, Walter and Melba) were new interviewees, and the remaining six (Ava, Yvonne, Dylan, Alan, Daniel, and Antony) were previously interviewed during phase one. Hasan and Jeff were recruited through Call for Participants. Tara, Rose and Melba had previously contacted me, and Walter was recruited through snowball sampling.

Table 5

Participant Demographics for Phase Two Interviews

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Employment status	Marital status
Hasan	M	28	Employed	Single
Tara	F	57	Employed	Single
Ava *	F	38	Student	Married
Yvonne *	F	54	Employed	Married
Dylan *	M	65	Retired/part time employed	Divorced/single
Alan *	M	49	Employed	Single
Daniel *	M	38	Employed	Married (separated)
Jeff	M	45	Employed	Single
Rose	F	68	Employed	Married
Antony *	M	43	Employed	Single
Walter	M	46	Unemployed	Single
Melba	F	44	Unemployed	Married

* Second interview with a phase one participant

3.2. ii. c. The interview guide

This section outlines data collection procedures for phase two: writing the second interview guide including amendments made during data collection and setting up and conducting the interviews.

The interview guide consisted of four sections based on key categories from the phase one analysis. The first section consisted of questions about the development of hoarding behaviours and some general questions related to hoarding behaviours, for example, "*Tell me about the strength of your relationship with possessions. What makes this so strong?"*

Two questions in the section on the development of hoarding behaviours were included specifically for new participants in order to find out about the trajectory of their hoarding and their recognition

of their behaviours as hoarding. The remaining sections of the interview guide were based on categories related to managing possessions and life, the meaning of possessions, and living space.

Amendments were at first mainly structural (for version two of the guide) as I got used to using the new guide and as there appeared to be few new aspects of the categories developing. I initially followed the section on the development of hoarding behaviours with questions on managing possessions and life. However, the last question in the development section was about the strength of participants' relationships with possessions which would be better followed by questions about the meaning of possessions. In later interviews I wrote some new prompts to capture potentially novel aspects of value and discarding possessions. I also found that the questions about what organising and sorting would mean to the participants sometimes yielded answers about what this would *feel* like. However, such answers did not capture actions, so I began to ask specifically what participants might be doing during each process and what they might see as different between sorting, organising and clearing. The other main change was the addition of two prompts as participants mentioned a potentially new aspect of value (the tangible and physical nature of possessions) and the idea of a sense of closure or completed transaction in discarding items.

3.2. ii. d. Procedure: interviews

Much of the procedure for phase two interviews was the same as phase one, for example setting up interviews according to the participant's geographical location and preference for face to face, telephone or Skype interviews[5].

To prepare for follow up interviews, I read the participants' previous transcripts and marked any questions which had already been answered. For example, if participants described tendencies to anthropomorphise possessions in their previous interview, I did not ask questions which were designed to tap into this concept.

While conducting interviews with new participants, before the interview began, I asked them to summarise for me in their own words what they thought the study was about, what they would be asked to do, and the risks and benefits of participating. During this second round of interviews, six participants were interviewed face to face at NTU in a purpose-built psychology laboratory, two were interviewed over Skype, and four were interviewed via telephone.

[5] I was unable to send one participant the information sheet in advance, as they could not access their email. After consulting with my supervisor, I arranged to give the information sheet to the participant on the day of the interview. I then provided time for the participant to read the sheet and for questions before gaining consent.

3.2. ii. e. Analytical procedures

This section will outline the initial and focused coding, comparison and memo writing for phase two. It will also outline the procedures for sorting memos into the final grounded theory presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

Initial coding

I conducted initial line-by-line coding on each transcript. I again used Charmaz's (2014) code for coding as a guide and used gerund coding extensively with some in vivo codes based on particularly salient and telling terms from the interviews.

Focused coding and categorisation

As I had some tentative categories to work with, I combined the analytic procedures for focused coding and categorisation from phase one. This involved taking the codes with the most analytical power (highlighted on each transcript) and clustering them in the categories I had already developed. For example, codes related to managing possessions were clustered together under one heading for further comparison and analysis within and between transcripts. Consistent with phase one I retained the original versions of my code lists in order to refer to them and compare with the final set of codes and categories.

Additional analysis: Memos and diagrams

Throughout each stage of the analysis I wrote memos, both standalone memos based on specific topics and smaller notes on the margins of each transcript. These captured ideas about the codes, data and possible ways to integrate the categories. I also utilised diagrams in a notebook which detailed potential links between categories.

During the focused coding and categorisation stage I wrote memos on each category including comparisons of codes both within and between transcripts. These were then summarised to include the various aspects of the categories. See Appendix I for an example of these memos on the category of *Managing possessions*. Writing memos in this way allowed for systematic comparisons and flexibility as this was an emergent, improvised strategy which developed from my engagement with the data throughout both phases of the analysis. Such strategies are in keeping with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008).

My memos also included small diagrams on how categories and subcategories might fit together. As I was coding, memoing and clustering the phase two data into tentative categories, I found that diagrams helped my analysis and theoretical direction due to the intertwined nature of

diagramming, sorting and integrating categories (Charmaz, 2014). Diagrams were primarily mindmaps, although I also utilised flow diagrams with arrows to indicate processes to help me see the progression of a process in some categories.

While analysing the data I became particularly attuned to the meaning of possessions as a way in which managing both possessions and life could integrate. This prompted reflection on my previous qualitative data analysis experience and my use of GTM, particularly the notion of "forcing" [6]the data and abductive reasoning. When considering a connection between managing and meaning I developed the idea that the objects acquired by participants are not simply lumps of inert matter, but possessions with meaning which fulfil psychological functions. Thus, their meaning must be considered when we think about how they are managed, and how life experience can imbue these objects with their meaning and psychological resonance. A focus on the meaning of objects and life experience is likely to have come from my previous experience using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996), and I questioned whether this was forcing the data or the use of abductive reasoning. In abductive reasoning, one considers hunches and follows these up in the data. There were links between meaning, managing possessions and managing life in the data such as hoarding as a response to loss which then meant that objects related to lost loved ones were extremely difficult to discard, but in some cases were also hard to manage.

I reviewed my diagrams and memos, developing a "big picture" memo which summarised previous diagrams showing the key processes and categories. This was extremely helpful in helping to integrate the previous categories and ideas and became the framework for the final structure of the empirical chapters. I also read through each of my transcripts and began collating data extracts which related to the overall framework I had developed in my big-picture diagram. This diagram can be found in Appendix J.

Developing the final framework

Through reflection in my research diaries and memos I began to refine the storyline of the theory. I started with theoretical sampling categories related to *Managing possessions*, *Managing life*, and *The value and meaning of possessions*. The idea of a continuum of managing to difficulty managing including the categories of *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed,* and *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*, and a corresponding continuum of difficulty managing to managing, including

[6] A particular concern in grounded theory is the notion of "forcing" data into preconceived categories rather than allowing the participants' views and ideas to drive the analysis. Glaser is particularly critical of the notion of data forcing and has sparked debate over the notion of emergence versus forcing in GTM (e.g. Glaser, 1992; Boychuk Duchscher and Morgan, 2004).

Resisting temptation, *Overcoming hoarding*, and *Building a life beyond the hoard* also encompassed the process of managing, where participants could either struggle to manage, or could in some cases move from difficulty managing to a point where they were attempting to overcome hoarding. The process of managing also helped to encompass those in the sample who perhaps did not have severe hoarding behaviours or had not gotten into severe hoarding situations, as they were more able to manage for a variety of reasons.

Theoretical saturation

While conducting my final interview for phase two, I began to feel that very little new information was coming up. A few new aspects of hoarding behaviour appeared in later phase two interviews but were mostly focused on additional aspects of value and meaning. Though important, meaning and value are highly subjective and individual so it is likely that although further interviews might bring up other aspects of value, they would likely be variations on the theme of valuing objects and giving them meaning. This idea of variation on a theme was consistent with ideas about theoretical saturation from Morse (2007).

After completing focused coding for phase two, I mapped the phrase two categories/coding clusters on to phase one theoretical sampling categories to integrate both phase one and two analyses. I realised this could then be used as a check for theoretical saturation. When I considered the categories I found that there were few aspects from phase two which I had not seen in other interviews, or in the literature. This also increased my confidence that I had a degree of theoretical saturation in my categories.

3.2. iii. Ethical procedures

This section will outline the ethical considerations and procedures undertaken for this study, for each type of interview (face to face, telephone and Skype).

Key ethical considerations were participants' wellbeing, right to withdraw, risks of harm, and confidentiality and anonymity. Due to the potential danger of some hoarding situations, interviews did not take place in participants' homes. Instead, these were conducted at university premises or via telephone or Skype. Right to withdraw was outlined in the participant information sheet and reiterated in the debrief form given to all participants post-interview (see Appendix E for these documents).

3.2. iii. a. Face-to-face interviews

Participant safety and wellbeing

Participants' wellbeing was a concern as hoarding can be a sensitive topic and people who hoard may have a history of traumatic experiences (e.g. Hartl et al., 2005) which may be discussed during interviews. At several points during the interview I signposted where questions might be particularly sensitive, and reiterated to participants their right to withdraw, take a break, or terminate the interview at any point as well as monitoring their reactions throughout. I also reminded participants that they were free to answer the questions with as much or as little detail as they were comfortable.

Researcher safety

To safeguard my own wellbeing, I used a lone working policy for face-to-face interviews. I would contact a supervisor with details of the interview location and time before and after the interview was conducted. We also used a debrief procedure whereby if anything a participant disclosed had caused me distress or concern, I would be able to contact a supervisor to discuss this.

Confidentiality and anonymity

There were two primary limits to confidentiality. Firstly, as the research takes a qualitative approach it is not possible to keep information confidential due to the use of verbatim quotes to support analytical claims. Participants were made aware of this from the outset and their written consent for extracts from the interviews to be published and presented at conferences was gained prior to the interview. Participants were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity and were informed that any information they gave would be anonymised during transcription, with real names of people or locations and any other potentially identifying information removed or changed. Participants were informed that only the research team would have access to raw data (recordings and transcripts) and that all data and consent forms would be kept in password-protected computers or in locked cabinets, to which only I have access, at the NTU Doctoral School.

Another limit to confidentiality concerned potential disclosure of dangerous living situations. Participants may have been living in conditions which were unsafe for them or their loved ones, for example with infestations of insects or rodents (Brakoulias & Milicevic, 2015) or a lack of basic facilities such as those for washing or heating (Frost et al., 2013). Participants were informed at the outset that if they disclosed any details of their living situation which gave me cause for concern, I would first discuss this with them further. They were also informed that this might necessitate a

breach of confidentiality beyond the publication of verbatim quotes, as I may need to discuss the situation with safeguarding officers or other authorities. This was also detailed in the participant information sheet. Any potential confidentiality breaches would be treated in line with ethical guidance provided by the BPS. I would discuss potential confidentiality breaches with a supervisor before taking more serious action, except where delaying this discussion would be "rendered impractical by the immediacy of the need for disclosure" (BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct, 2009, p. 11).

3.2. iii. b. Skype and telephone interviews

Additional ethical and practical concerns arose with interviews conducted via telephone and Skype. One such concern was participant distress, which is more difficult to monitor compared to face-to-face situations, especially when talking over the telephone. To overcome this, I monitored how the participant sounded and signposted where questions may be more sensitive than others, also reiterating their right to withdraw, take a break, or terminate the interview. Prior to the interviews I negotiated with the participants a course of action if they put down the telephone or logged out of Skype. As there is no way to know whether this is due to participant distress or technical issues, before each Skype or telephone interview we discussed whether I would be able to call back and under what circumstances. I also drafted an email (see Appendix F) to participants which would be sent if a participant logged off and I could not call them back.

Skype interviews particularly posed something of a challenge due to technical issues. For example, one participant's webcam not working. One particularly important aspect was the time lag when talking over Skype which meant that I did not realise one of my participants was upset until I had begun asking the next question. However, this was easily remedied as I could see the participant's reaction and was able to modify my line of questioning, ensuring she was okay to continue.

Ethical approval for phase one was granted on the 10th of June 2016 from the NTU College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. To complete the ethics application and guide the research, I used previous literature on hoarding to assess risks which may be incurred and consulted the British Psychological Society ethics documents: Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) and Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009). Ethical approval for phase two of the study was granted on the 9th of March 2018.

3.3. Summary and conclusions

Having discussed the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research and considered the methodology used in detail in the first section of this chapter, this section outlined the methods used in data collection, analysis, and generation of the final theoretical framework. Relevant ethical

issues involved in interviewing participants via face to face contact, Skype and telephone have been outlined as well as those related to hoarding research in general, such as concern for participants' wellbeing and balancing confidentiality with potential safeguarding requirements.

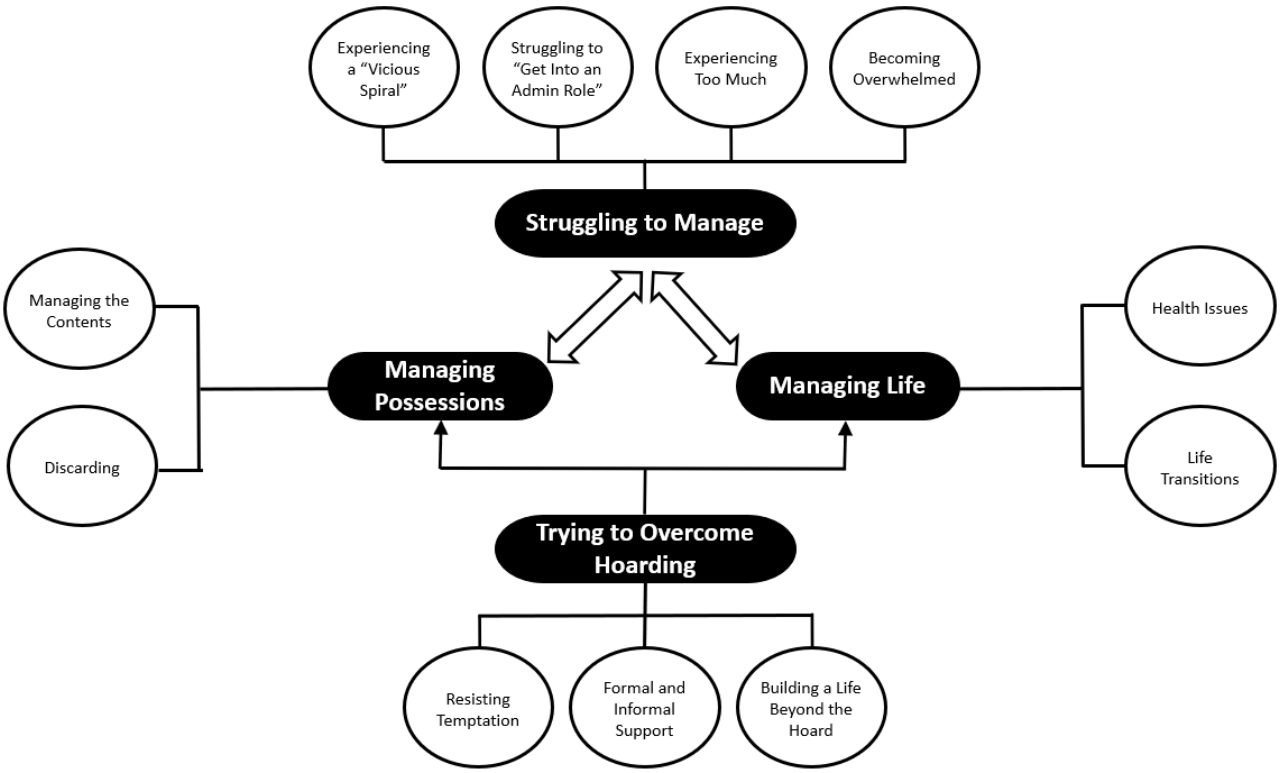
This chapter concludes the first section of the thesis. Section Two: Empirical Findings, outlines the theory developed in the thesis, consisting of three empirical chapters.

SECTION TWO: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section presents the empirical findings: a constructivist grounded theory of hoarding behaviour. This theory consists of two inter-related categories: *Managing possessions* and *Managing life*, and two processes: *Struggling to manage*, and *Trying to overcome hoarding*.

Figure 1

Empirical Model of Hoarding Behaviour Developed in this Thesis



Note: The main categories and processes in the grounded theory model developed in this thesis. Major categories and processes are rendered in white text on black shapes, and key subcategories in black text on a white shape. More detailed individual diagrams of the subcategories in each major component of the theory are also included in each chapter. An overview of the model follows before the three empirical chapters in the thesis which detail the findings in depth.

Struggling to manage represents the core category and involves managing possessions and managing life, as well as several specific aspects of struggle, such as *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*. When this occurs, hoarding is used as a form of compensation for or an attempt to cope with experiences of trauma or loss, but itself begins to occasion further trauma and loss for the individual. Additionally, some participants described ways of *Trying to overcome hoarding.* They described

strategies and experiences in attempting to overcome their problematic hoarding. This process can be thought of as the inverse of struggling to manage, where struggles with possessions and life are wrangled with and participants attempted to return to a point where their possessions and lives are manageable. This process became part of the model due to its importance to participants and insights into their experience of attempts to overcome their hoarding.

Managing possessions described the activities undertaken by participants with their belongings. *Managing possessions* involved putting like with like (which some participants referred to as sorting), making decisions about possessions, discarding them, and finding a home for them (called organising by some participants). Together these can be thought of as *Managing the removal of possessions* (discarding) and *Managing the contents.* Struggles to manage can arise at any point while managing possessions, although sorting, decision-making and discarding were particularly troublesome for a variety of reasons. These included the meaning of possessions and of discarding, decision-making difficulties, and participants' preferences for certain discarding methods which, when unavailable, led to saving possessions they might otherwise discard. Some participants also described *Doing the bare minimum*, where the need to make space in a cluttered home meant that possessions were gathered together in a disorganised fashion and moved elsewhere. This made space but resulted in further clutter and struggles to manage.

Managing life provided the context in which managing possessions occurred and detailed some of the conditions under which participants could struggle to manage possessions, particularly related to *Life transitions* and the impact of mental and physical health conditions. *Life transitions* include times of change, particularly around changes in household and moving to or from university. For example, when a housemate or partner moved out, decisions about managing possessions fell to the individual with hoarding tendencies. Difficulties making decisions, the meaning of possessions, and hoarding behaviours could then cause a struggle to manage. Experiencing health problems such as a lack of energy or pain which affected cognitive functioning made managing more difficult as decisions became more onerous and physical tasks more difficult. These categories are described in Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life.

The process of *Struggling to manage* included further conditions under which difficulties in managing possessions, life, and at times both, resulted in struggling or even being unable entirely to manage. These included times when strong emotions invoked by possessions and their meaning prevented them from being managed (described in *Struggling to "get into an admin role"*, an inability to see the task of managing possessions as a practical one akin to administration). For some participants their experiences of trauma and loss led to hoarding behaviours. The consequences of

severe hoarding, such as excessive time spent maintaining a hoard, or the association with possessions and traumatic experiences, meant that a "vicious spiral" occurred whereby hoarding itself became a source of further trauma and loss. A final component of *Struggling to manage* included *Experiencing too much,* where participants either took on too much or experienced life events (sometimes concurrently) which left them overburdened emotionally and practically. This could lead to *Becoming overwhelmed*, where the demands of life, possessions and in some cases both, became too difficult to manage. These aspects are detailed in Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage.

Trying to overcome hoarding is an additional process whereby participants who were struggling to manage attempted to overcome their problematic hoarding and find new ways of relating to and living with their possessions. This included *Resisting temptation* to acquire new possessions, engaging with *Formal and informal support*, and in some cases *Building a life beyond the hoard*. The latter was particularly important to those participants whose struggle to manage their possessions was longstanding and involved the need to develop and adjust to new ways of functioning and new identities. This process is detailed in Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding.

Having outlined the main components of the model, this section continues with the in-depth analysis of the findings, beginning with Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life. It is important to note at this point that there were certain transcription conventions used within the thesis, which follow in the extracts presented in the empirical chapters. In some transcripts, speech was unclear and is rendered in round brackets. Words within these brackets represent the transcriber's best guess at what was said, and spaces between brackets indicate speech which was so unclear that it could not be transcribed. Interviewer utterances are rendered in square brackets. Punctuation (commas and full stops) in extracts represent short pauses (commas) and longer pauses (full stops).

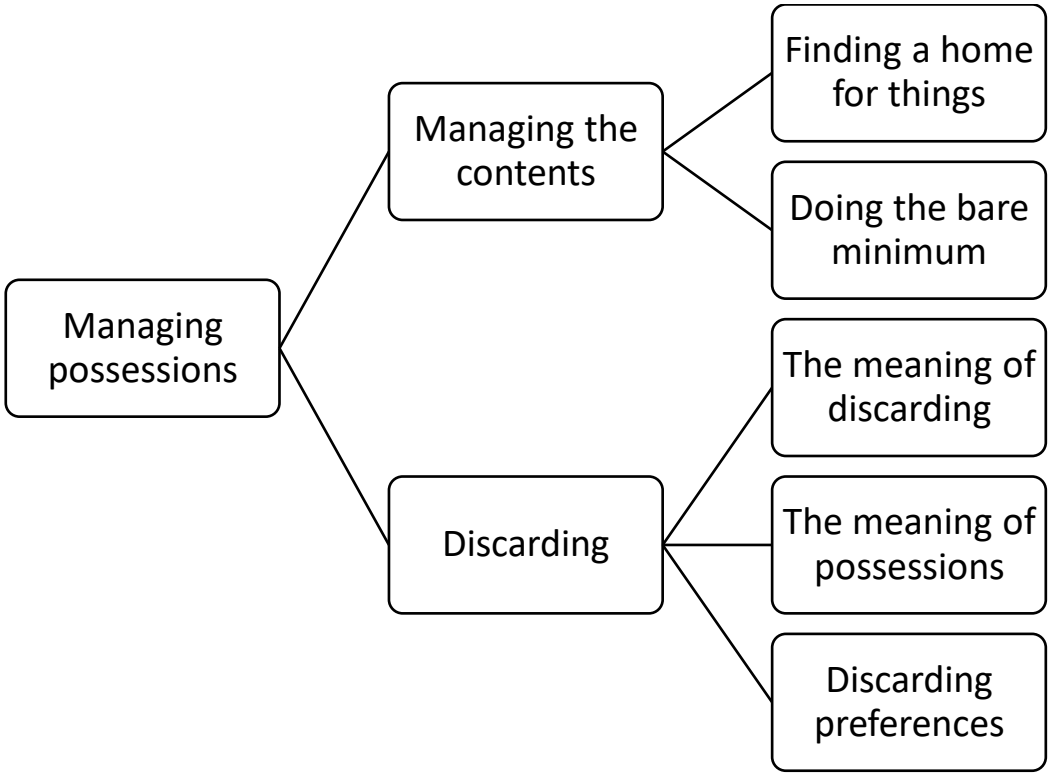
CHAPTER FOUR: MANAGING POSSESSIONS AND MANAGING LIFE

This chapter presents two integrated categories: *Managing possessions* and *Managing life*. Chapters Five and Six, which follow, present two processes: *Struggling to manage* and *Trying to overcome hoarding*. As some participants were interviewed more than once, data extracts from these participants include both interview numbers and line numbers. Dylan was interviewed twice during phase one, so his interview extracts are labelled 1a and 1b.

Figure 2 shows the subcategories of *Managing possessions.*

Figure 2

Subcategories of Managing possessions



4.1. Managing possessions

The process of *Managing possessions* involved: putting like with like (which some participants called sorting); making decisions about what will be kept and discarded; actually discarding possessions; and finding a suitable place for those items which are kept (which some participants called organising). Although these may sound like quite straightforward tasks, there were various barriers to being able to achieve them. The struggle to manage (described in Chapter Five) can be thought of as a struggle to accomplish these tasks.

This section is subdivided into two parts. Subsection 4.1.i. Managing the contents details the activities participants engaged in when managing the possessions in their homes. Subsection 4.1.ii. Managing the removal of possessions refers specifically to discarding.

4.1. i. Managing the contents

Managing the contents involves gathering items together, making decisions about them, and finding a place to store them. Participants used various terms to refer to managing the contents, including *"sorting", "sorting out", "organising", "tidying"* and *"filing".* In theoretical sampling the meaning of organising and sorting were explored further. The most difficult process in managing the contents appeared to be related to decision-making and considering the fate and purpose of items.

Dylan and Yvonne talked about sorting as putting like with like. For Dylan this appeared to be straightforward: *"simply, putting them into separate sets … piles or, boxes or … ((laughs)) some sort of container"* (2, lines 224-226). For Yvonne sorting appeared much more complex, involving a system of placing into an order: *"everything that is similar, you know all the hospital letters need to go together in chronological order"* (2, lines 868-870) but also feeling that she will be unable to complete this. Health issues, the meaning of paperwork and its association with times in her life and identity affected Yvonne's ability to sort paperwork. For Antony sorting was time-consuming and complex, involving sorting multiple things simultaneously.

Rose, Ava and Jeff described complexities in sorting, and several participants also talked about repeatedly sorting. For Rose, sorting involved various stages and decisions:

> "to sort them into, well I think, probably three piles. One's, well it might be more than that, one's to go maybe something to the charity shop, something that's staying, *[Mmm]* and then there might be a pile that I don't know *[Yeah]*, and then the, that's staying then I should sort that into, where it's gonna live [*Mmm, okay*]. And then, eventually (I suppose I should) go then go through the, the ones I can't decide and, hopefully there might still be some I can't decide on but hopefully, that will be fewer I will have thrown some of them away but some of them, yeah if I decide (then I'm gonna keep it)" (lines 672-682)

Above, Rose described categorising and making decisions, including which pile an item will go in, and what will be done with those items which are to be kept. Similar cognitive processes were mentioned by others, for example Jeff included considering the item's purpose in sorting, and Daniel included identifying what needs to be kept and which items are useful. The notion that Rose *"should"* sort these suggests that although she might feel some sense of obligation to do so, this may not be acted upon. She also describes how she might *"eventually"* go through her *"don't know"*

items, potentially a more difficult process requiring the overcoming of a psychological barrier such as procrastination or concern over mistakes. Several participants described not wanting to throw away something they might later need, an aspect of especial concern for Tara.

There is a looseness about Rose's descriptions of decisions and actions during sorting which may be due to how questions were asked and interpreted. Participants were asked what sorting would mean to them, what they would be doing during sorting, and thus some may have answered hypothetically. Conceptually it may reflect the difficulty of managing possessions, underlying features such as procrastination and fear of decision-making, or both.

Repeated sorting was not the most desirable outcome. Dylan described preferring to do a methodical job of managing the contents so that he did not need to sort possessions again. Yvonne sorted things once and put them back where they previously were, making it harder to subsequently try to manage them:

> "I've pulled it all out once, looked through it all once, thrown about three pieces out, put the rest back under the cupboard again … and it's something that I fear looking at because I know it needs to be addressed" (1, 1194-1197)

Her decision also had an impact on discarding, which she found difficult. Dylan and Yvonne's experiences highlight the idea of finishing activities so they would not have to sort repeatedly. The impact of unfinished processes and unprocessed emotions on hoarding behaviours can also be seen in *Struggling to "get into an admin role"* (Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage, section 5.1) and in *Doing the bare minimum* (this chapter, section 4.1.i.a).

Organising could involve finding somewhere to store possessions. For Yvonne, organising involved items existing in a state of readiness to be put away or thrown away. Organising appeared to be a kind of intermediate stage between deciding what happens to an item and acting upon that decision, after sorting but before discarding. Tara described how organising involved putting things in a designated space and incorporated keeping like items together, like sorting. Dylan and Daniel described similar ideas around putting things away and finding a home for them. Daniel described a particularly definitive activity, putting things *"where they've need to be finally"* (2, line 898). Both described the same goal of trying to find organised items, but Dylan did so in a more ironic way: "*actually finding a home for it … putting it away somewhere [Yeah, okay] that, I might be able to find it again [Yeah] ((laughing)) in five years' time!"* (2, lines 227-230). Finding a home for something implies a place for the item to belong in order to locate it, although Dylan appears somewhat sceptical about the possibility of finding the item again. Finding a home for things appears to be

much less final than for Daniel, suggesting that Dylan will need to repeat the process of finding the item and may need to find another home for it where it can be more easily located.

Participants' descriptions of organising primarily involved putting things in a designated place. Construction of sorting appeared to be a more complex and potentially difficult process for several participants, involving decision-making and consideration of the purpose and fate of possessions. Thus, although finding a home for something was a key issue with organising, it is the process most often considered as sorting which may involve the greatest struggle in managing the contents.

4.1. i. a. Doing the bare minimum

A common underlying feature of participants' experiences was unfinished processes and unprocessed emotions. These contributed to difficulties in managing possessions and needing to overcome emotional barriers to being able to interact with and remove possessions. One physical process can be conceptualised as *Doing the bare minimum*, simply what is necessary to allow access into the home or minimise the impact of possessions on others.

During a period where she needed to make space and tidy for a visitor, Tara collected various unsorted possessions into bags. Rather than sorting through these, discarding unwanted and unnecessary possessions, and storing the remainder in a designated spot, Tara did just what was required to move things out of the way:

> "there wasn't much time left, just I bagged up loads and loads of stuff that was kind of, cluttering everything up and it was all like piled up in the garage and in the loft and just kind of, not really sorted but kind of moved out of the way" (lines 516-520)

Consequently, Tara had disorganised and jumbled possessions which were harder to then sort through, as she described after a second visitor:

> "it was really quite depressing because … it was like a whole muddle of things all in these carrier bags … not sorted in any way, and it was the thought of having to sort through all those … it was like, not so bad when they were plonked on the table, but knowing they were all mixed up in all these bags and it'd all need sorting through, it was like, *[Mmm]* it was almost like it was too much to even think about and, and start." (lines 526-535)

Although collecting things together in this way allowed for more space, their disorganised nature made finally managing them a more psychologically overwhelming task. The contrast between things *"plonked on the table"* – thus more easily seen – and mixed up in bags suggests that Tara might consider things on the table to be more organised.

Dylan described how needing to move things to allow a plumber to access his home made him want to use his space methodically rather than *"just, get stuff and pile it away"* (2, lines 925-926). He moved a number of books into a bookshelf which he described as being *"packed full …. (in a lot of) occasions two deep … in random order just 'cos I had to pick them off the floor or whatever they were"* (2, lines 929-931). Although moving books allowed a practical task to be accomplished, the lack of organisation and accumulation of additional items in the space in front of the shelves meant that for Dylan sorting would require more work than if he had been able to initially organise his books in a less *"random"* order. Melba also identified that although moving things into disorganised bags allowed people access her home, this made trying to manage the contents of those bags more difficult.

Rose engaged in a similar process of doing the bare minimum which she called *"surface-tidying"* (line 901), described as, *"Erm, gathering things into a pile and putting them in a, in a box or a, or a bag or something then moving them somewhere else [Okay] I suppose some people call it churning I think"* (lines 658-660). Rose's comparison of these processes suggests a similarity between doing the bare minimum and churning, a term coined by Frost and Hartl (1996) to describe the habit of moving possessions rather than sorting or discarding. While Rose's consideration of simply moving things around suggests a similarity with churning, the activities involved in *Doing the bare minimum* are prompted by external factors. Surface-tidying was often done in response to the arrival of someone to her home.

4.1. i. b. Finding a home for things

A key issue for participants was the lack of a kind of definitive storage space for possessions. This was most clearly seen in the conflict between storing things in a *"home"* where they could belong, and merely putting them away for convenience, emphasised by several participants. Susie illustrates the difference between things which are just put somewhere – anywhere – for convenience, and those which are thoughtfully stored:

> "otherwise I tend to just have undifferentiated stuff, (as) like *[Yeah]* you put it away, but away is just here is some stuff in a drawer, rather than *[Mmm]* here's where I know this lives*"* (lines 1611-1614)

A link with doing the bare minimum, characterised by gathering together a diverse range of objects, is also implied in the idea of *"undifferentiated stuff"*. Susie described how she felt that she was engaged in a *"constant process of trying to, re-put things away"* (line 1606) but was improving in her ability to put things in designated spaces.

Daniel suggested that a lack of a home for things was one reason why his current living space was disorderly. In the absence of a place for something to live, Daniel had to create one, which was not an optimal decision as it represented *"where that is away for now"* (2, line 1250). The idea of something being away *"for now"* suggests a temporary space, meaning eventually it will need to be put somewhere else. Lily alluded to a similar idea when she described a need for her and her partner to address certain parts of their home where there were things which *"really should have a permanent home but I haven't quite found where to put them yet"* (lines 637-639). Here again a permanent home is contrasted against temporary storage space. The lack of a "home" for something also suggests that psychologically, such "homeless" possessions are somehow in transit. Interestingly Susie talked about an *"ongoing transient population of stuff"* (lines 1603-1604) on her bedroom floor, for which she was struggling to find a definitive place. Possessions with no home have nowhere to belong, and thus this could result in a kind of psychological tension, similar to the idea of unfinished processes which cause a feeling that something is not yet complete, an *"unfinished business"* (Susie, lines 414-415). A hoard which contains many such possessions is likely to feel emotionally, cognitively and physically overwhelming.

Finding a home for things was an ongoing struggle for Yvonne. Although she also said that being unable to find homes for things was new to the family, as they were previously orderly, she suggested that the way in which they moved – within a short timeframe – had an impact. Yvonne described how instead of leaving boxes to be worked through, items in them were simply placed wherever they would fit, resulting in an ongoing struggle with possessions not being where they would most helpfully reside. Yvonne also hinted at other factors involved. Thus, the struggle with finding a home for possessions appears to be one factor among several which can contribute to hoarding difficulties.

Dylan expressed a preference for putting something in a home rather than a momentarily convenient location, particularly in relation to things with special meaning or which he wanted to hold onto:

> "I suppose, if it's something that, er really means something to me then, I'll find somewhere sense, find a home for it. *[Yeah]* Erm, things that I just want to hang onto, erm, probably kick around for a while, moving from one place to another *[Yeah]* erm, until, eventually I might get round to either, finding a home or, ((quietly, with emphasis)) possibly even throwing it out! ((laughs))" (2, lines 735-741)

Dylan thus distinguished between those things which meant something to him, which eventually go to a home, and things with less importance which he still wanted to hold onto. Finding a home for

these things appeared to be less of a priority as they were churned around the house and might even be thrown away.

Possessions could also overflow into spaces designated for other items: *"(I'd) obviously would have a place to put things and I'd [Mmm] generally try to keep things, erm, kind of in the room where, you know they ought to be, unless there's like overflow"* (Tara, lines 442-445). Here this overflow, presumably caused by a larger volume of possessions than can be contained, could make managing difficult even when *"homes" are* identified and used. Dylan referred to a similar process where his organisational system could be interrupted by new possessions, describing how although his organising had *"some sort of method …. the method disappears"* (2, lines 309-311) when new possessions entered his home.

For those whose homes were particularly cluttered, the lack of a designated storage space for things could also lead to difficulties in managing possessions. Tamara hinted at the lack of a home for things when she described how the sheer volume of possessions she owned prevented them being displayed, so *"the safest way is to pack, pack it away into a strong box"* (lines 1186-1187). Although she dreamed of *"this mythical time in the future where … I'm gonna be super organised … put stuff out"* (lines 1188-1189) she also thought this time would not materialise. As they are also packed away into boxes, the difficulty in managing them is also implied as they lack a permanent home. The lack of a home for these items was also echoed in her description of her home as like a *"warehouse"* (line 542), which implies temporary storage before things are moved on to be sold.

Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage, details the process by which participants began to find managing their possessions and lives difficult. It primarily considers the role of emotion and life experiences, however the struggle to manage can also be a practical one, as outlined in some of the problems identified by participants above. The volume of possessions, the way in which existing systems could be impacted by the overflow of possessions and the acquisition of new ones, all suggest practical contributions to the struggle to manage. A large volume of possessions meant that in some cases things must be packed away, making them harder to then retrieve and manage, as well as contributing to a lack of space. The lack of space in the home, as well as impeding living areas for those with severe hoarding, could also mean there is nowhere to begin to manage possessions. Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage also details the concept of the vicious spiral, whereby hoarding resulted from trauma and loss and could become itself a source of further trauma and loss. There was a corresponding kind of vicious spiral of possessions with some participants, where the volume of their possessions contributed to disorganisation, disorder, and the inability to manage.

4.1. ii. Managing the removal of possessions: Discarding, clearing and clearing out

This section will focus on detailing the meaning of discarding for participants, and the difficulties they encountered when trying to discard. When talking about discarding generally, participants also referred to *"clearing"* and *"clearing out".* These terms imply a kind of mass discarding, perhaps like decluttering, or a longer process of removing a smaller number of objects rather than discarding more generally which could refer to removing one or two items from a hoard. Clearing and clearing out will be discussed along with discarding, using participants' terms where appropriate.

Discarding could be difficult for a variety of reasons. Some participants described practical aspects such as lacking a viable way to get rid of certain items. For example, online selling was considered to involve a great deal of work in *"capitalising on the value"* (Lily, line 796) of items, and Walter described how he struggled to know *"what the government wants us to do"* (line 932) with some items such as batteries and lightbulbs. Some described a feeling of not wanting to get rid of things or not liking to get rid of things which may not be fully articulable. Natalie said that in the past she *"just, had that feeling … I don't want to get rid of it"* (lines 337-338) and Ava described how she did not know why she had been unable to put a computer mouse in the bin despite it being *"broken beyond repair"* (1, lines 710-711).

The meaning of discarding and of possessions influenced difficulty discarding, as did preferences for certain discarding methods. Decision-making and loss were key aspects of difficulty discarding. Although not all participants described difficulty discarding as related to the meaning of possessions, observations such as Hasan's and Dylan's that they would be throwing away respectively part of themselves or their past if they discarded certain things indicates a connection between the meaning of possessions and difficulty discarding them.

Some participants described difficulty with decision-making specifically around possessions and generally. Antony described himself as indecisive in general, and both he and Rose found it hard to make decisions and commit to them once they were made. Tara described having poor decision-making skills and wanting to make *"**the** perfect decision"* (line 342), one which she would not subsequently discover was wrong. Decision-making also linked with aspects of life context, so was not a purely cognitive process. For example, stress, busy working lives and lack of time were reasons which participants gave for their inability to make decisions.

Decisions which were clear-cut appeared to be easier to make, but if there was ambiguity then the decision seemed to be harder. Jeff described how he would throw things away when there was *"definitely no use in keeping"* (line 914) them. Similarly Dylan talked about throwing away *"absolutely destroyed"* (1a, lines 149-150) books, and Daniel described discarding something *"if it*

were, definitely no longer needed" (2, lines 978-979) and with paperwork in particular, *"if there's no way that that information's ever gonna be useful again*" (2, lines 980-981). Rose described problems with certain kinds of items: *"the in-between things erm, can take a lot of, decision, making and, might not get thrown out because not sure whether I might need it again"* (lines 217-219). These in-between items are those which are neither easy nor difficult to discard, which require a lot of decision-making.

Ambiguity over decision-making could also intersect with the meaning of possessions. In Rose's example of *"in-between things",* the future usefulness of such items appears to be the main issue, a contrast with Natalie who described now being able to decide whether things would be useful in the future. Keeping things *"just in case",* mentioned by several participants, also speaks to their usefulness in the future as well as uncertainty in decision-making. Usefulness and potential were important considerations for some participants. For example, Alan described the value of books as containing several aspects of potential and attached emotional value to the potential of bicycles.

A particularly poignant consideration of the meaning of possessions and ambiguity came from Yvonne. She described how things with tangible beginnings and ends were easier to discard, giving an example of paperwork related to loans. Although she admitted she would keep the paperwork for a limited time after the last payment, she would eventually feel that it could be shredded as there was *"no more proof … needed that that transaction happened … I can get rid of that"* (2, lines 914-916). When asked whether this provided closure, Yvonne agreed and described this as feeling *"good, 'cos that feels like it's a tangible beginning and end"* (2, lines 919-920). She compared this with other aspects of life:

> "I think most things don't feel that linear … that is … a transaction *[Mmm]* that is completed, whereas life things aren't really like that … even when somebody passes away, and it's completed, there's this sense of not wanting, you know, the not wanting it to be completed and, the attachment to, what was … especially when it's a human being obviously, *[Mmm]* or, if it's something related to, something that is no longer with us" (2, lines 921-929)

Thus, items with tangible timeframes can be discarded more easily. However, it is not just the clear beginning and end of the transaction which makes the related paperwork easier to deal with, but the *meaning* of that transaction. Yvonne's contrast with *"life things"* such as losing a loved one suggests an additional meaning and a link with life events. Even though the finality of death suggests completion, for those left behind the yearning for a remnant of lost loved ones means the emotional and social transaction with them and their possessions is *not* complete.

4.1. ii. a. The meaning of possessions and its impact on discarding

The various meanings which participants gave to their possessions could prevent discarding and facilitate keeping. Although the meaning of possessions could be deeply personal and idiosyncratic, there were some commonalities in the meanings which participants ascribed to their possessions. Meanings related to loss were particularly relevant to discarding. Possessions could be viewed as connections to loved ones, part of one's self or past, and part of history, thus discarding possessions means respectively a loss of connection, identity and past or history. Some participants also described concerns around losing information and memories, and there were references to bereavement. The use of objects as protection and a way to fulfil basic needs for comfort and connection are also relevant to discarding.

Dylan described how he might want to *"hang onto"* (2, lines 547-548) things as mementoes, an activity he described as a passive process of *"not wanting to cut those, emotional ties … rather than actually dwelling on them*" (2, lines 549-550). When asked whether this was a way of trying to keep the connection to the person, he described how *"it's not actively I must keep that connection it's just, erm, I don't want to cut that connection"* (2, lines 553-555). Thus, letting go of some possessions means severing a connection to someone Dylan cares about, which he is unwilling to do. Dylan described how he believed immortality was about *"being remembered by others"* (1a, line 452) so keeping others' possessions meant *"you could sort of in a roundabout way say it's a way of giving them some sort of immortality"* (1a, lines 453-454). Possessions belonging to the deceased can be valued because they are *"what's left"* (Yvonne 2, line 1244). Thus, to lose these remnants of the person is to potentially lose them completely but keeping them means immortalising the person.

Hasan described feeling that his possessions were part of him: *"these possessions, they're part of me and er, it's the memories they bring to it … I can't ((mumbles)) let go of these memories"* (lines 343-345). Elsewhere in his interview he described distress about his mother throwing away his possessions in childhood due to the same feeling that they were part of him. For Hasan discarding objects potentially meant throwing away part of himself as well as his memories. Similarly, Dylan linked some possessions to earlier times in his life, prompting a reflection that getting rid of these things may mean he is *"effectively throwing away par, an important part of my life"* (2, lines 254-255). Dylan's suggestion is akin to the meaning given to possessions by several participants as a kind of tangible autobiography providing physical proof of lived experience.

Objects could give concrete physical proof of experience, which is ephemeral and intangible. Yvonne described *"holding on to the memory of something through an object"* (2, lines 327-328). Some things were *"kind of keepsakes, they're, there's something about the reality that something,*

something was lived and experienced and did happen" (2, lines 329-339). Susie described *"having proof of where you were, [Yeah] and saying, I went through this, I did this"* (lines 906-910). Linking times in her life to periods of accumulation meant that for Susie the objects became tangible proof of having lived through these times. Having such tangible proof means being able to hold onto memories, another aspect of how discarding could mean losing memories. Keeping possessions was thus a way for some to document life in a sense, which also involved preserving the past. The tangibility of objects potentially provides a layer of meaning beyond their associated memories, information and even aesthetics, suggested in the comparisons which participants made between physical possessions and their digital counterparts. The former were often given more meaning and significance than the latter.

Yvonne's concerns over losing the written word in the technological age were expressed in her observation that getting rid of things, *"also erases history"* (2, line 291). For Yvonne, paper, information and the written word represented history, and for Tamara and Antony objects had the potential to do this. Objects from previous time periods were to be cherished. Tamara stressed, "*an element of, erm, curatorship in a way … you've found that and you've got to take care of it [Mmm] 'cos there won't be any more from that time"* (lines 249-250). This desire to care for things was even more strongly stated later when she described what she felt she was doing by saving items: *"rescuing it from oblivion"* (line 424). Tamara also described the appeal of being *"the person who's bringing it into the light"* (lines 432-433). Thus, oblivion may reference not just physical destruction but a kind of fading into obscurity when failing to preserve objects which reflect the time in which they were produced, one now gone. Discarding could thus hasten the decline into oblivion and mean that the item is forgotten, and with it the time period. Being able to acquire and keep such objects means keeping the past alive, and allows a sense of pride in *"being able to sift the, the sort of treasure from the trash"* (Lily, lines 171-172)

Ava and Emma talked about the ability of objects to protect. For Emma this involved creating a physical barrier of possessions in order to prevent people from harming her. Ava's notion of things conferring protection was more subtle. Having experienced a degree of poverty in her younger years, Ava described how knowing that she had enough was a comfort to her, an observation also echoed by Yvonne and Susie. Ava suggested that *"quantity has a quality all of its own"* (1, line 148) and *"people say about things don't matter … they do, because they protect you"* (1, lines 479-480). Descriptions Antony, Susie and Emma gave of creating dens, nests or cocoons also echoed this notion of protection and comfort, as did Emma's suggestion that *"the only comfort … I got was stuff"* (line 45). Emma described a deep connection to her possessions and a sense that she was fulfilling her needs for connection through her possessions. Thus, to discard possessions with such meanings

is to remove a source of comfort and protection and a process which Emma likened to *"like telling someone, 'oh just get rid of your kids', or your (family)"* (lines 313-314).

A final aspect of meaning for several participants was the ability for some objects to reflect a form of love and intimacy. These items, while not being financially valuable, saleable or even in good condition nevertheless became imbued with meaning. Tara described such as items as the ones which *"held the memories"* (line 956) through repeated use. Such items were particularly hard to discard, with Susie calling them:

> "objects of direct, personal love …. little things that people handled. You know like, I've got a little pepper pot that we used to have in our house and like, erm, you know things like that are like, ((sigh)) or like a little picture that was on the wall" (lines 782-787)

The physical metaphor of things holding memories and the examples of clothes and things people handled also suggests a physical and tangible element to these objects. They are woven into the fabric of everyday life, increasing their connection to the person they are associated with. There is an intimacy attached to such items which is perhaps their most valued aspect, a sentiment which Ava alludes to when she described why she valued her wedding shoes more than her dress. The shoes represented the *"privacy and intimacy of marriage"* (1, lines 405-406) which the actual wedding day did not always reflect. Daily family life and togetherness in a home could also reflect a degree of privacy and intimacy captured in the more idiosyncratic and less financially valuable objects which Susie and Tara described, making these particularly difficult to discard.

Conversely, a change in the object's meaning made discarding easier. Dylan and Alan both talked about being able to get rid of things if the connection they felt to the items had gone. Lily's observation that sometimes possessions required time to change from things which have value in one's life to lacking that relevance and value was reminiscent of how Melba described her thinking around some of her possessions, particularly those which had been there a long time. "*I realise rationally that, if it can sit there for a long time, that maybe I, either don't need it or it doesn't mean … what I think it means*" (lines 890-892). The item being allowed to *"sit there"* as if unused and perhaps unappreciated allows Melba to question its value in a way she may not have done before.

4.1. ii. b. The meaning of discarding

The meaning of discarding itself could also prevent possessions from being discarded. Some participants likened discarding to bereavement: *"it's actually … almost like bereavement really, [Mmm] erm, because it's sort of like you are letting go of something, so it's a bereavement side"* (Melba, lines 771-773). Although Melba does not say what might be grieved during this process, her

reference to bereavement is direct and clear. Some participants alluded to bereavement in a more subtle way, describing discarding as something they needed to *"come to terms with".* For Ava this was one potential reason for her hoarding behaviour: *"I've just not qui-I've not quite come to terms with parting with it"* (1, lines 693-694) and Antony referred to changes in his ability to discard possessions: *"I think I've come to terms more with letting stuff go"* (2, lines 903-904). The idea of coming to terms with parting with things implies a difficult process related to loss and a need to accept that things must go, which might tax a person emotionally and require time. The latter is not a literal need for more hours in the day in which to get things done, but a need for the temporal element of experience to shift someone towards acceptance of things they cannot currently manage.

Some forms of discarding were viewed as cathartic, allowing the ability to release the old and make way for the new. Holding onto items reflects the desire to preserve (time, connections to loved ones, connections to one's past, a sense of immateriality in an object), but letting go allows for new horizons. Thus, there is a potential tension between a desire to preserve and a desire – or need – to make space for the new. Closure, which allowed some participants to be able to get rid of things, is also reflected in complete transactions. A lack of closure and completion is reflected in unfinished physical processes, for example *Doing the bare minimum*, and emotional processes which leave the person stuck, such as dealing with the belongings of the deceased where strong emotions prevent management of those belongings, the *"undigestable chunks of the past"* (Susie, lines 675-676).

Tamara hinted at the idea of discarding as potentially positive when she described how in an enforced separation from some of her possessions she felt *"freer, I mean [Mmm] the whole house was lighter"* (lines 1360-1361). She suggested that this experience of separation might have prompted her to think about getting rid of her things. However, it is important to note that such temporary separations may prompt discarding, but this does not mean that having to let go will be an easy process. Although possessions are no longer in the living space, they have not (yet) been discarded. In Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding, the importance of underlying issues in hoarding is addressed, thus more needs to be done to help those with severe hoarding problems than simply removing possessions.

Alan found discarding cathartic, describing "*the process of decluttering"* (1, line 1611) as healthy and likening it to *"a snake removing its old skin or a tree losing its leaves"* (1, lines 1614-1615) in the ability to *"get rid of old … make some space in your life for the new to come in"* (1, lines 1615-1617). The notion of discarding as cathartic could represent a kind of positive loss and a contrast to more negative connotations of loss. The term decluttering was potentially illuminating, as it implied

removing unnecessary and old possessions, suggesting that this is what Alan views as positive, not simply discarding. Discarding encompasses more than removal of clutter, including those items which are valuable, therefore some forms of discarding may have more negative associations. Additionally, the process of discarding itself may be painful, but the resultant positive effects on living space and physical and mental wellbeing, the products of discarding, are positive. Thus, although there is loss, there is also potentially much to be gained.

Both Alan and Ava described being able to discard things if certain conditions were met. Alan described how once he found a way to discard some books which *"(met) that need for, like, closure"* (2, lines 408-409) he was happy to let them go. This involved having found *"a home … for them to go to"* (2, line 407). Similarly, Ava described clearing as positive when she was able to know "*where they're going or what I'm doing with them or find someone that really wants them or appreciates them*" (2, lines 319-321). Thus, when psychological needs are met discarding could be not only possible but potentially positive. The need for closure echoes Yvonne's idea of the notion of complete and incomplete transactions.

However, it is important to note here that while ambivalence and occasionally positive notions of discarding were expressed, these may reflect the participant's circumstances. Hoarding behaviours can be viewed as a potential continuum (e.g. Timpano et al., 2013), reflected in the diversity of behaviours and attitudes in the present sample. Thus, feelings of discarding as giving potential closure may apply more to those with milder hoarding behaviours, and in the case of those with more severe hoarding, may also reflect life circumstances. For example, while Tamara and Emma were both on the more severe end of the sample and had both put some of their possessions in storage, Tamara described how her house felt freer and lighter, whereas Emma expressed concerns about whether she would be able to get rid of things. Both were concerned about their rates of acquisition compared to discarding, and both found discarding difficult, but Emma appeared to be experiencing a greater level of difficulty. This may be due to their life circumstances, as Emma talked about experiences of current trauma which were also contributing to her hoarding behaviours, whereas Tamara appeared to have experienced past trauma which was not acutely affecting her at the time of her interview. Thus, when considering the meaning of discarding, it may be important to consider the impact of life events and circumstances on hoarders' perceptions of managing possessions.

4.1. ii. c. Preferences for discarding methods

Certain discarding methods were preferred, particularly those which allowed for getting rid of things in meaningful ways with many participants being particularly averse to throwing things away. The

meaning of possessions influenced both whether they would be discarded and *how* this might happen. Emma described how *"my stuff has value, yes I've got too much of it, yes I need to cut it down but it could go to charity shops, it could get sold, it could, you know, it's not just chucking it"* (lines 29-32).

Participants' aversion to throwing things away reflected a dislike of a throwaway society, a concern for the fate of items, and participants' values. Alan particularly emphasised environmentalism and sustainability, describing how he found it difficult to contemplate items in skips being thrown away, asking *"well where's away? … it's still gonna stay on planet earth"* (1, lines 443-444). Susie linked a desire to care for people and objects with concern for the fate and identity of objects which were thrown away. She described feeling upset at the idea of things being thrown away: *"I like the idea that … everything has a past and everything is important and everything will be cared for by someone"* (lines 326-328). Ensuring that things were not thrown away meant they could be cared for and would be treated as important. With the suggestion that objects have a past, giving them to someone also indicates a future for them. Throwing objects away meant treating them as unimportant and disposable, discarding not only the item's past but also its future.

Ava, Alan and Lily emphasised sharing and keeping things in circulation. Ava considered passing objects onto others a *"happier transaction"* (2, line 931), linked to the importance of her values around sharing and generosity: *"if you kinda pass that on, then maybe they will pass something else on to someone else or d'you know what I mean? … that kind of spirit of generosity"* (2, lines 932-935). Lily and Alan both talked about how they liked to keep things in circulation. Lily described contributing to the *"ecosystem of second-hand goods"* (line 466) as desirable and talked about valuing second-hand goods because they had *"imaginary histories"* (line 710) and were previously owned and appreciated by others. Being able to acquire these (and by extension pass them on when she was no longer using them) meant *"unlocking"* (line 726) the value of the item once more. She also agreed that this would potentially allow the item to have another life, making links between preferred discarding methods and the value of objects.

Dylan described how he felt that there was *"something there in terms of, erm, a feeling of, something non-material in objects that means something to me"* (2, lines 640-641). Very tentatively, Dylan suggested this this "*might … **might***" (2, line 642) be a reason for his reluctance to discard some things. This immateriality and the idea of imbuing possessions which meant something to him with life force linked to methods of discarding as Dylan preferred to give some things away: *"I don't actually want to kill them, [Yeah] I'd rather give them a new home"* (1a, lines 869-870) Giving *"life*

force" to objects means that they should go to a new home, an idea mentioned by other participants, and Dylan implies that not doing so may be *"killing"* the objects.

Although some participants talked about recycling as a discarding method, some either disliked recycling or preferred to recycle in certain ways. Walter described himself as *"a very strong ecologist"* (lines 857-858) who believed objects should be recycled, but in particular ways. Walter preferred to recycle a whole object, such as a jar, by reusing it rather than contributing to a recycling process which involved reducing it to its constituent parts. Susie described a similar concern around recycling: *"it's like it just becomes mushed in with all other stuff and they don't have their own histories anymore, they don't, they're not their own things anymore, they're just, matter"* (lines 337-340). For Susie the mixing of objects in recycling means losing their histories and identity, much like how Walter's jars lose their quality of being jars when they are recycled into raw materials. Such concerns about losing an object's identity and history suggest a clear preference for discarding methods which allow the object to have a continued or new life rather than being merely thrown away.

Preferences for discarding methods meant that sometimes participants were unable to discard their possessions. Ava described holding onto things because she did not have *"an immediate way of getting rid of it that is satisfactory to me"* (2, lines 52-53). For Ava this was due in part to concerns around trusting those to whom she gave things and a need to feel *"happy with the way that I've got rid of something"* (2, lines 50-51). Alan also expressed a similar concern: *"if I could trust that somebody was gonna use something I'd give it to them"* (2, lines 262-264), which he speculated might be due to feeling like a protector of objects. As both talked about concerns about the fate of possessions after they had been given away, perhaps both felt that they still owned or were responsible for them in some way. Although finding a home for something was a concern in managing the contents, the idea of getting rid of things in certain ways and concern for the fate of an item reflects a broader concern with making sure objects find their way to somewhere else they might belong. Finding a home for things not just in the home, but when they leave the home as well.

4.1. iii. Discussion

A set of actions developed from the analysis of participants' descriptions of the meaning of aspects of managing possessions such as sorting, organising and discarding. These could be organised into a process – termed *Managing possessions* – which involved putting like items with like; making decisions about them, e.g. whether to discard them; actually discarding these items; and finding a home for possessions.

Managing the contents – actions with possessions which did not include discarding – distinguished between sorting and organising and described two additional problems: *Doing the bare minimum* and *Finding a home for things*. In participants' constructions of these actions, sorting tended to involve putting like with like, and organising was more about finding a home for something. These findings give us several novel insights.

Firstly, the process commonly referred to as sorting appeared to present the most difficulty. It has been previously observed that hoarding is associated with difficulties in organising, categorising and decision-making (e.g. Tolin et al., 2009; Luchian et al., 2007). While the findings of the present study appear to confirm such observations, much empirical research on organising, categorisation and decision-making has focused on attempts to uncover general or specific underlying deficits explaining these difficulties. Thus, the present study gives a process by which to understand what participants may be doing in their homes with their possessions and sheds some further light on specific aspects of difficulty.

Difficulties in decision-making have previously been implicated in hoarding, including general indecisiveness (Frost, Tolin, et al., 2011; APA, 2013). Results from the present study support the notion that decisions are difficult and provide insight into the meaning of decision-making for those with hoarding tendencies. Decisions which were uncertain, and which were influenced by emotion, including the emotional resonance of possessions, appeared to be the most difficult to make. Thus, sorting, with its decision-making component, appeared to be more difficult than organising due to the cognitive and emotional burden which it placed on the individual.

The uncertainty of decision-making, expressed in keeping things "just in case" and the ability of some participants to discard things which they identified as having no definite use or being in an irredeemably poor condition, potentially relates to intolerance of uncertainty. This would support studies which find that intolerance of uncertainty is related to hoarding behaviour and suggest a link between intolerance of uncertainty and possessions-related decisions specifically. Several studies have investigated this construct in relation to hoarding with mixed results. Some studies have found associations between hoarding and intolerance of uncertainty in non-clinical (Oglesby et al., 2013) and clinical samples (Wheaton et al., 2016). However, Grisham and colleagues found that intolerance of uncertainty was not a predictor of hoarding symptoms in a clinical sample once depression and anxiety were controlled for (Grisham, Roberts, et al., 2018). As intolerance of uncertainty is a general construct which can be related to several different disorders (Boswell et al., 2013), it may be the case that it is associated with hoarding rather than being a hoarding-specific risk factor (Grisham, Roberts, et al., 2018). One further possibility is that the intolerance of uncertainty in

hoarding behaviours relates specifically to possessions. This would be consistent with suggestions by Baldwin et al. (2017) that patterns of brain activity during possessions-related decisions and abnormalities in error monitoring in hoarders indicate avoidance of uncertain discarding and acquiring decisions. However, they also note that such suggestions are highly tentative and speculative. Previous studies used the Intolerance of Uncertainty scale, a general measure of this construct. Thus, the issues participants face with uncertainty may be best measured in future research in relation to discarding and acquiring tasks rather than self-report questionnaires which assess broad constructs.

Melba's division of sorting and organising into an emotional and more rational process in Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage also suggests that certain parts of the process of managing possessions are indeed more difficult. Together, these results suggest a progression and a specific set of difficulties around certain points in the attempt to manage possessions, for example when decisions are required during sorting. Perhaps organising is more rational and is focused around finding a home for things. Although finding a home for things was difficult, this appeared to be more of a practical problem. It had an underlying similarity with the notion of unfinished business, and there is a psychological resonance to the word "home" which implies belonging, thus it may not be entirely practical. However, stronger emotions are likely felt around discarding than in finding a home for something, perhaps because the item remains in the *person's* home rather than having left it entirely.

Doing the bare minimum and *Finding a home for things* may shed light on the practice of churning. Previously a term coined by Frost and Hartl (1996) who suggested that it represented a search for something which could be easily categorised. In this thesis, churning has elements of both *Doing the bare minimum* -- moving possessions, but with the express purpose of making space or allowing access -- and *Finding a home for things*, in which there is a conflict between putting something in a convenient space, and finding its ultimate storage space. Although churning has a less specific and more diffuse purpose than *Doing the bare minimum,* there are similarities and perhaps the practice of churning can be subdivided into the two processes herein.

Key analytical findings related to discarding were the importance of decision-making, loss, and the meaning of discarding and possessions. Decisions to discard could be difficult, particularly where there was ambiguity over the future use of the item. Participants' descriptions of the meaning of decision-making, as something potentially torturous and to be avoided, and the meaning of discarding as something which could be both painful and cathartic, add important detail to existing studies. Previous research on decision-making has focused primarily on the presence or absence of

decision-making deficits in hoarding, and whether these are specifically related to possessions or represent general problems with decisions. Despite the preponderance of quantitative and experimental investigations of decision-making in hoarding (e.g. Tolin et al., 2009; Morein-Zamir, 2014; Levy et al., 2019), one aspect which has not been fully explored is the nuance and meaning of decisions.

The present investigation of hoarding from a qualitative perspective allows for a greater understanding of how decision-making, the meaning of possessions, and the meaning of discarding, may link together. This has been previously hinted at in other studies, for example ambivalence around discarding was described by Bratiotis et al. (2019), and participants who met criteria for HD talked about the meaning of their possessions during deliberations about whether to discard them. However, Bratiotis et al. utilised content analysis and focused on "frequency, patterns and relationships" (p. 1078), whereas the research in this thesis considers hoarding from a constructivist grounded theory perspective emphasising action, process and meaning. Thus, while ambivalence was expressed by doubt, feeling conflicted and wanting to postpone decisions (Bratiotis et al., 2019), participants herein described their ambivalence in a much more detailed way. Ambivalence here is based on the notion that while the *process* of discarding may be difficult and painful, the *product* of discarding, such as increased mental clarity and clearer living space, may be positive. This has similarities with the distinction made by Kellett (2007) that micro elements of hoarding such as saving things as they are considered beautiful are ego-syntonic, whereas macro factors, for example living in a cluttered home, are ego-dystonic. Ego-syntonic aspects are those which are consistent with the person's values and sense of self (Kings et al., 2017) and which the person finds acceptable (Kellett et al., 2010). Increasing feelings that discarding may promote mental and spatial clarity may be beneficial in helping those who hoard to let go of their possessions. However, these results need to be viewed with a degree of caution. Although some participants did feel ambivalent and even positive towards discarding at least some of their possessions, for others discarding was highly painful and difficult. The meaning of discarding may also be affected by life events such as trauma, with hoarding potentially worsening during times of acute trauma and making the meaning of discarding much more painful and aversive than might be the case at less distressing times.

The various meanings of possessions which were particularly germane to discarding in this study were aspects of loss (a part of self, a connection to a loved one, a connection with either an individual or collective past) and the ability of possessions to confer protection or comfort. These correspond to some of the concepts described as part of emotional attachment, which has been studied using a variety of definitions (Kellett & Holden, 2014). It may thus be useful to consider emotional attachment as a multidimensional construct involving loss, possessions as part of one's

self and past, comfort and protection. This is hinted at by the Saving Cognitions Inventory which includes the constructs of emotional comfort, loss and value/uniqueness, however as a quantitative rating scale this measure does not allow participants to describe their emotional attachments in detail. It has also been noted that this scale was developed at a time when much less was known about the phenomenology of hoarding (Steketee & Frost, 2014b). The use of constructivist grounded theory methodology and in-depth interviews allows for a greater level of detail and nuance than quantitative rating scales can capture. For example, the Saving Cognitions Inventory contains the item "this possession provides me with emotional comfort" but does not allow participants to describe *why* possessions may provide comfort or what has happened in their life to prompt such feelings.

Thus, the complex and multifaceted emotional relationships with possessions described herein support the idea that further unpacking and study of emotional attachment and its components is warranted (e.g. Yap & Grisham, 2019; Timpano et al., 2020). A particularly novel finding is the idea of possessions as becoming part of the fabric of everyday life through repeated use and association with loved ones. Such a meaning of possessions brings together emotional attachment to possessions and people, and the physical, experiential elements of emotional attachment which have been hinted at in previous studies (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010; Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010) but not described in such detail, and provides a novel aspect of emotional attachment.

Imbuing objects with meaning in such a way, through repeated interaction with loved ones, potentially explains why in some studies sentimental and emotional reasons predicted saving but not acquiring (e.g. Dozier & Ayers, 2014; Frost et al., 2015). These objects become more meaningful over time, with repeated and sustained contact with loved ones. Thus, their meaning develops and is associated with attachment to significant people and the memories associated with them. These would be reasons to save but would not likely have any relationship with acquisition except perhaps if they were inherited from a deceased loved one.

However, it is important to note that a line of demarcation between hoarding and "normal consumer behaviour (and collecting)" (Kellett & Holden, 2014, p. 122) regarding emotional attachment is that such attachment occurs across a large number of "apparently 'useless' objects" (p. 122) which are not organised around a central theme (Kellett & Holden, 2014). Thus, while it could be said that worn-out and stained clothes of the type described by Tara are "useless", they could also be said to be organised around a central theme, that of having been worn, loved and used in the course of everyday life. Therefore, this form of emotional attachment may not be unique to

hoarding but may nevertheless feed into difficulty discarding for those hoarders who imbue their objects with such meaning.

Additionally, findings from the present study suggest a nuanced relationship with possessions which can include emotional attachment but is not limited to it. Such findings potentially shed light on why different reasons for saving and acquiring are endorsed by those who hoard (e.g. Dozier & Ayers, 2014; Frost et al., 2015). Given that the kinds of objects which are hoarded are much like those retained by non-hoarders (Mogan et al., 2012) this allows for a wide variation not only in objects, but in the potential meaning given to them. It is logical therefore to think that someone who hoards primarily newspapers, for example, would keep such things for their instrumental use as information sources. In contrast, a person whose hoard consists mostly of vintage objects may value such things for their intrinsic beauty or connection to another time period. In the present study participants valued and saved a large variety of objects and some did not consider themselves to have strong attachments to their possessions. Nevertheless, they struggled with discarding them. Thus, emotional attachment alone cannot explain why people who hoard are reluctant to discard their objects. Difficulties in discarding may be explained by examining connections between what is hoarded, why it is hoarded, and the meaning which possessions have for the person.

Participants' descriptions of their preferred discarding methods and the meaning of such methods also provides depth on the link between the meaning of possessions, difficulty discarding, and the relationship between possessions and self. Possessions have been described as part of the extended self (Belk, 1988). Particularly germane to methods of discarding is Belk's discussion of having, being and doing in relation to possessions. The line of demarcation between all three states appears blurred when considering discarding methods. Owning possessions is analogous to having, whereas discarding and keeping are what is done with possessions.

Participants' links with their values, behaviours and the meaning of possessions suggests that not only can possessions be related with self, but that what is done with them can also reflect something about the self. Thus, for those with hoarding tendencies, discarding things in meaningful ways may be a way of maintaining values, identity and positive views of self. Throwing things away may therefore reflect something negative about the person, perhaps acceptance of and participation in a throwaway society, a lack of generosity, or a lack of due care and concern for the fate and identity of an object.

Frost et al. (1995) previously linked the notion of environmental consciousness, values and self, suggesting that a negative consequence of discarding may be that it reflects wastefulness, and so avoiding discarding meant avoiding this impact on self. This assertion was not supported in their

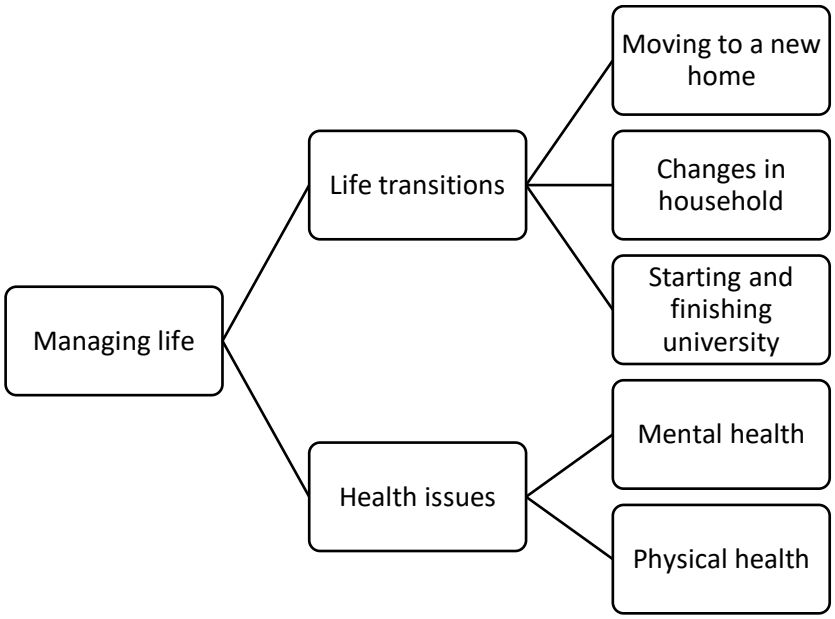
study as environmental consciousness was not strongly associated with hoarding. However, more recent studies have found that waste avoidance *is* a motivator for saving and acquiring (e.g. Frost et al., 2015; Dozier & Ayers, 2014). Assessing waste avoidance by linking it to environmental consciousness taps into only one element of this construct, that of environmental impact. Qualitative studies (e.g. Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010; Orr et al., 2019) suggest a more nuanced concern for waste avoidance involving responsibility towards objects, towards future generations and to avoid waste, and the desire not to participate in a throwaway society. These explorations of value and meaning of possessions thus yield more detailed conceptual understanding of how people with hoarding tendencies view waste and discarding. Results of the present study, which suggest that discarding can represent not only wastefulness but other potential negative aspects of self and are linked to several different values, add new and important detail to such insights. Qualitative exploration of discarding and its meaning therefore yields further understanding into why discarding may be difficult, due to its potential to say something negative about the person who discards and the possible need to discard in a meaningful, ego-syntonic way.

4.2. Managing life

Figure 3 presents the subcategories of *Managing life*.

Figure 3

Subcategories of Managing life



4.2. i. Life transitions

Various factors related to changes in participants' lives also had an impact on managing possessions and can be thought of as *Life transitions*. Key life transitions were moving to a new home, changes in household (partners moving out or in, living alone) and starting or leaving university.

4.2. i. a Moving to a new home

Moving to a new home could be a catalyst for managing possessions. For some participants, seeing the amount of possessions they owned was a kind of consciousness-raising, as belongings could no longer be thought of as out of sight and out of mind. Participants' realisation of how much they owned when moving could prompt clearing. However, this did not always happen before moving, and in some cases did not happen at all.

For Alan, moving allowed him to see what and how much he had, which he found useful:

> "I've, seen everything in its entirety, you know all the sort of erm, do I really need this, have I used this in the last year or six years or whatever. *[Mmm]* So, action doesn't always match with intention, *[Yeah]* but erm, moving is, an opportunity for me to s- for de-, to declutter *[Yeah]* because I find what I've really got." (2, lines 35-40)

Moving was an opportunity to declutter as Alan became aware of the extent of his possessions, allowing him to see what he has and potentially manage it through discarding some unwanted items. Notably though, although Alan expressed a preference for decluttering before moving, this did not always happen.

Walter described how during house moves he thought that he had too much: *"that's been the main thought in my mind as to why I should lose things, why I should go through my possessions and actually get rid of some stuff"* (lines 315-317). Like Alan, Walter's intention to discard possessions is not acted on as other things take priority. Walter's health meant he had less energy than in the past, thus there may be a need for him to choose which activities he expends this limited energy on:

> "I feel it acutely when the move happens and … then I have to deal with the practicalities of being in a new place which then … takes erm, over your energy and then you just get used to *[Mmm]* living there" (lines 327-330)

Walter's focus becomes the practicalities of day to day living, consequently he is unable to discard possessions. The idea of getting used to living somewhere suggests a possible blindness or complacency towards the home, so that while a person may want to deal with their living situation, familiarity with the home may prevent this. This is reminiscent of the concept of 'clutter blindness', where people who hoard become accustomed to the clutter around them (Cooke, 2017).

Dylan echoes Walter's post-moving difficulties in describing events after he left his wife: *"I had a lot of stuff to sort out and … I got work sooner than I expected, [Yeah] so never had time to (get around) to finishing the job off! ((participant laughs))"* (1a, lines 700-703). In both cases the everyday practicalities of life got in the way of managing possessions. Thus, it is not just significant life events which can affect managing possessions, but the necessary tasks of day to day living during and after these events.

Ava and Lily also talked about house moves as prompts to discard possessions when they otherwise might not consider this. Ava described how moving house meant being *"forced to have massive clear outs"* (2, lines 338-339), and Lily agreed that when she had gotten rid of things it had been prompted by house moves and whatever was going on in her life at the time, where she would *"maybe have a spring clean and get rid of some clothes"* (Lily, lines 426-427). Clearing was not something Lily would do *"voluntarily"* (line 425).

Antony acknowledged moving as a chance to discard, but this made his hoarding worse:

> "I'd go to move house and I'd think, oh I should be throwing stuff away, but instead … I'd be picking up other items that other people had left behind when they'd *[Mmm]* moved out, so I ended up with this big burden of stuff that I was taking from one place to the next." (1, lines 783-788)

So, although Antony thinks he *"should"* discard things, he ends up keeping his own things and acquiring more from those who have moved out. Having a *"big burden of stuff"* – which Antony also said prevented him from moving too many times! – suggests an ambivalence to the hoard. While Antony at other times talked about his hoard affectionately, as being made up of objects he cared deeply about, here it is a burden.

For Lily, becoming settled in one place through buying her own home meant she did not have to get rid of things, whereas in the past multiple house moves prompted discarding. Unlike some other participants, this was something Lily did act on. Living on her own, however, meant that she did not discard things unless someone else moved in. Changes in household such as someone else moving in or out could have an impact on hoarding behaviours and managing possessions. In a more psychological vein, part of becoming settled in one place may relate to the ability and opportunity to hoard. Ava referred to having experienced *"a big palpable shift"* (1, lines 727-728) from having very little to then having *"stuff to lose"* (1, lines 725), circumstances to which she attributed her hoarding behaviour. Having previously had to keep only those things which she could *"hold onto from moving*

multiple times" (1, line 467), becoming settled represented a time when Ava could acquire and hold onto more.

4.2. i. b. Changes in household

Several participants talked about changes in their hoarding behaviour when partners or housemates moved in or out. At a physical and practical level, a change in the household meant more space for possessions. Antony described how his hoard spread across more rooms in his home:

> *"as they moved out I just took, extended the amount of [Mmm] space that I was renting and it was me and, the housemate who, also hoarded. Um, so that was a point where it suddenly just went, you know, it was just filled within no time" (2, lines 108-112)*

As the amount of space available increased so did the hoard, at an apparently exponential rate. The increase in possessions then meant more time and energy expended in trying to manage the contents: *"all the time was spent trying to condense down everything we had and then expanding it up and finding more space and, things like that in back garden"* (2, lines 112-115). It appears that the hoard became so expansive at this time – one point at which *"it really did sort of snowball"* (2, line 106) – that Antony's possessions and those of his housemate spread beyond the boundaries of their house and into the garden.

Similarly, Walter described having a *"very large, free upgrade to my book collection"* (lines 81-82) when his housemate moved out, having *"pounced on it and grabbed ((laughs)) as much [Mmm] of this stuff as I could"* (lines 80-81). This sudden influx of new possessions meant Walter needed to find space to house them. He confessed to now having a large book collection which took up a wall full of shelves but which he did not feel inclined to read, which he had thought of selling but had not got around to doing.

A further influence related to a change in household was the lack of someone else to help or take over decision-making about what to discard and keep. Tara described how this influenced her after a divorce:

> "I suppose there was probably, not so many, checks or nobody else to take over the like, deciding to throw things away, so then I probably was when it was all my own decision-making that, erm, I would make the decision to keep things" (lines 38-42)

Thus, having nobody to take over or help with decision-making meant that sole responsibility fell to Tara. Decision-making appeared to be a significant issue for several participants, for example the need for decisions to be clear and unambiguous before something could be discarded. Tara's difficulty with decision-making involved feeling a need to make *"**the** perfect decision over something*

every time" (line 342). Thus, for Tara and others with this kind of thinking process, needing to make decisions alone would be an area of especial difficulty. Tara's emphasis on "**the**" perfect decision suggests that there is only correct one, which *must* be made, and made every time. Given the amount of pressure this would bring to bear on her, it is not surprising that Tara struggled with decision-making and thinking about what to keep and discard, a process she described as a kind of mental torture.

Lily described how living with a partner when she first bought a house meant someone else there helping to keep the amount of possessions down: *"he was quite good at saying "no we don't need all of (the) stuff". [Yeah] And when we split up and er, I, I lived on my own … ((participant laughs)) just didn't get rid of anything at all"* (lines 346-349). While living with a partner, Lily may have been able to discard things – or allowed her partner to do so – but while living alone she did not discard anything. Lily also described how she would also acquire more: *"particularly 'cos I was on my own I was sort of quite bored, I would [Mmm] buy lots of bits and pieces and start lots of different hobbies and, er, accumulate a lot, a lot of stuff like, you know, way too much"* (lines 351-354). Living with someone else may not just allow for shared responsibility for decisions, but also provide opportunities for socialising and shared activities which can stave off boredom and thus curb acquiring behaviours.

4.2. i. c. Starting and finishing university

Antony, Hasan, Daniel and Walter reported their hoarding behaviour changing during university. The transition to university represents a time when, like living alone, responsibility for making decisions about and managing possessions rests on the shoulders of the individual. In childhood, parents would have had more control over living space. For Daniel, leaving university resulted in a change in his hoarding behaviours.

In a kind of foreshadowing of later events when his housemates moved out, Antony's hoard grew in university accommodation as his *"ability to keep stuff"* (2, line 34) increased: *"my room would get fuller and fuller"* (2, line 36). Hasan described how as a student he would borrow multiple textbooks, visit bookshops and charity shops, and *"buy books and books … keep em, er, stocked up at the flat I was living in"* (lines 152-154). Walter suggested that he could not remember hoarding while living with his parents, however at university he began borrowing and recording large amounts of music which he identified as part of a wider tendency to accumulate. Around his third year Walter realised that his burgeoning book collection was *"getting a bit large*" (line 14). Thus, starting at university appears to be a time when hoarding behaviours may either begin or increase.

Beginning university is a life transition potentially involving moving away from parents for the first time, and a time when control over one's own environment could lead to saving possessions. Although not directly about university, Emma described how her parents' influence curbed her hoarding tendencies in childhood, being *"made to get rid of stuff"* (line 103) which she found *"traumatic … I would like to hold onto everything"* (lines 105-106). Natalie talked about how her mum helped her to get rid of things: *"Sometimes I need prompts and, she's just, really firm when I need it"* (lines 665-666). Thus, without this kind of influence when at university, possessions may become harder to manage. Antony's comparison of his childhood and university experience reinforces this, as he suggests that while hoarding might have been *"an issue"* (2, line 14) during his childhood, he lacked *"control over any space to do that"* (2, line 15).

Going to university *"for me … feels like a new phase of stuff because, even though I was in student, accommodation, um, nobody could make me throw anything away, so I, started to gradually accumulate"* (2, lines 22-25). This *"new phase"* of hoarding contrasts with a time of less control over his possessions, during which Antony's mother threw things away, which caused him anxiety. For Antony then, university appears to provide more of an ability to hoard. This is interesting, as while Antony also talked about a psychological impetus to hold onto things driven by anxiety, fear of loss, death and things falling away, he emphasised being able to hoard. Several other participants, including Ava, talked about the ability or opportunity to hoard. Certain life events such as moving away to university without outside influences could increase this ability and opportunity to hoard.

For Daniel it was leaving university which changed his hoarding behaviour, as it marked a time when he moved into his own home and *"the end of sort of student accounts and starting to have to, well, thinking at least that I had to sort of keep track of stuff a bit more"* (1, lines 129-131). This transition from student accounts and housing prompted a concern about keeping things and worrying about what would happen if he got rid of something he might later need:

> "first time … kind of living on my own, responsible for my own rent and erm, *[Mmm]* my own kind of situation … that's probably when that, when that kind of started, erm, *[Yeah],* I didn't, I didn't want the landlord to, to need something that I hadn't got" (1, lines 403-408)

The notion of being responsible for his *"own … situation"* echoes the difficulties encountered with changes to households such as living alone. Thus, transitioning to and from university represent times when the relationship with possessions and the ability to manage them may change, placing more responsibility on the individual.

The life transitions described above presented challenges for participants in being able to manage their possessions, including increasing the amount of possessions in the home, making decisions more difficult, providing further opportunities to hoard, and preventing discarding.

4.2. ii. Health issues

Health issues had an impact on several participants. Some participants had to contend with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. For some participants an underlying mental or physical health condition was suggested to underpin or trigger their hoarding behaviours. The need to understand such conditions is detailed further in Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding, section 6.2.i.c: "Demons" and "triggers": Managing the stuff beneath the stuff.

4.2. ii. a. Mental health

Depression and anxiety in various guises were most mentioned, although some participants talked about having been diagnosed with other mental health conditions. For example, Emma described a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, and both she and Natalie talked about autism and Asperger's syndrome respectively. Natalie attributed her hoarding behaviour to her Asperger's syndrome, and Emma described how her desire to have things organised in specific ways contributed to difficulty discarding and made it hard for people to help her. Having a very systematised way of doing things, with her possessions cross-referenced into spreadsheets, meant that she had to be able to keep these consistent. Discarding things and having others involved caused her distress as she might not be able to maintain her systems.

Decision-making was a source of anxiety for both Antony and Rose. The former described how the finality of a decision was particularly difficult to deal with: *"the idea of making a decision, things that [Yeah] shut doors, you know it's like … once you've thrown that away it's gone"* (2, lines 189-191). Antony experienced this anxiety not just with throwing things away, but with things he passed in the street such as stones, which he picked up rather than leaving them as choosing to carry on walking caused anxiety. Antony suggested this was an avoidance of decision-making, as he could defer a decision about the item's fate, whereas leaving the item where it he saw it meant *"the decisions made, that's gone … irretrievable"* (1, lines 215-216). For Antony then, throwing things away and walking away without picking them up represented a possibility that he would lose something which could not be retrieved. His anxiety about not picking things up worsened his hoarding because *"the scope of things that I collected got bigger"* (1, line 455). In attempting to avoid the anxiety of a final decision, Antony's hoarding grew in scale, thus could be a source of anxiety in and of itself. However, it appeared that Antony did not consider keeping and picking things up as also a decision, albeit one which involves having the object so he can later decide upon its fate.

Similarly, for Antony picking things up could be, *"almost like a self-soothing behaviour to do … go home [Mmm] with big bags full of something"* (2, lines 251-253) during times of anxiety. However, this caused a kind of feedback loop: *"The more stuff I kept, the more things I felt like I needed to keep" (*2, lines 49-50). Periods of increased anxiety coincided with a *"stronger desire to hoard I think"* (2, line 256). Thus, the relationship with anxiety is a complex one. Although he used the expression *"desire to hoard"*, Antony suggested that his hoarding felt more like an obligation or a responsibility rather than something he wanted to do, suggesting a compulsive quality to the urge to pick things up and hold onto them.

Rose talked about anxiety and the tendency to *"worry too much about things"* (line 1059), potentially learned from her mother, who she described as having difficulty making decisions and feeling content with decisions once she had made them. Rose said *"I'm the same …. I suppose that's probably the (aim) of this "don't-know-what-to-do-with-it" pile, [Mmm] it's partly because I, yeah, I can't decide what to, to do [Yeah] with it"* (lines 1099-1102). Antony similarly described difficulties in making decisions and being able to *"commit to the decisions [Mmm] of throwing things away"* (2, lines 73-74). Although Antony's anxiety around decision-making led him to accumulate more, Rose's decision-making anxiety resulted in a pile of things which she was unsure what to do with.

Antony noted that his decision-making ability could fluctuate depending on how anxious he was. Although he found decisions difficult, he could make decisions and commit to them if he was in a *"very safe, calm space"* (2, lines 76). When stress, busyness and anxiety encroached upon this space, a thought process kicked in where he felt the need to keep things. This thought process spiralled and affected Antony's ability to discard possessions and commit to decisions, resulting in feeling that the object was *"a different level of, of personal possession that's [Mmm] something that needs to be kept, for a whole string of reasons"* (2, lines 81-83). The impact of stress and busy life circumstances on decision-making, managing possessions and hoarding behaviours echoes suggestions by other participants such as Dylan and Daniel that practical concerns such as lack of time also have an impact. There is a complex interplay between managing possessions and life involving social, emotional and practical factors as well as cognitive ones.

Another source of anxiety for some participants was the idea of missing out on or losing something precious, resulting in checking behaviour before things could be discarded. Susie described how she was unable to throw magazines away without checking each page to ensure *"there wasn't anything I wanted or needed from it"* (lines 196-197). This she partially attributed to a feeling of anxiety around *"missing out, you know …. like, there'll be something precious that I won't have seen"* (lines 198-199). Thus, Susie's concerns are not just for things she may want or need, but also missing out.

Tamara described checking behaviour related to fear rather than anxiety: *"I was frightened that I'd lose something … I'd wanted to keep forever or I'd always wanted to keep or, [Yeah] I don't know I just had to check"* (lines 1406-1409) Needing to check things before they can be discarded means more time must be spent managing the contents. Notably some participants described discarding things they wished they had not, or getting rid of too much, decisions which could contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression and concerns around discarding things they may later need or want. Tamara described how *"I have lost something of value, you don't forget about it"* (lines 1399-1400). The loss of something valued, although she did not specify what this was, appeared to motivate Tamara to check things so that she did not incur further loss.

Emma's connection to possessions resulted in anxiety which made her unable to discard them: *"I know … it is only stuff … but I've ended up connecting in the way, and I can't just go and get rid of it, it causes such anxiety"* (lines 117-120). Although rationally Emma thought of her possessions as *"only stuff"*, her connection to them made discarding extremely difficult. Emma compared her attachment to her possessions to the way others might attach to a partner or children: *"it'd be like telling that person, well you just get rid of your relationship, [Yeah] or your kids, [Yeah] they wouldn't be prepared to do that"* (lines 114-116).

Other participants described specific sources of anxiety around hoarding. Walter described how social anxiety made selling things difficult: *"a certain fear in me, of … things involving people coming to my flat … or, financial transactions where there's, there's a possible ( ) want to complain or something"* (lines 1454-1455). For Yvonne a kind of separation and attachment anxiety ran in her family which led to the desire to hold onto possessions. She described having experienced *"a lot of early losses"* (2, line 1052) during her childhood and losses as part of her family history which related to holding onto possessions and identity. Although not directly about hoarding, these sources of anxiety affect Walter and Yvonne in that the former was unable to sell things which took up space in his home, and Yvonne could hold onto things which otherwise could be discarded, both adding to the amount which must be managed. The link between possessions and attachment also potentially places a further emotional and cognitive load on the person who is trying to manage such emotion-laden possessions.

Depression was a factor for a small number of participants. For Emma and Antony, depression affected their ability to manage possessions: *"the depression part will then, I get behind and it just gets overwhelming, I can't keep on top of keeping things tidy and [Yeah] organised"* (Emma, lines 648-650). For Antony periods of depression meant that *"I find it really hard to do stuff so gradually stuff would build up into piles or [Yeah] or mounds"* (1, lines 551-553). Emma described herself as

having difficulties with acquiring and discarding, but also described experiencing *"a traumatic trigger that then meant I sank into depression, couldn't cope with stuff, and it got overwhelming, and yes I, erm, started messing up my systems and (things)"* (lines 261-264). Although Emma thought she always had the potential to hoard, experiencing depression as a result of trauma was part of a decline into overwhelming hoarding behaviour, without which she may have been able to manage her hoarding tendencies and possessions.

4.2. ii. b. Physical health

For some participants, physical health had an impact on their ability to manage their possessions, affecting decision-making and energy levels. Yvonne's difficulties with paperwork were partly due to the impact of migraines on her ability to read and take in information:

> "the pile up … has been very much about, can I trust my own head? *[Yeah]* Have I read it through, have I understood it? *[Mmm]* What do I need to do with this now? … when I had migraine I couldn't … really read anything … it feels like I missed a lot of reading, *[Mmm]* because I was fearful of it, and I wouldn't move towards reading, *[Yeah]* which is why now thinking about it, that's why it's paper isn't it?" (1, lines 917-926)

A further decline in Yvonne's health meant she was unable to implement strategies she could previously have done, at least without help from others: *"stupidly I should have done this a long time ago, and now my health is also playing a big part in this"* (2, lines 855-857). Her inability to carry things meant that even being able to look at and make decisions about possessions was hindered, as it required the help of someone else to set it up for her. Although she acknowledges a feeling that she should have dealt with her possessions before, her declining health makes the tasks involved in managing more onerous.

The exhausting nature of sorting had an impact on Yvonne's energy levels, meaning this could be forestalled and unfinished: *"because of the energy and the exhaustion … I'd have to then leave it for, days and days and days, [Mmm] before I can do the next bit"* (2, lines 840-842). Thus, health had a twofold impact on Yvonne's ability to manage her possessions, first from migraines making decisions difficult, and her currently declining health meaning that she lacked the capacity to carry boxes of possessions and manage them independently of others' help.

Tara and Walter talked about the impact of a lack of physical energy on their ability to manage their possessions. Tara's experience of cancer meant she lacked the energy to *"sort things out"* (lines 70-

71). She pinpointed this as a time when it *"was pretty much getting on top of me … it got to the stage where I really thought this is very difficult to have anybody into the house"* (lines 72-74). Being unable to allow people into her house during this time had serious implications as she was receiving care from a district nurse: *"there was like barely a space for her to put her equipment down and things like that [Mmm] and I d-I did start thinking, oh dear this is getting bad"* (lines 78-80). Walter experienced a lack of energy later diagnosed as a thyroid condition which he believed went undiagnosed for around a decade. The impact of experiencing *"chronically low energy for years"* (line 179) was a loss of motivation:

> "you want things to be easy, you don't want to, do physical work, *[Yeah]* so … you don't do the same work of tidying things away or finding a place for them or … increasing the amount of space available by, *[Mmm]* being neater so … things just get left in places" (Walter, lines 180-187)

Walter also described how his low level of energy also meant he stopped discarding things *"properly"* (line 651) and recycling. Both Tara and Walter saw a deterioration in their ability to manage their possession in several ways. Walter was unable to manage the contents of his home, to find homes for things, and to discard things in his preferred way (recycling). Tara's experience of ill health appears to have been something of a turning point, where a lack of space for medical equipment allowed her to see how bad her hoarding had become. Although experiencing ill health affected decision-making, managing the contents and discarding, such effects could potentially give insight into hoarding severity and provide a catalyst for change.

4.2. iii. Discussion

Key aspects of managing life for participants were the importance of life transitions and health problems, both mental and physical. Although some life circumstances have been considered (for example traumatic and stressful life events, e.g. Landau et al., 2011; Shaw et al., 2016), very little research has focused on the impact of life transitions. Thus, the role of life transitions and circumstances adds detail about how changes in life circumstances such as moving to a new home or starting and finishing university can impact upon hoarding behaviours. The latter appears not to have been previously investigated. Increased hoarding at university may be due to the lack of influence of parents, the impact of being responsible for one's own space, and could also intersect with other life experiences and stressors during university. Thus, it may be important to consider hoarding as a mental health vulnerability for students, particularly those who have pre-existing hoarding tendencies. One existing study, using Straussian GTM, suggested "a dynamic, synergistic interaction that occurs between HB [hoarding behaviours] and growing older" (Eckfield and

Wallhagen, 2013, p. 481), including some of the issues discussed by participants in this study, for example changes in household composition such as when partners move out (or in the case of the participants in the Eckfield and Wallhagen (2013) study, when partners or spouses die). Results from the present study on life transitions suggest not just an effect of life experiences and transitions on growing older with hoarding, but their effect on living with hoarding behaviours more generally. The impact of events such as changes in household composition and becoming settled in one place also add detail to findings such as those from Landau et al. (2011) in which these were associated with hoarding. Of the participants in Landau et al.'s study who attributed worsening of their hoarding (to clinically significant levels) to an environmental trigger, the majority (31.8%) linked this to such neutral life circumstances. Results from the present study give detail to the semi-structured interview findings of Landau et al. (2011) by exploring in depth how these life circumstances may interact with hoarding behaviours, for example by increasing the amount of space available and thus the ability to hoard, and in the effects of living alone such as lacking another person to help to manage possessions or provide social activities which act as an alternative to shopping.

Health issues in the present study included the impact of pain on cognitive processing, and physical mobility and energy which could prevent managing possessions. Previous studies have mostly considered health in terms of rates of comorbid health conditions (e.g. Frost, Steketee, et al., 2011; Spittlehouse et al., 2016). These are important to consider when looking at risk factors, for example indecision has been implicated in hoarding but could also be related to depression, so could be a transdiagnostic feature of both conditions. However, what is somewhat lacking in existing research is detail on *how* health conditions, both physical and mental, interact with hoarding behaviours. Thus, the experiences of Yvonne, Tara, Walter, Antony and Emma give insight into where health issues may have the most significant impact for those who hoard, and how specific health issues may affect hoarding. They also support a small qualitative literature base which considers the impact of health in a more nuanced way.

Health considerations were one physical constraint described by participants in a study by Orr et al. (2019), including lack of energy and a lack of mobility. Declining mobility could contribute to clutter by preventing participants from using high cupboards, and a lack of energy made days feel compressed so that there was a perceived lack of time to deal with things (Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013). Unlike participants in the previous studies, Tara's experience in this study demonstrated how the indirect effect of hoarding on her health, in preventing others from being able to access her home safely to care for her, provided a catalyst for change. Additionally, although physical constraints were a small part of the impact on hoarding for participants in a previous study (Orr et al., 2019), Yvonne linked a large amount of her hoarding behaviour to her experience of migraine.

The impact of pain on cognitive functioning and thus hoarding behaviour has not yet been explored in any studies to date of which I am aware. Findings from this study also extend those of Eckfield and Wallhagen (2013) whose results considered an older age group, suggesting that although worsening health issues have an impact on older participants, health can also play a part in hoarding behaviours in a wider age group. It may thus be important when considering comorbid factors in hoarding and treating those who hoard, to consider specifically the impact of decreased mobility, decreased energy levels, and physical pain.

Mental health issues in this study primarily included anxiety and depression. Participants' experiences with anxiety and depression herein reveal some useful insights about the role of both in hoarding, which have previously been questioned (Frost, Steketee, et al., 2011). Decision-making and discarding could be sources of anxiety, consistent with previous research and observation (e.g. Grisham & Barlow, 2005), and other aspects of anxiety were described. Attachment anxiety and social anxiety related indirectly to hoarding for Yvonne and Walter, and Antony described how hoarding behaviours could both provoke and soothe anxiety. Both generalised anxiety disorder and social anxiety have been found to be comorbid with hoarding (Frost, Steketee, et al., 2011). Experiences of depression meant that Antony and Emma struggled to keep on top of managing their possessions and contributed to worsening hoarding. Such experiences contribute to our understanding of how anxiety and depression could contribute to hoarding by driving acquiring behaviours, decreasing motivation and energy to tackle clutter, and preventing discarding. Such observations give some answers to questions posed by Frost, Steketee, et al. about whether depression and anxiety cause hoarding or precede from it. Detailed descriptions such as Antony's feedback loop of anxiety and Emma's account of how her hoarding *"spiralled out of control"* (lines 1769-1770) as a result of depression and trauma give further understanding from hoarders' own perspectives of how comorbid conditions may result in and worsen hoarding behaviours. It is possible then that experiences of anxiety, depression and trauma can act as a kind of vicious circle with hoarding behaviour. An aspect of this phenomenon is described in the concept of *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"* (Chapter Five section 5.2).

4.3. Conclusions

This chapter has outlined two key categories in this grounded theory of hoarding behaviour, *Managing possessions* and *Managing life*. The former involves the process of putting like with like, making decisions about what will be kept and discarded, actual discarding, and finding a home for things which are kept. The process participants sometimes referred to as sorting appeared to be the more complex, as this involved making decisions which could be difficult, and tasks could go unfinished, contributing to clutter and difficulty managing. Difficulties in *Managing possessions*

involved *Doing the bare minimum* -- where possessions would be moved but this would contribute to clutter so was a short-term solution -- and *Finding a home for things*. Key issues with discarding were decision-making and the meaning of both discarding and possessions. Clear-cut decisions were easier to make, but ambiguity, for example around the potential usefulness of objects in the future, made decisions harder. The meaning of possessions, particularly related to loss, could also prevent discarding. Seeing objects as reminders of lost loved ones, part of one's self or past or part of history could prevent discarding, as could the meaning of possessions as fulfilling basic needs such as comfort. A particularly novel finding was the ability of possessions to reflect a form of love related to intimacy and daily life. Discarding was likened to loss, and a counterpoint to this was the idea of discarding as cathartic, a kind of positive loss, particularly when it involved closure or the ability to get rid of things in a preferred way. Participants' discarding preferences could have an impact on their ability to discard and potentially reflect aspects of identity. Some forms of discarding were meaningful, but others were disliked, with links to participants' values and meanings of possessions.

In terms of *Managing life*, *Life transitions* such as moving house or changes to the household composition could change hoarding behaviours. Moving house could sometimes act as a prompt for discarding but was not always acted upon. Changes to the household could mean that responsibility for *Managing possessions* fell solely to the individual, which could increase hoarding behaviours. Additionally, moving to or from university could also increase hoarding, possibly due to increased responsibility for and control over possessions. Finally, various mental and physical health concerns could have an impact on decision-making ability, energy levels, cognitive functioning, and level of motivation to tackle the hoard.

Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage, which follows, details the process whereby participants could become unable to manage their possessions.

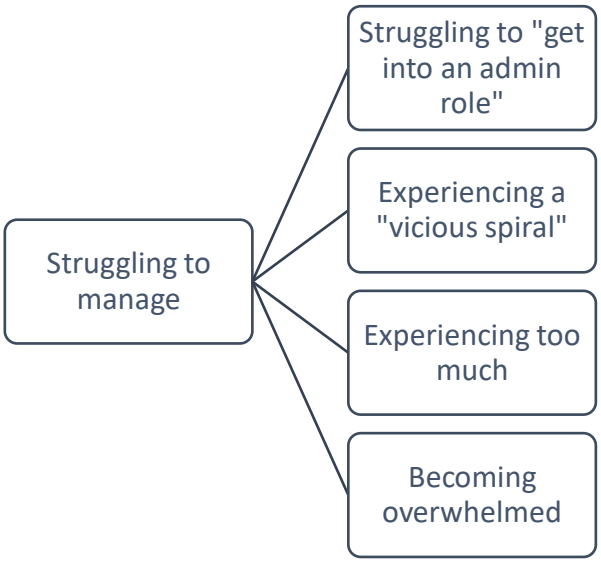
CHAPTER FIVE: STRUGGLING TO MANAGE

Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life outlined the ways in which participants tried to manage their possession, both those which were staying in the home (*Managing the contents*) and those which were going to be removed (*Managing discarding*). It also detailed difficulties with both, including *Doing the bare minimum* and *Finding a home for things*, and the impact of decision-making and loss on discarding behaviours. The meaning of both discarding and possessions was also considered in participants' discarding behaviour. Finally, the previous chapter considered the impact of managing various aspects of life on hoarding behaviour, including the impact of *Life transitions* such as going to or leaving university, and moving to a new home, as well as the impact of mental and physical health on hoarding.

This chapter details the ways in which participants struggled to manage their lives, their possessions, or both. As in Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life, hoarding behaviour was not just about physical possessions, but also about the various aspects of life context which had an influence on the participants. More emotional aspects will be considered first, including *Struggling to "get into an admin role"* and *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*. Finally, the process of *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed*, a more general consideration of the impact of life events and managing possessions, will be explicated. Figure 4 presents the subcategories of *Struggling to manage*.

Figure 4

Subcategories of Struggling to manage



5.1. Struggling to "get into an admin role"

This process was described by Yvonne and involved an inability to see the task of managing possessions as a practical one due to the strong emotions they can evoke. The struggle was both external and internal, involving difficulties in physically managing possessions and in moving through a kind of emotional journey to be able to put both possessions and their associated emotional experiences in order. Yvonne described how *"I can't get into an admin role"* (1, lines 462-463) as she was also unable to *"somehow separate the emotion from the piece of paper"* (1, line 449). The struggle to "get into an admin role" also illustrates a link between what is hoarded, the reasons for keeping them/their meaning, and the difficulties experienced when trying to manage them. For example, Dylan presents a contrast in his observation that he tended to value things more for utility than emotional reasons. Although there were things in which he invested emotional value, his focus on utility means that he – and those who similarly place a high value on this aspect – are unlikely to struggle in the ways described below. Their individual struggles are likely to manifest in other ways, for example in keeping items which may be useful in the future rather than discarding them.

Yvonne contrasted being able to think about having a file for medical-related papers with the experience she had when encountering such papers:

> "I'll get a hospital letter that reminds me of, all of the conditions that I've, you know that I've just been through and all, you know whatever … at that moment in time I've just got myself exhausted *[Mmm]* from reading something that is like, oh my god (how), you know I was really seriously ill" (1, lines 455-462)

Feelings of exhaustion and the emotional impact of recalling her illnesses meant that Yvonne was unable to do the practical task of managing her papers. Although she could identify practical steps to enable her to deal with her possessions, her emotional reaction to such possessions formed a significant barrier to achieving this. A further difficulty emerged with her description of being unable to separate (some) papers from their emotional impact, as all her papers appeared to have been jumbled together irrespective of their content. This then made the task of sorting papers generally difficult due to the possibility of finding one of the emotionally resonant papers described above, which would derail her progress.

Susie talked about the emotional impact of possessions belonging to her deceased parents and associated difficulty in dealing with them:

> "I can't get rid of any of their things, and, I need to keep them close but I also can't look at them or deal with them, or sort of, so I can't organise them in to something that's n-you know, neatly put away" (lines 685-686).

These highly meaningful possessions represented a set of objects which Susie could neither discard nor deal with, making organising and managing them impossible. Yvonne also described possessions belonging to her deceased parents which she couldn't *"even look at*" (1, line 310), to which she attributed being closely involved with her parents' deaths and palliative care, two potential links with trauma. Possessions may be triggers and reminders of events in one's life, or another thing to manage practically when one also needs to deal with and process the emotions involved with traumatic and difficult life events. The idea of things being *"neatly put away"* in Susie's extract suggested not only the physical act of storing possessions, but potentially a form of closure, where the emotions related to these objects could be processed and worked through. Thus, managing possessions with deep emotional significance may be a way of working through their associated emotions and experiences. Achieving a sense of closure through dealing with the objects was not (currently) possible for Susie or Yvonne.

Emma described how imbuing her possessions with emotions meant that interacting with them became a trigger for those emotions to return:

> "I put all my anger into creating the mess … I just couldn't touch the stuff because I just felt so angry … it represented my anger, … So it wasn't just physical stuff anymore, I'd put emotions into the physical stuff … touching it brought back the emotion *[Yeah]* and became very traumatic" (lines 216-232)

Like Yvonne, Emma's experience suggests that possessions can act as triggers for strong emotions. Neither can deal in a detached way with possessions due to strong emotions and traumatic experiences evoked. Just as they are unable to tidy, sort or organise their possessions, much less discard them, participants who had these experiences were also unable to deal with the emotions attached to these possessions.

Melba talked about the difference between sorting and organising in terms of an emotional process for one and a more rational process for the other. She also infers a temporal element in her description of a phase of hoarding:

> "I think sorting *[Mmm]* is sort of like erm, ((exhales)) it's very time-consuming, it's very draining, *[Mmm]* because it's, I think you're sort of, trying to process, make, you're still kind of I think you're very much you're in the moment, you're still in that sort of phase of

> hoarding, side of things, *[Mmm]* so I think actually you're ... still in contact I think very much emotionally with that ... when you're, erm, sorting[7] it's more of a rational side of things so you're more, I think your brain is more, it's more processing and it's organising, and it's not so much *[Mmm]* your emotional side in it … when you're sorting you're still in the element, you're still there, *[Mmm]* so you're still in that sort of emotional, er attachment side. *[Mmm]* Erm, that's what I would say there is (a mass-), *[Mmm]* there is a difference yeah" (lines 898-916)

For Melba above, sorting involved a close and emotional connection with possessions, contrasted against a more rational process of organising. Placing sorting in a specific hoarding phase suggested that the ability to organise and be more rational and less emotional with possessions may evolve with the passage of time. Thus, for Melba the struggle to "get into an admin role" may be strongest early on when trying to sort. Managing her possessions at certain times during her hoarding trajectory involved more emotional toll, which she found draining and time-consuming.

This section has considered the difficulty participants had in being able to manage their possessions due to their emotional impact. The emotional resonance of possessions and their relationship with events in the person's life meant that managing them in a more impersonal way was not possible. For some participants, an external struggle to complete the tasks involved in managing possessions appeared to go hand in hand with an internal struggle to process and organise the emotions and life experiences related to those possessions.

Struggling to "get into an admin role" considered the idea that there are things which are not being dealt with, both physically and emotionally. This has commonalities with a further aspect of struggling to manage: *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*, an emotional difficulty whereby hoarding is a form of coping to compensate for trauma and loss, but which then results in the very thing which the person is trying to cope with or compensate for.

5.2. Experiencing a "vicious spiral"

Emma first described the notion of a vicious spiral when discussing how her hoarding was a coping mechanism which then became a problem in and of itself. Having experienced mental health problems (depression and anxiety), trauma and previously undiagnosed autism, Emma used

[7] In the section of the interview from which this extract is drawn, Melba used the term "sorting" throughout, although the question asked was "And so if, to come back to the idea of sor-sorting or sorting out, would that be different to organising?" In order to clarify her meaning, I asked her whether her distinction was one of sorting as emotional and organising as rational, which she confirmed. Thus, this reference to sorting should be thought of as "organising".

possessions to gain pleasure and comfort and feel less lonely in her isolated state. She described the vicious spiral:

> "it's helping you manage what you thought you couldn't, *[Yeah]* whatever it was you weren't dealing with, but of course with these things they often then themselves become problems … they … can get out of hand to create that person then a, extra issue on top and it becomes a vicious sort of spiral" (lines 1963-1969)

Hoarding is thus a form of coping, albeit a potentially maladaptive one, which Emma alludes to when she describes how such coping mechanisms can become problematic. The vicious spiral implies not only a vicious circle, where things feed on each other and worsen, but the concept of downward progression, restriction and compression. In severe hoarding this is represented physically by the constriction of living space as possessions build up and in a symbolic way as the person's social world shrinks. The absence of social activities as friends and acquaintances cannot or do not visit and an absence of opportunities to do what the person wants to in their home can mean that the horizon of experience also compresses. For Emma social isolation meant that rather than a world spread over several spheres outside the home such as work, her possessions became her *"whole world"* (line 549).

Emma's experience of trauma led her to create a barrier and cocoon for herself in her home, and meant that she imbued her possessions with emotions, described in *Struggling to "get into an admin role".* Thus, touching her possessions or having others touch or move them in attempts to help her brought back those emotions. This is another way in which the vicious spiral may operate, by bringing back feelings of trauma so that the possessions themselves may come to represent pain. In the same way that Yvonne's paperwork came to represent reminders of the health problems she had experienced, Emma's possessions are a reminder of emotional pain and trauma.

For Melba, hoarding was *"trying to … cope with something that was so, traumatising for me"* (lines 1231-1232). She talked about her hoarding as a result of trauma, loss, abandonment and unresolved grief, all issues which had not been dealt with: *"I literally have had trauma after trauma, [Mmm] um, and that hasn't really been addressed"* (lines 325-327). For Melba, losing things meant that she was *"getting in contact with something very, very powerful emotionally within you … of your trauma"* (lines 601-603). Having such experiences of loss and trauma meant that potentially Melba was trying to compensate for an unmet need by hoarding: *"it's just something that I can hold onto because, you know it's stayed there, it was there present in me … around me"* (lines 1227-1229). In a life which she described as involving *"trauma, [Mmm] loss, abandonment, [Yeah], rejection"* (lines 187-188) possessions may thus represent stability and longevity, things which Melba can *"hold onto"* despite

having been abandoned. Her use of the phrase "*it's stayed there"* is potentially illuminating, especially in light of her life experiences. Like Tamara, Melba experienced a lack of nurturing from her mother, who later abandoned Melba and her sister, so that *"to this day I don't know if she's alive or dead"* (lines 296-297). Such loss of nurturing and abandonment can be forms of ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999) where a person is either psychologically present and physically absent, as when someone's whereabouts are unknown, or physically present but psychologically absent, as in the case of dementia or possibly mental illness. Melba appears to have experienced both forms of ambiguous loss, her mother being physically present but psychologically absent due to the lack of nurturing and care which Melba described experiencing. Her abandonment of the family also resulted in being psychologically present but physically absent. Something which *"stays there",* perhaps until a decision is made to discard it, represents not only something which cannot and will not abandon the person, but over which the person may also have control.

The vicious spiral related to loss thus refers to the impetus of some hoarding participants to respond to loss by hoarding. Participants who struggled with the impact of loss in being able to "get into an admin role" talked about the difficulty involved in managing possessions related to lost loved ones. Susie, Yvonne, Melba, Antony, Tamara and others attributed at least some of their hoarding to loss, but the latter three participants also described how hoarding itself caused loss in their lives.

Although Antony speculated on several reasons for his hoarding, including experience of loss, he also described a fear of loss: *"I do wonder if, if it's just this, real … fear of loss, [Mmm] at the root of it, and wanting to hold onto everything you know"* (2, lines 177-179). Fearing loss results in the desire to hold onto *"everything",* with objects related to time being particularly valued for their ephemeral nature. The idea of loss was expressed several times, both explicitly and implicitly. Antony talked about how difficult he found it to resist picking up things with handwriting on, as they represented a moment and were *"unrecreateable"* (1, line 178). The idea of something which cannot be recreated suggests a unique and deep kind of loss, as does his description of things *"falling away"* (2, line 394).

Despite hoarding at least partly due to a fear of loss, Antony's descriptions of the multiple losses he experienced as a result of hoarding were particularly poignant.

> "I've not maybe lived the life I should and maybe my mother feels a little bit, erm, sad about the fact that I've been, kind of tied down by this and, um, obsessed by this hoard for years *[Mmm]* and not getting on and living my life. *[Yeah]* You know, I've not settled down and had a family and things like that … missed opportunities where I've gone, you know I've kind of chosen my hoard over, moving on and living my life. *[Mmm]* I've kinda been stuck and tied

> down to things … a lot of my life has been focused about making sure I've got this one house kept safe and orderly." (1, lines 2067-2079)

Antony also described a long-distance relationship, which when it ended resulted in him reflecting on whether his situation with his hoard had contributed to the breakup. As expressed above, he also lost the possibility of other relationships and the ability to settle down and start a family, as his attention was focused on his hoard. Maintaining the hoard and trying to manage his possessions meant that other aspects of life passed him by. Antony's mention of how his mother might be saddened by the impact of his hoarding also underscores the impact of hoarding not only on the individual, but on their loved ones as well. The impact of living in a hoarded home has been previously documented (e.g. Wilbram et al., 2008; Sampson, 2013), and Antony's description of his mother's sadness suggests influences beyond living in the home of a hoarder.

In his second interview Antony talked about loss and the futility of trying to deal with a hoard he was struggling to manage without really knowing how to: *"'cos I suddenly realised, I suddenly started to feel like, I was losing a lot of stuff from life because of the hoarding, I was kind of cut out of life a lot"* (2, lines 349-352). Being *"cut out"* of life suggested a feeling of isolation from everything other than the hoard, similar to Emma's observation that her *"whole world"* (line 549) had reduced to her home and possessions. Antony described how he spent so much time trying to tidy his hoard that it *"became like a full-time job really, I felt like I was always tidying, I couldn't understand, why, things weren't getting tidy"* (2, lines 355-357). The amount of time spent tidying a huge volume of objects without really getting anywhere also suggested a loss of time to do anything else. Not only had Antony's hoarding left him (presently) unable to have achieved certain life goals such as having children, and the breakdown of a relationship, he also lost a sense of identity when he started trying to overcome his hoarding. This is described further in Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding.

Tamara also experienced several losses in her life, firstly two beloved childhood toys, which she described as a trigger for her hoarding. While Tamara watched, her mother put her toy panda and teddy bear in the bin, telling the young Tamara that she was *"too old for them … and … I'd outgrown them … I just think that's cruel"* (lines 1055-1057). Although Tamara retrieved the toys, her mother would not let her keep them:

> "she put them back in and forced me to leave them alone, and I couldn't, oh, *[Yeah]* I was … absolutely distraught. So I think if anything has to be the trigger, I think my father's death compounded it, *[Yeah]* but I think the trigger is probably throwing away *[Mmm]* that teddy and that panda. *[Yeah]* … they were my friends, and they were in the bin" (lines 1062-1069)

Although her father's death undoubtedly had an impact on Tamara, she suggested that the trigger for her hoarding was the experience of losing these two toys. It is not just the loss that appears to have been traumatic, but the surrounding experience of seeing her *"friends … in the bin"* and being forced to leave them there rather than retrieve them as she wanted to do. Tamara's description of the *"cruel"* actions of her mother and her subsequent emotional reaction as *"absolutely distraught"* underscored how traumatic this experience seemed to have been for her.

The loss of Tamara's father also represented the loss of comfort and nurturing: *"I can't remember her hugging me, [Mmm] or any kind of comforting gesture. [Mmm] My dad did, [Yeah] and then of course when he died, [Mmm] that had gone"* (lines 1080-1083). Thus, losing her father meant not only contending with the loss of a parent at a young age, but also dealing with the loss of comfort, nurturing and affectionate physical contact which a loving parent can provide. Tamara suggested that her mother's lack of affection and being unable to *"run to her with any problems"* (lines 1716-1717) might be why she felt she *"needed these soft toys and animal-wanted these animals*" (lines 1717-1718). Despite hoarding due to loss and to perpetuate the memory of her father, a keen collector, Tamara ended up losing a great deal as a result of her hoarding, particularly having her children removed from the home. She described her life as having been *"dominated"* (line 1169) by hoarding, having a *"fairly abnormal existence"* (line 1153), and expressed a wish to *"have more of a life …. than I had before"* (line 1168). The use of the words *"existence"* and *"life"* suggest that Tamara may not have been living in the fullest sense of the word, but she aspired to.

Melba agreed with the idea that her hoarding might be due to experiences of loss and trauma, and poignantly described her hoarding as related to such loss: *"when you've lost everything, [Mmm] it's erm, trying to hold, it's just trying to hold onto something"* (lines 590-591). Melba does not just suggest one loss, but a loss of *"everything".* Elsewhere in her interview she described several deeply traumatic experiences and losses in her life. Moving to another country during childhood resulted in feelings of alienation and confusion, she lost her father, and lost part of her childhood and adolescence as she ended up caring for her mother who suffered severe mental health issues.

Melba also realised what she had lost as a result of her hoarding:

> "oh I think I'm aware of so much, of the loss of things … my time … money … my, life, *[Mmm]* that I just think, you know, I … have to question that *[Yeah]* and say is it worth that. *[Mmm]* So, it's, I think the loss has made me aware now of my behaviour. *[Mmm]* Erm, and what the damage is" (lines 1064-1069)

The loss of Melba's *"life"* seems to underscore the ways in which hoarding can impact so many things. Antony described how his hoard had *"blighted"* (1, line 655) his life, and Tamara described wanting a life which was not *"dominated"* (line 1169) by her hoard. Realising this loss for Melba appeared to prompt reflection on whether her hoarding was really worth it, perhaps whether it was fulfilling its intended function of helping her cope when its impact on her life was more loss. Her use of the word *"damage"* also emphasised the potentially destructive vicious spiral, where the descent into further hoarding behaviour becomes a source of pain and loss rather than an attempt to cope with them. Melba's realisation and subsequent change in behaviour represented a way in which participants who hoarded could begin to climb out of the vicious spiral and begin new ways of life.

This section has detailed the concept of the vicious spiral, which represented ways in which hoarding behaviour could develop as a result of trauma and loss but cause further trauma and losses in a person's life. Realisation of these losses as a result of hoarding could, for some, be a catalyst for the desire and attempt to overcome hoarding behaviours and find new ways of living.

The next section considers a further aspect of the struggle to manage, that of *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed*. This details a process whereby several factors in managing both life and possessions presented challenges to participants and in some cases resulted in them becoming so overwhelmed by possessions and/or life that their ability to manage broke down.

5.3. Experiencing too much and Becoming overwhelmed

This aspect of the struggle to manage concerns the ways in which aspects of life context and participants' responses to them can result in *Becoming overwhelmed*. *Experiencing too much* concerns the impact of participants taking on too much in their lives and experiencing multiple life events simultaneously.

5.3. i. Experiencing too much

In Chapter Four, the impact of life transitions on participants' hoarding behaviours and ability to manage possessions was outlined. Though they are life transitions, they represent individual circumstances. This section, *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed*, includes situations where several life experiences in concert can affect participants. They described either taking on too much in terms of responsibilities, tasks and work, or finding themselves dealing with too much in their lives. At worst this meant the ability to deal effectively with both possessions and the demands of life broke down. Antony also described taking on too much in the way he approached managing his possessions.

Ava described how having too much happening at the same time, taking on multiple projects, had an impact on her hoarding behaviour. Such events left her with less time, energy and mental space to manage possessions. In her suggestion of various solutions to this problem, Ava proposed that *"I ought to do less"* (2, line 532), and *"constrict the time that I spend doing, to better compartmentalise my time"* (2, lines 535-536). In the idea of being able to constrict her time Ava hinted that she may spend too much time on things, echoed by other participants when they talked about how they managed their possessions.

Yvonne took on a lot of projects related to her various interests and passions, consequently processing the related information and making decisions about what to keep became too onerous. She described ending up with a lot of administration – reading, sorting emails and post – as a result of these various interests, activities and passions. The volume of information became unwieldy, meaning Yvonne could not make decisions about the items or process the information in a satisfactory way. She described how she would skim read some post, but then *"think, (no) I wanna read that properly later … then later never comes"* (2, lines 140-141). Making an immediate decision was not possible, and if she could not read something *"properly"* at the time, she would put it aside so that she did not do it an *"injustice"* (2, line 150) by not reading it fully. Although Yvonne planned to read things properly later, she acknowledged that *"later never comes"*, a sentiment also expressed by other participants.

Walter described a similar feeling of having too much to deal with in the number of responsibilities he took on, feeling *"rushed off my feet with everything I have to do*" (lines 1413-1415). Some were things he did because he found value in them although they took time out of his day and others were related to *"voluntary or community organisations and groups"* (lines 1421-1422) which also required time and commitment. Much like Yvonne he had many interests and activities which he enjoyed being involved in and which took priority over tidying and managing possessions. Balancing competing priorities in terms of managing life, living life in the participant's preferred way, and managing possessions, was an issue for Yvonne, Walter and Dylan. When preferred activities took precedence over managing the contents and discarding, the balance could be tipped towards being unable to manage.

For some participants several life events occurring at the same time had an impact on their ability to manage their possessions, as Rose described when asked whether her experience affected her hoarding behaviour:

> "yes 'cos things just weren't getting dealt with [*Mmm*]. And … my father in law fell … which was awful … and died about eighteen months later … so much going on) … the last two years have been awful" (lines 586-593)

Rose's experience is discussed in more detail in section 5.3.ii: Becoming overwhelmed, however the circumstances which led to her becoming overwhelmed were based around family issues. Her father's move out of his home meant that his possessions needed to be dealt with, thus there was very little scope for Rose to manage her own possessions. This plus other life events built up so that there was too much to manage. Yvonne also experienced several life events at the same time, all of which were significant and had an impact on her hoarding behaviour.

Jeff and Alan provided negative cases, as both described the need to keep their lives and possessions manageable. Alan attributed this to an ability to prioritise and work to deadlines rather than procrastinating, and an awareness of how severe hoarding situations could develop. Jeff talked about being able to manage his time so that he did not put himself under undue time pressure. The tendency not to put things off was something Alan described from a young age, suggesting a lifelong behaviour pattern. This tendency was motivated by a desire not to be "*burdened with the horror of, having too many things to deal with at a, at a time"* (2, lines 1079-1080), which underscores how undesirable Alan would find this situation. His motivation behind wanting to keep things manageable was the desire not to *"get into a state where, life becomes, difficult or, erm, unbearable because I've got too much stuff"* (2, lines 897-989) and an awareness of the need to keep things at a manageable level so his possessions would not impinge upon his life and cause distress. This he also attributed to seeing family members and friends with hoarding issues, also a concern for Ava and Susie, whose friends and relatives with severe hoarding problems made them want to manage their lives and possessions. The idea of life becoming difficult or unbearable due to too much stuff – physical possessions or life experiences and events – expressed the difficulties some other participants had in their struggle to manage.

Jeff described how he organised working with a team of colleagues: *"for … three days of working, you know one at a time … I spread them two or three days"* (lines 1147-1149). Parcelling out his time and ensuring that he had enough time to work meant that he did not *"squeeze myself each minute"* (line 1148) and allowed him *"some space … to do my personal things"* (lines 1149-1150). Although not specifically related to managing possessions, Jeff's ability to achieve a work-life balance and carve out time for himself acts as a contrast to taking on too much. This ability to balance his time and awareness of the need not to put excessive time pressure on himself may go some way to explaining why Jeff found it easier than other participants to manage possessions and life.

This section considers the impact of life context and its effect on hoarding behaviours in terms of situations where too much happens at once. For some participants their own tendencies to take on too much or to have many interests, activities and jobs concurrently meant that they could not manage both their lives and their possessions. For others life events which all happened at once took up so much time and energy that there was none left for them to manage possessions. Jeff and Alan presented negative cases where their ability to manage their lives and time potentially allowed them to forestall the development of hoarding behaviours or feelings of having taken on too much.

5.3. ii. Becoming overwhelmed

Part of the struggle to manage involved experiencing and trying to deal with feeling overwhelmed. Managing life could become overwhelming, both in terms of specific and potentially life-changing events such as the loss of a parent, and in the activities of daily life encroaching upon the ability to manage possessions. Possessions themselves could be overwhelming for several reasons: large amounts, the muddled and jumbled nature of some possessions, and the strategies used to manage them. For some participants life events *and* managing possessions interacted and became overwhelming.

For Antony and Yvonne, losing a parent was an overwhelming life experience. Antony described the *"overload"* (2, line 2151) of his father dying and *"suddenly sort of bringing in his, his, some of his hoarded stuff"* (2, lines 2152-2153) as a situation which affected his hoarding behaviour. Losing his father triggered a desire to hold onto things and produced a feeling of becoming overwhelmed with both possessions and the impact of his father's death. Notably Antony described how although his father's death worsened his hoarding, it did so *"I think to the, to the extent when it was just, too much of a problem, so, it probably helped me stop hoarding"* (lines 2154-2156). Thus, it appeared that Antony was also overwhelmed by his hoarding behaviour in the aftermath of his father's death, which potentially provided a catalyst for change.

Yvonne's description of her father dying suggests the overwhelming nature of trying to manage possessions in the face of such loss:

> "my dad passing away, there was a lot of, *[Mmm]* erm, I think, you know when you get full up emotionally? *[Yeah]* So it, it's overwhelming I can't then look at anything else. *[Mmm]* So I'll put things aside 'cos I can't manage anything else in my head that day, whether it's good, bad or indifferent" (2, lines 188-193)

In describing becoming *"full up emotionally"* Yvonne suggested a lack of emotional resources to deal with anything else, thus putting things to one side because she had no headspace left. It is as if the emotional and personal 'space' inside one's self becomes overwhelmingly full in the same way that physical space can become overwhelmingly full of hoarded possessions. Putting possessions aside to deal with later may be a feasible strategy with few things, or if the individual is able to return to the task. However, putting off too much for too long may mean that the hoard becomes not only unwieldy, as Antony's did, but may represent obligation and inability to cope, described by Susie later in this chapter. Both circumstances could themselves contribute to difficulty managing in a practical way and in a personal way as the hoard begins to represent the person's perceived failure to manage.

The impact of managing several different spheres of life, including home and work, could also result in becoming overwhelmed. For Yvonne it was not just the emotional impact of her father's death which made life feel overwhelming and impacted on her hoarding behaviours, but also her working life:

> "where I work it's very, intensive … I'm full up all day with, not I, oh you know, and obviously I can manage it very well … But obviously that goes somewhere, and when I get home the last thing I wanna do is to then, start looking at stuff that is, directly my emotional stuff. *[Yeah]* Start filing it or thinking of ways of managing it" (1, lines 464-472)

The impact of day to day life affected Yvonne's hoarding behaviours as there was very little emotional and mental space for her to be able to manage her possessions. Having an intense job meant that although Yvonne could function at work, upon returning home she had to contend with the impact of keeping herself together during stressful workdays. The phrase *"that goes somewhere"* suggests that the impact of such intense work stayed with her when she left the office, leaving her with little energy for her possessions.

Daniel described how *"managing stuff, managing life as you say … is something I find … quite difficult"* (2, lines 1064-1065). Life circumstances at the time of his second interview were particularly difficult: *"work is, is really busy, there's loads of stuff going on, the job is extremely complex. Erm, and the home situation doesn't help"* (2, lines 1067-1069). This contributed to Daniel feeling *"kind of overwhelmed by it all"* (2, lines 1070-1071) to the point where he questioned how he would get through it. A complex job and home situation meant that managing life, which could be difficult anyway, was even more challenging. Stress at work also caused Daniel to focus on managing stress levels, leaving him little time to manage his possessions.

Rose described how life events could become overwhelming and affect hoarding behaviours. Due to her father moving into sheltered accommodation, Rose was unable to deal with her own things as they took a backseat to more pressing issues. She described feeling "*absolutely exhausted … that was absolutely overwhelming"* (lines 580-583) as she needed to clear her father's home in a short space of time, and travel to do so. Thus, Rose had very little left to give to her own situation. Yvonne also described a similar feeling, that in being overwhelmed by life circumstances she had reached and exceeded her capacity to manage. In Yvonne's case this involved reaching a kind of breaking point where *"something had to give"* (1, lines 1319), this something being the ability to manage paperwork.

Just as life events could result in feeling overwhelmed, possessions themselves and the task of managing them could become overwhelming. Emma described how her hoarding resulted in overwhelming amounts of possessions. Collecting behaviours got *"out of hand"* as she acquired new things while also being unable to get rid of anything, meaning that the space she had was filled: *"you've only got limited space that you live in, it's going to rack up"* (lines 145-146). Other participants talked about things getting *"out of hand"* (Tara, line 456) or *"out of control"* (Antony 1, line 1545), suggesting a point at which things become unmanageable. Emma experienced this when she acquired more than she discarded. Although Emma described limited space, it is not solely a lack of space which would prevent her from hoarding. However, the point at which living space becomes overwhelmed could be thought of as one tipping point when hoarding behaviour becomes hoarding disorder.

For Tara the mixed-up nature of possessions, after *Doing the bare minimum*, caused her to become overwhelmed:

> "knowing they were all mixed up in all these bags and it'd all need sorting through, it was like, *[Mmm]* it was almost like it was too much to even think about and, and start. So I'd open (a) carrier bag, look inside it and think oh I (don't), this is too tiring, this is too difficult, and I'd just sort of ((laughing)) shut the bag again." (lines 532-535)

It is possible that Tara became overwhelmed by the task because there was no logical starting point. Her observations are reminiscent of Yvonne's description of the exhaustion she felt when trying to manage her possessions. For Tara though it was not necessarily exhaustion about what she had already done, but *potential* exhaustion, as if she anticipated that sorting would be such a Herculean task that she could not bring herself to do it. When asked about whether the muddled-up bags were what made things difficult, Tara said:

> "there'd be like, bits that have come off things, *[Yeah]* and, like not been put back together with where it had come from in the first place. *[Mmm]* And it'd be almost like the mental torture of trying to remember, and looking at something and thinking, I know this is a part of something but I can't remember what it comes off, and if I throw it away then, I'm going to need it and then think oh yeah that's what I've just binned." (lines 566-573)

The disorganised nature of things which were not in a home or categorised meant that trying to remember where things came from was *"mental torture",* a strong phrase indicative of the painful and potentially prolonged nature of the process of trying to think and make decisions about possessions. Her concern about throwing things away also suggested that it was not only the difficulty of thinking and making decisions, but the possibility that her decision might later be regretted. Tara also described how experiencing stress about money or work resulted in *"brain freeze"* (line 916) where thinking was just too difficult, thus she would put things to one side. Thinking was not just a torturous process, but one which could also feel suspended entirely under stress, so overwhelming that Tara could not cope and mentally shut down.

Antony's attempts to manage his possessions also appeared to contribute to him feeling overwhelmed:

> "I want to order things too much … I would get like obsessive about the detail, if I was gonna order things, I'd end up trying to order them, five or six different ways and with so much detail and, you know by author and then time period and things like that if say if it was books and things. It'd just get out of hand again" (2, lines 1958-1962)

Antony's behaviour with possessions in his home could be *too* ordered, trying to do things in too much detail and ending up with an unwieldy system. He gave another example of this with stones: *"I'd lay them out … into size, colour, category, things like that*" (2, lines 2002-2003). However, as *"invariably it went too far again"* (2, line 2003) he could not complete the task. Such half-finished tasks contributed to feelings of overwhelm and to avoidance of managing possessions in some participants. Things *"invariably"* going too far suggested a kind of inevitability and having done this *"again"* suggested it was not a one-off occurrence but part of a repeated pattern. It appeared that Antony started out with a system, but the details became so intricate that the system spiralled out of control and became overwhelming, much like possessions can become overwhelming as the hoard grows.

Jeff cited moving to a new home as *"the most overwhelmed thing that I ever felt"* (line 994) with possessions. While seeing everything one owned could be a prompt for *Managing possessions* as it encouraged reflection on what was owned and whether it was wanted, Jeff found his possessions

overwhelming. He described himself as *"a bit shocked at the total amount of thing that I have"* (lines 996-997). One thing he noted was a TV which he did not watch. As it was not being used, and the license fee determined to be a waste of money – a key issue for Jeff as holding onto money constituted one of his core self-identified hoarding behaviours – he discarded this. A difference in one's threshold for feeling overwhelmed by possessions might explain why some people are more able to manage possessions than others. Those who are easily overwhelmed by a smaller amount of cluttered possessions may be more likely to discard what they perceive as the excess, whereas those who can more easily tolerate a larger volume of possessions could struggle with discarding.

However, it was not just the impact of managing life or managing possessions alone which could result in feeling overwhelmed. At times life circumstances *and* problems with possessions and their management could intersect. Susie clearly articulated the interaction between life events and a hoard for her, how the latter could be overwhelming due to what it said about the person's life and (perceived) coping abilities:

> "hoarding is more like, it's negative … a heavy weight, it, it reflects something bad on you … evidence that you can't deal with something or, or, or it's this kind of thing hanging over you, or even if it's something that you care about its this, obligation … it kind of remains intact as this kind of undigested chunk of, something you, you need to keep or something you need to do … almost like a sort of holding area *[((interviewer coughs))]* for things you can't deal with in your life" (lines 966-979)

Hoarding – as opposed to collecting – was experienced as an obligation and something that could not be managed psychologically and practically. This echoed the struggle to "get into an admin role", both externally with possessions and managing them, and internally with what they represented. Susie went on to describe hoarding as something which could *"become huge and kind of, overwhelm you and then become another thing that you can't ((participant laughing)) deal with in your life"* (lines 980-982). Here she nods to the vicious spiral, where the hoard became out of control due to loss or trauma. Hoarding as an obligation and a heavy weight hanging over a person suggested not only a physical sense of weight and compression, but a kind of emotional compression as things were not being dealt with.

For some participants the interaction between life events and possessions was conceptualised as a kind of diathesis-stress model, where existing hoarding tendencies – previously under control – interacted with life experience to produce overwhelming situations. Emma highlighted such a situation: *"What I reckon is that the trait's always there, but something triggered it to go out of control, [Yeah] if that makes sense?"* (lines 162-164). She considered herself to be *"highly organised,*

in fact even the chaos is highly organised" (lines 155-156), a contrast with the perception that *"hoarders can't organise"* (lines 155). Emma talked about how before she had become *"unwell with mental health problems"* (lines 157-158) her home was *"pristine …. everything was in its place and everything was neatly packed away"* (lines 160-161). Emma thus suggested that she was able to manage her possessions until life events triggered something which spiralled out of control. For her this was the experience of mental health problems caused by trauma which then meant she *"couldn't cope with stuff, and it got overwhelming, and yes I, erm, started messing up my systems"* (lines 262-264). Managing life and Managing possessions intersected as Emma managed her hoarding tendencies until life events and mental health struggles prevented this.

Yvonne described how the task of sorting could be affected by her health and the practicalities of everyday living to produce an overwhelming situation. She would sort things into piles but find that the number of piles of items left her *"depleted in trying to sort"* (2, line 831), which then required repeated rounds of sorting, with piles of items in various rooms in different stages of having been sorted. Her health meant she was unable to walk from room to room to consolidate these piles, and she could not *"find a way in which, I can finish that exercise in one place and then pick it up in another"* (2, lines 837-838). Much like Antony's half-finished tasks, partially sorted piles of items in different rooms contributed to a feeling that managing possessions was overwhelming. The amount of energy Yvonne needed to expend on sorting, *"and the exhaustion it causes"* (2, line 840) posed an additional difficulty, as she would have to then wait for several days before she could begin again. Not only did Yvonne feel exhausted from the emotional impact of dealing with possessions and the demands of life and health, the very task of sorting left her *"depleted"*. She appeared to be engaged in a process of never getting things resolved, never being able to pick up the process again. Sorting is thus an overwhelming task which needs to be stopped and started again, akin to Rose's description of how possessions felt overwhelming when managing them involved fits and starts of activity.

Everyday living could also impinge upon Yvonne's ability to sort things in progress as she described how events in her home meant that the piles of partially sorted items needed to be moved and could be forgotten about. Although life-changing events had an impact on hoarding, life did not have to present traumatic and life-changing challenges. The mundanities of life could also prevent managing possessions, as with Walter and Dylan when moving, the need to deal with the practicalities of being in a new home. For Yvonne another aspect of difficulty appears to be everyday life in a home, and the need for living spaces to be used in various ways. She needed a designated space like a room or a corner of a room in which to deal with her possessions, where they could stay until they were definitively dealt with.

This section has considered the various ways in which managing life, managing possessions, and the impact of both possessions and life experience, can result in participants becoming overwhelmed. Becoming overwhelmed by life could include serious events such as losing a parent, the difficulty in managing several different spheres of life, and the influence of multiple life events resulting in a kind of breaking point where the ability to cope with possessions and life breaks down. The volume of possessions could be overwhelming, as could the way in which participants dealt with them. Activities such as *Doing the bare minimum* (Chapter Four, section 4.1.i.a), which left possessions muddled and disorganised, and applying over-complicated organising systems could result in possessions being unmanageable and overwhelming. In terms of the interaction between life events and possessions, a hoard could represent a physical manifestation of the person's failure to manage their lives and hoarding tendencies could spin out of control due to the impact of life events. Daily life could also have an impact, meaning that events did not have to be severe and traumatic to interact with managing possessions and produce an overwhelming situation.

5.4. Discussion

Struggling to "get into an admin role" and *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"* detail the impact of emotional experiences on participants' hoarding behaviours. In particular, the emotions invoked by possessions could pose a struggle to manage them, and in the vicious spiral experiences of trauma and loss result in hoarding, which then results in further trauma and loss. Both bring together aspects of life experience and the meanings ascribed to these experiences and possessions. They thus reveal a more experiential and holistic understanding of hoarding behaviours than pure cognitive behavioural theories, which propose that hoarding behaviours arise through information processing difficulties, beliefs about possessions, and conditioned emotional responses which reinforce hoarding through positive and negative emotional states (Steketee & Frost, 2014a).

Hoarding has been suggested to be a maladaptive coping mechanism (e.g. Kyrios, 2014), however no studies to my knowledge have explicated the process by which this may occur from the individual's perspective. In this study some participants described how they hoarded as a result of loss and trauma, but experienced further traumas and losses as a result of their hoarding, thus giving such an explication of this process. Hoarding behaviour is associated with trauma and loss, for example the association between hoarding and having experienced a traumatic event (Cromer et al., 2007), a link between hoarding and the number of traumas experienced (Hartl et al., 2005) and attributing hoarding behaviour to experiences of loss (Taylor et al., 2019). Participants in the present study who described hoarding as a result of trauma imbued their objects with emotion, used objects as a source of protection and comfort, and for Melba her traumatic experiences included loss and abandonment which she tried to cope with by holding onto things. The desire to hold onto things as

a result of loss was described by several other participants. Tamara described how a loss of nurturing and comfort might have motivated her to want soft toys and animals, and Antony's fear of loss motivated his desire to hold onto and acquire items.

Hoarding as a result of trauma and loss may thus be a way to cope with powerful feelings and to be able to physically hold onto something when more ephemeral things have been lost. The physicality of possessions is again potentially relevant. In the absence of an ability to hold onto people, who can abandon the person who hoards, or to use interpersonal or other strategies to stand up to others, possessions become a kind of proxy which can be physically manipulated and meet unmet needs for love, connection, or empowerment. However, although these may be short term solutions, allowing a person to feel protected behind a barrier or cocoon of possessions, they nevertheless are not a long-term way to solve the problem.

Existing research and theorising suggest that hoarding can be a form of compensation and a comfort. O'Connor (2016) proposes two meanings of hoards which are relevant to the analysis in this chapter: the compensatory hoard and the fortress hoard. Using possessions as a form of coping and a compensation for loss and trauma can be likened to the compensatory hoard, which posits that the act of hoarding is "a way of dealing with psychic pain through providing a basic reassurance to oneself of one's capacity to hold onto things" (O'Connor, 2016, p. 67). While appearing somewhat like the idea of holding onto things after having lost significant aspects of life, the analysis in O'Connor's paper draws heavily from psychoanalysis and object relations theory. The compensatory hoard section is jargon-heavy and appears to be related to intrapsychic processes. Descriptions of hoarding as protection suggests the idea of the fortress hoard, where possessions are used as a kind of battlement to keep out those who might harm the person who hoards. *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"* thus extends suggestions about the meaning of hoards to include aspects of life context such as loss rather than considering the intrapsychic processes within the individual.

No extant studies of which I am aware have also described how attempts at maladaptive coping through hoarding can then result in the very thing which the person is trying to cope with or compensate for. Thus, the vicious spiral presents two novel findings which give further information on the role of trauma and loss in hoarding, and demonstrates how this can be harmful not only because it does not solve the original problem, but also by presenting an additional problem as the hoarding itself spirals out of control. Interpersonal and financial problems have been suggested as results of hoarding (Kyrios, 2014), and when HD is involved there are clear losses involved in the lack of space to move around and use active living spaces (DSM-5; APA, 2013). The evocative descriptions given by Antony and others of the losses they experienced as a result of hoarding help us to hear the

voices of hoarders and see the impact of such behaviours on their lives. Such descriptions also add to the small qualitative literature base on hoarding which previously identified the impact of hoarding on self, others, and the home environment (Kellett et al., 2010; Singh & Jones, 2012). Shame and fear over their hoarded homes prevented participants from being able to let others in, and the volume of clutter meant losing the ability to function in their home (Kellett et al., 2010; Singh & Jones, 2012). One participant in the study by Kellett et al. (2010) suggested a similar impact of their hoarding to that described by Antony and Melba: "I can't live a life there. I can't have a bath … use the toilet … I can't brush my teeth there … use the cooker" (p. 149). Although focused on the practical aspects which are lost in a severely hoarded home, the notion of not being able to "live a life there" in the Kellett et al. study also suggests a deeper impact which was powerfully explicated by participants in the present study. Thus, results related to the vicious spiral and loss extend observations made by others in qualitative studies that hoarding can have a dramatic and all-encompassing impact on life and wellbeing.

Emotion plays a key role in both *Struggling to "get into an admin role"* and *Experiencing a vicious spiral.* The cognitive behavioral model (e.g. Steketee & Frost, 2014a) contains several emotional aspects. However, the cognitive behavioural model has been criticised for its focus on emotions as drivers of behaviours (Taylor et al., 2018). More recent studies (e.g. Taylor et al., 2019; Postlethwaite et al., 2020) have given more consideration to the role of emotion and particularly emotion regulation in hoarding. Emotion regulation refers to the ability to respond to and manage one's emotions, including the ability to deal effectively with negative emotions and induce positive ones. Different emotional profiles related to hoarding have been suggested (Postlethwaite et al., 2020) and emotional regulation has been explored previous in qualitative work (Taylor et al. 2019). Participants with HD described engaging in a number of avoidance, cognitive, acceptance-based and behavioural strategies to manage their emotions, and some attributed their hoarding to emotional factors such as loss, "difficult emotional conditions" (Taylor et al., 2018, p. 533) in childhood and adulthood, and experiences of material deprivation. Some aspects of hoarding also served to regulate participants' emotions, such as acquiring to escape from negative emotions and induce positive ones. Although some participants derived emotional comfort from their possessions, many did not use their possessions as a way of regulating emotion and did not think their possessions served a purpose when they were upset. Interestingly one participant in the study by Taylor et al. was quoted as saying "When I'm upset I don't even look at them really. I very rarely acknowledge the stuff I've got, it's just there. It's more that I value it when I'm trying to sort things really" (participant 1, page 536). There is a parallel here with observations made by some participants in the present study who did *not* describe themselves as having strong emotional relationships with their

possessions. The reference to sorting also hints at the idea that certain aspects of dealing with possessions can be more emotionally strenuous than others, a process emphasised in Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life.

The importance of emotion in categories of this theory such as *Struggling to "get into an admin role"* and *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*, and the process of managing possessions described in Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life, thus shed further light on the emotional lives of people who hoard. Emotional attachment is a key component in the cognitive behavioural model, and strong attachments to possessions have been identified in hoarding participants, as well as the components of emotional attachment such as possessions as part of self, which are also supported by some of the findings in this study.

However, the importance of emotion in this theory points to an emotional relationship with possessions which may be activated at certain times, for example while trying to sort and discard. The emotional core of hoarding phenomenology may therefore be an emotional *relationship* with possessions which can include an emotional attachment but is not solely described by this attachment. Some participants in the present study made observations that they did not have strong attachments to their possessions, and some appeared frustrated by their hoards. Nevertheless, it was difficult for them to discard their possessions.

Results from this current study suggest that there may be an emotional relationship with possessions and the hoard characterised by emotional attachment (including seeing possessions as part of self and related to intimacy and love), frustration and potential despair at the consequences (for example in the vicious spiral) and strong emotional triggers from possessions related to trauma and life events (seen in the struggle to "get into an admin role"). Such an emotional relationship also integrates several suggestions made by other studies (e.g. Postlethwaite et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2019). The process described in Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life, where sorting and discarding were experienced as difficult and included emotional aspects, i.e. the meaning of possessions and discarding, further suggests that such an emotional relationship is activated under certain circumstances. Related to this was an aspect of the struggle to "get into an admin role" based on finding possessions which were imbued with strong emotions, and the ability of such possessions to derail progress in managing possessions. The jumbled nature of possessions and the possibility of finding something emotionally resonant within these jumbled-up belongings has parallels with observations that items of financial and practical value such as money and identity documents can be found in piles of cluttered objects (Frost & Hartl, 1996). This was suggested by Frost and Hartl to be a reason for hoarders' reluctance to discard objects, particularly discarding

them en masse. Participants' experiences in the current study suggest that the same thing could be happening with objects which have emotional resonance. These findings on emotion taken together thus add to our knowledge of the emotional aspects of hoarding phenomenology.

Experiencing too much and *Becoming overwhelmed* described the ways in which life events and even daily living in a home could have an impact on hoarding behaviours. Life events have been implicated in hoarding (e.g. Landau et al., 2011; Tolin, Meunier, et al. 2010) and the impact of, for example, having a busy working life have been acknowledged as problems when hoarders are seeking treatment (Steketee & Frost, 2014a). Tolin et al. (2017) also provide an example of how assigning equal priority to various competing spheres of life along with CBT tasks can prevent therapy homework from being completed due to the idea that "life got in the way" (p. 16). However, no extant studies of which I am aware have detailed the process by which possessions, life experiences, and the effects of both can result in *Becoming overwhelmed* and potentially unable to deal with possessions. This provides a route by which the progression of hoarding behaviours can be understood. Just as Eckfield and Wallhagen (2013) described the synergistic and dynamic effects of growing older with hoarding behaviours, the categories of *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed* describe a dynamic interplay between hoarding behaviours (saving, difficulty discarding and acquiring), life events and experiences, and how possessions are managed within a sample including a wider age range. Thus these categories give us more understanding of not only how those who hoard might try to manage their possessions, for example by engaging in overly complex ways to order things, but also how life experiences may have an impact, for example in everyday life in a home preventing half-sorted piles of items from being definitively sorted and thus contributing to clutter.

Some extant qualitative research speaks to the concept of *Becoming overwhelmed*. For example, compulsive hoarding participants in the study by Kellett et al. (2010) described the extent of their clutter as and the prospect of dealing with it "overwhelming" (p. 149). Feelings of entrapment were expressed which could represent the endpoint of having become so overwhelmed by possessions that they leave one feeling "gridlocked" (Kellett et al., 2010, p. 149). Thus, findings in the present study extend these observations by employing a process-based methodology. Previous research by Kellett et al. (2010) used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996) and Singh and Jones (2012) utilised framework analysis and visual methods in their study. Both have been used to generate interesting, novel and useful themes related to hoarding. Grounded theory methodology is more explicitly process-based. Themes such as the sense of psychological and physical entrapment described by participants in the study by Kellett et al. (2010) express what it is like from the hoarder's perspective to feel trapped by possessions. Categories like *Becoming overwhelmed* can

give us insight into *how* these feelings of being overwhelmed and entrapped can arise through actions and experience.

Additionally, a recent study (Postlethwaite et al., 2020) identified a cluster of hoarding participants whose emotional response to their hoarding was one of being emotionally overwhelmed. These participants strongly agreed with the idea that thinking about discarding and actually discarding possessions caused them distress, agreed that anxiety caused them to postpone hoarding, and that they avoided discarding possessions because it was a stressful process (Postlethwaite et al., 2020). The process of *Taking on too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed* may also be beneficial then in shedding light on what such emotionally overwhelmed participants may be experiencing in their homes and lives, and possible routes to decrease these feelings of being overwhelmed. For example, if feelings of being overwhelmed stem from the way in which possessions are organised, intervention could focus on developing simpler systems of organising. If the person is instead overwhelmed by the impact of unfinished processes, intervention could focus on being able to follow through on tasks rather than leaving them undone.

5.5. Conclusions

This chapter has considered the ways in which some participants were struggling to manage their possessions, their lives, or both. Hoarding difficulties were not just about the physical possessions in the home but were related to various emotional and contextual factors. The emotional impact of possessions for some participants meant that they struggled to "*get into an admin role*". They were unable to see the task of managing possessions as impersonal and thus achieve the tasks described in Chapter Four: Managing Possessions and Managing Life: putting like with like, making decisions about possessions, discarding them, and finding a home for them. For some participants, their hoarding behaviour was a form of coping with negative events such as loss and trauma, however they incurred further loss by hoarding, including not being able to live their lives fully. Multiple life events, taking on multiple projects, and trying to manage possessions in overly complicated ways, among other factors, could result in becoming overwhelmed and unable to manage possessions. Thus, hoarding behaviours can develop via several different routes related to trauma, loss, the impact of life events, and the volume and nature of possessions.

Findings related to emotion, taken along with results of existing studies, suggest a complex emotional relationship with possessions which includes emotional attachment, the emotional consequences of hoarding and emotional responses to possessions which are influenced by life experiences. This emotional relationship appears potentially activated at certain points during the

managing process, for example while sorting or attempting to discard, and can form a significant barrier to being able to do either.

However, it is important to note here that due to the variation of experiences in the sample, results related to the development of hoarding behaviours are not restricted to those with severe hoarding or HD. Thus, they should be read as more wide-ranging and awaiting further research in a sample of participants with diagnosed HD.

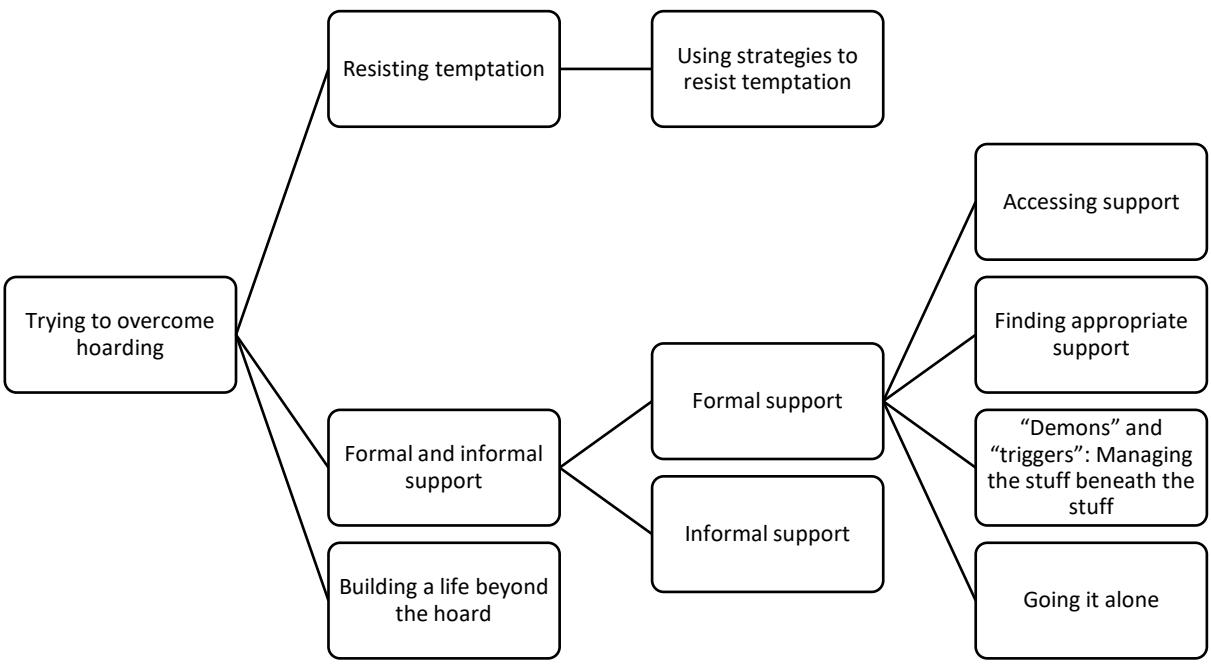
Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding, which follows, details the ways in which participants tried to overcome their hoarding behaviours. This involved *Resisting temptation*, *Formal and informal support*, and *Building a life beyond the hoard*.

CHAPTER SIX: TRYING TO OVERCOME HOARDING

The previous chapter, Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage, outlined the various ways in which participants struggled to manage possessions and life, a process which involves moving from a situation where possessions can be managed, to one where managing can break down. This chapter presents the opposite process, whereby participants attempt to move from difficulties managing to situations where they were able to manage possessions. Three subcategories developed within this process: *Resisting temptation*, *Formal and informal support,* and *Building a life beyond the hoard*. These subcategories are shown in figure 5.

Figure 5

Subcategories of Trying to overcome hoarding



6.1. Resisting temptation

Resisting temptation refers to the recognition of a need to resist the temptation to acquire and hoard items, and the strategies employed by participants to be able to resist such temptation.

Tamara described the need to resist the temptation to acquire as part of overcoming hoarding: *"I'm still acquiring things although not at, nothing like the same rate. [Mmm] But you know, if I do see something I find it very hard to resist, [Yeah] but I am trying to get rid of things"* (lines 1157-1160).

Here the idea of *Resisting temptation* is a process, as one aspect which fits into the overall mix of trying to overcome hoarding. Tamara's journey towards overcoming hoarding is about not only curbing acquisition but being able to discard possessions as well. Tamara still obviously has a difficulty with acquiring, though the comparison with the rates at which she previously acquired suggests she is in fact getting better at this. While some strategies were physical, discussed below, Tamara hinted at a more internal process involving a degree of behavioural and psychological control over an *"urge"* (line 545) to acquire. She described herself as *"a lot better" (line 545)* at controlling this. Making an effort not to *"put temptation in my path if I can help it"* (lines 546-547), thus resisting such temptation, was part of this control process.

Antony alluded to the need to resist temptation to pick up flyers:

> "um there was flyers on the side there and I found it very hard … norm-ordinarily I would have been picking those up … to document the fact that I'd been here, partly *[Yeah]* (they would connect) to that moment but there would also be, things that I might have interest in later but there'd also be the pleasure of just having the little wad of the same flyers" (1, lines 297-304)

Antony's contrast above with his "*ordinary"* behaviour suggests a struggle not to pick up the flyers and a need to resist the temptation to do so.

Comparable to the idea of *Resisting temptation* were observations by Jeff and Alan that they were concerned about acquisition, and thus tried to avoid acquiring. Although they had much more restricted issues with possessions, both expressed concerns about acquiring. For Jeff this was due to what he described as a very risk-averse nature, and for Alan it was motivated by a certain set of values. Jeff did not want to acquire new possessions unless he could be sure that he would be able to use them and that they would suit his purposes. Alan did not want others to think of him as acquisitive and expressed a dislike of materialistic society. Alan thus tried to limit what he got into his life, a strategy which also linked with managing the contents and discarding:

> "I've come to realise … it's easier to limit what I get into my life, *[Mmm]* and then erm, make a decision about what to keep, what to chuck, *[Yeah]* than to, get too many things in and then struggle to get rid of them." (1, lines 230-234)

Contrasting ways to manage possessions, by limiting acquisition versus acquiring *"too many things"* which would then be a struggle to discard suggested that Alan might find discarding a struggle if there is too much. A conscious effort to limit the amount he brings into his home could be a kind of pre-emptive strike against the potential problem of needing to later discard things which he may not want to. Alan's experience also highlighted the difficulties which would be faced by those whose desires to acquire possessions were much more difficult to control, such as Tamara and Emma.

6.1. i. Using strategies to resist temptation

These primarily involved avoidance of certain retail outlets and disconnecting oneself from sources of acquisition. Tamara disconnected her broadband internet, and Emma stopped watching television so she would not develop an interest in new programmes or films and end up buying box sets. Both thus made attempts to curb their buying.

Tamara described needing to avoid certain places: *"I have to actively avoid going past, erm, shops where I know they might have something [Yeah] I like, 'cos if I see something in the window I'll try and acquire it no matter how heav-however difficult"* (lines 341-344). This is an active process suggesting the need for awareness, vigilance and self-discipline to avoid not only the acquisition of objects but also places where those objects may be sold. Other participants described such physical forms of *Resisting temptation* by avoiding going to certain shops. Melba described avoiding charity shops in particular but also shopping in general: *"I haven't been to charity shops for ages so I've had to avoid [Mmm] that, erm, [Yeah] or go shopping like consuming"* (lines 1058-1060). Ava shopped online to avoid unnecessary but discounted goods which would be tempting to buy: *"it sounds ridiculous but, I don't have to walk past aisles of ... discounted stuff and, cheap things that I could get, [Yeah] does that make sense?"* (1, lines 974-976). Changing how she shopped appeared to help Ava to curb her buying, avoiding circumstances which might encourage her to spend and acquire. For Tamara, Melba and Ava, a change in lifestyle and habits has been required to try to resist temptation and overcome hoarding tendencies.

Sales were also particular circumstances under which participants needed to resist temptation to acquire. Rose described how she would not go around sales in the way she had before, suggesting the need for a change in behaviours. Rose also thought she might have spent more time going to sales after she had two trigger experiences of a broken engagement and a redundancy, suggesting that buying items in sales may be a point of vulnerability for some people with hoarding tendencies, especially during times of difficulty. Rose speculated that she gained comfort from her hoarding, and that the sense of loss she experienced after those two events motivated her to hoard.

Ava also talked about avoiding sales: *"I like bargains, I mean I try and, I resist going in to look at sales because I want to buy thing-do you know what I mean"* (1, lines 969-971). The appeal of sales and bargains may also be reflected in Lily's observation about buying things from charity shops: *"it doesn't, it's not very much money so it's not like being, erm, lavish or, [Mmm] erm, decadent [Yeah] it's like a, a, erm, a harmless indulgence ((participant laughs)) it, it, in some ways, yeah"* (lines 118-120). Although Lily had in the past left charity shops with *"a bag full of, essentially rubbish"* (line 115), the items did not cost much money. Her reasoning for acquiring the items was that she might regret not buying them, and other participants including Emma and Antony described positive feelings about acquiring objects.

In contrast, Tamara talked about how her feelings might change from positive ones to feelings of regret and even guilt after buying certain things: *"It's a thrill initially, [Mmm] then I get this huge guilt trip about, oh god something else I've got to find a place for or, [Mmm] you know I've spent the money on that and I owe this bill or-"* (lines 305-308). The initial heightened emotions involved in acquiring objects, described as a *"need"* (line 310) rather than a mere want, give way to feelings of guilt and regret. Thus, if objects in charity shops are thought of as inexpensive and small rather than *"lavish"* and cumbersome purchases which could more easily be regretted, this might further make charity shops a point of vulnerability for those who hoard. The combination of positive feelings about acquiring, the lack of monetary cost, and perhaps a need for comfort and positive emotion during difficult times may all contribute to why sales and charity shops are a form of temptation which must be avoided with vigilance.

Participants also used more indirect strategies to resist temptation. After a particularly difficult and exhausting journey home with an item acquired on an internet auction site, Tamara decided to cancel her broadband internet. As a means of coping, Emma decided she would cut herself off from some forms of media: *"to help I actually stopped watching TV, I unplugged my aerial and I c-so I've got no TV channels, [Yeah] um, and stopped going to the cinema so if I can't see new stuff I can't find new stuff to buy"* (lines 535-538). Removing the ability to watch new television shows meant being able to curb buying and spending on DVDs.

As suggested in some of the previous extracts, *Resisting temptation* was not a one-off event, but a process which required work in order to improve. Tamara described what this was like for her:

> "I suppose I've got better at resisting things that I think are too expensive or-I like finding things. *[Yeah]* I like being somewhere where, perhaps this item has lain unnoticed or, erm,

> what shall I say? In an out of the way charity shop or, er, so it's been in someone's garage forever, you know that kind of *[Yeah]* all adds to that feeling all, all into the mix with that kind of excitement, er, of acquisition" (lines 406-412)

Acquisition was a highly complex process involving a mix of emotions and experiences, culminating in a realisation that this is *"the item"* (line 405). The use of the definite article suggested something Tamara needed to have, a unique and special item. Things which may have been unappreciated, which Tamara can then bring to light, were perhaps those which were most difficult to resist. *Resisting temptation* was not just about not buying or acquiring but being able to turn away from these powerful emotional experiences and the process of acquisition in which a special object is identified. Being able to control this *"urge"* to acquire things was a notable challenge for Tamara in *Resisting temptation* and overcoming hoarding.

6.2. Formal and informal support

Melba described going through a process of self-development and working through hoarding. The idea of a progression in hoarding was one she stressed a lot, and she answered some questions with reference to how she felt answers were only possible when one had worked on one's self. Thus, for Melba part of overcoming hoarding involved developing knowledge and insight into her behaviours, and going on a kind of personal journey, a metaphor also used by Yvonne: *"I (have) to kind of work this through in my own mind how to move through the clearing bit of this"* (2, line 953-955). A psychological journey may be facilitated by therapeutic efforts, either formally or informally. Some participants described either having formal therapy such as CBT or attempting their own forms of therapy. Others described more informal support from family and friends. Formal intervention will be detailed first.

Tamara, Emma, Antony, Hasan, Tara, Rose and Melba described formal support and intervention from various agencies. These encompassed psychological therapies, social service and other agencies, the fire service, practical support (such as help with tidying) and support groups. Some such interventions were experienced as highly negative. Tamara described feeling under *"scrutiny"* (line 596) by social services and Emma detailed a traumatic experience with her housing association involving legal action, during which she described attempting suicide.

There were four aspects related to formal support: *Accessing support, Finding appropriate support, "Demons" and "triggers": Dealing with the stuff beneath the stuff*, and *Going it alone*.

6.2. i. Formal support

6.2. i. a. Accessing support

Tamara, Emma, Antony and Rose described problems in accessing support. Tamara expressed a desire for support as although she knew her *"demons"* (line 1604) and *"triggers"* (line 1604), this was not going to be sufficient for her to be able to overcome her hoarding*: "I'm still hoping to find in the future, you know, some help with this strange condition, this erm, hoard-so called hoarding disorder"* (lines 1606-1608). Although she described having seen a psychotherapist in the past and discussing anxiety, Tamara's hope for the future suggested that she had not yet been able to access the support she needed.

Emma described various barriers to being able to access support for her hoarding. She described having expressed concerns to her housing association that she was developing hoarding problems:

> "originally when I told them, originally it wasn't that bad and they said, "oh it's fine, that's just, you're just a bit messy", it, it wasn't severely enough. But I knew I, I was only gonna go-I didn't know exactly but I just knew I needed help" (lines 714-718)

Such concerns suggested a mismatch between what Emma felt she needed and how she felt her hoarding would progress, and the perceptions of others. The idea that her hoarding behaviours were not severe enough to warrant intervention also suggested a concern with the end points of hoarding (Brien et al., 2018) rather than earlier, preventative action. Being described as *"a bit messy"* also suggests an emphasis on the physical stuff of hoarding rather than the psychological and emotional underpinnings of the behaviours, discussed further in "*Demons" and "triggers"*: *Managing the stuff beneath the stuff* (section 6.2.i.c.). Various other issues also affected Emma being able to get the support she needed, including experiencing stressful events which led her to take medication with difficult side effects, and needing to pay for private counselling. At first this was due to a lack of service provision as she had already had the maximum number of treatment sessions. Later she described how she again had been unable to access therapies through a mental health team and had ended up paying privately for therapy, although this was focused on a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder she had received.

Antony and Rose talked about support groups. Antony had been looking for groups and having found one for people with OCD and hoarding disorders nevertheless discovered that many members attended due to OCD, driving him to want to connect with other hoarders. Rose and her husband found support groups useful in helping them realise that there were others in the same and even more severe situations: *"otherwise you feel like you're, alone [Yeah]? You're the only one(s) sort of suffering [Mmm] I guess"* (lines 1036-1038). Rose could also gain motivation from support groups

when she heard others talk about their aims in tackling their hoarding: *"if I do go to one of these group things, you know and (you) say what you're gonna do, the next month [Mmm] and then, then I might do some, then"* (lines 721-723). However, Rose also struggled to get to the groups as they were not local. A lack of local services generally was also mentioned by Emma.

Thus, although there were some forms of support which could be helpful, such as support groups and in Emma's case her therapist and care coordinator, accessing local support or indeed any support for those with hoarding issues could be problematic.

6.2. i. b. Finding appropriate support

A further issue described by participants was finding appropriate support. As previously described, there were very few local services, and few which were hoarding specific. Those who did have therapy such as CBT sometimes received it for other reasons. For example, Antony described having CBT for anxiety which had indirectly helped him with his hoarding.

When participants did receive CBT or other psychological support for hoarding, their experiences were mixed. Tara talked about how although CBT had benefitted her, certain things had not worked and had even made her withdraw from therapy. Tara did seem to feel it gave her a foundation to work from, including increased self-knowledge and strategies for trying to challenge her hoarding which she could then build on. She also made some progress in discarding her possessions, although this could be a slow process due to her perceived need to *"go through every little thing before throwing it away …. And I never really got any quicker"* (lines 1645-1646). However, it was discarding something – with encouragement – which she later regretted which caused her CBT to cease. A combination of her distress over discarding the item, which had belonged to her daughter, and her reluctance to talk to the therapist about this meant that Tara never contacted him again. Thus, for Tara although there were benefits to CBT, the time-consuming nature of trying to deal with her possessions and setbacks in discarding meant that this method of therapy did not work for her. However, it is important to note that these issues may not be specific to CBT and may have occurred with any form of formal therapy.

Rose similarly described concerns around CBT for hoarding:

> "we have, have talked a bit as well but it's more about CBT which does not seem to be working with hoarding. *[Mmm]* I think it might do for people who have some OCD as well, *[Mmm]* (could help) OCD but I don't think it helps with, with the hoarding" (lines 1086-1972)

Although Rose did not elaborate on what she thought did not work, it may be related to the support she was offered which focused on the here-and-now and on clearing: *"they're still going, the other*

way [Mmm] erm, just helping me to, to clear the hoard" (lines 1066-1067). Rose wanted to examine her childhood, which she thought had contributed to her hoarding more than she had previously thought. Thus, it may be that she would prefer counselling, which she talked about having undertaken related to her broken engagement and redundancy, but which had not involved talking about her childhood.

Emma discussed the need for support services to focus on both practical issues **and** any underlying mental health concerns as neither one alone could provide the holistic understanding required:

> "they might understand it, the mental health element but they can't really give me the practical support, and there isn't really the practical support and the practical (sup)port people don't understand the mental health and just think you can just, get a skip" (lines 1505-1509)

Thus, Emma suggested that there ought to be *"either … the same person or two services that are working together in conjunction that can manage these things"* (lines 1258-1260). The implementation of such an integrated service might help to overcome some of the issues described by other participants where there was a perceived overemphasis on the physical hoard. The call for an integrated service which addresses underlying issues also links to "*Demons" and "triggers": Managing the stuff beneath the stuff*, discussed below.

In particular there appears to be a mismatch between the support participants needed and wanted, and what they were offered, when it was offered at all: *"although I told them what I want, what I think that I need, I'm not, I'm not getting it* " (Rose, lines 1073-1074). Emma also described a discrepancy between what she could do in clearing her home, and others' expectations: *"I was really making improvements-I think I wasn't making fast enough improvements … because you know they had (targets) but for me it was the best I'd ever been in years"* (lines 842-846). These differences between the needs and experiences of those who need help for hoarding and those providing the help suggest a need for hoarding treatment to keep the individual at the heart of it.

Problems when undergoing therapy may undermine hoarders' willingness to engage with services again in the future. Emma described how she was somewhat sceptical about the idea of hoarders' reluctance to ask for help:

> "(if) people have been asking for help before they got into a mess then yes they maybe then stop asking for help 'cos either, if it's gone so wrong or they're then so ashamed, you know, and if they've asked for ( ) whether it's for mental health services or practical support from adult social work and it's not available *[Mmm]* then potentially again it would be picking that

> up 'cos I think as I said, early, like (in) ( ) we know if I'd, this had been caught earlier and then had the right support and understanding, I think I would have got into far less of a mess and I could've, controlled and got on top of this before things got so out of hand" (lines 1758-1768)

Emma's quote above encompasses several difficulties with being able to access not only support, but also an appropriate form of support, and the potential consequences if such support is not there. Hasan also described a desire for finding *"the right support"* (line 1051) to help him with his hoarding. Either the support is unavailable, or something has gone wrong and derailed progress. Emma also highlights the importance for her of earlier intervention with her hoarding behaviours, suggesting that if she had been able to access support earlier in her hoarding trajectory, things would not have "got so out of hand". There is therefore a potential link between timely intervention and *Experiencing too much* and *Becoming overwhelmed*, described in Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage. Specifically, timely intervention before the person becomes overwhelmed by their possessions, their life experience or both, may forestall the struggle to manage and allow the person to overcome their difficulties.

6.2. i. c. "Demons" and "triggers": Managing the stuff beneath the stuff

A common thread in participants' narratives about formal support they had received was the importance of focusing on the underlying issues in hoarding. Tara was an exception to this, as she identified one of the issues in CBT for her as the focus on childhood experience. In contrast to other participants who wanted to focus on underlying issues related to hoarding, Tara wanted practical solutions and to avoid a deep dive into her past:

> "I don't think it's any good dredging up bad things that have happened in the past that you can't change, *[Yeah]* and I sort of very much said at the start I don't wanna talk about any of these bad bits, I only *[Mmm]* want, any kind of practical ideas" (lines 1691-1695)

Despite telling her therapist this, she felt that *"he did sort of slip into, regurgitating things in the past … you know has any of your behaviour come from that?"* (lines 1696-1698). Tara's reluctance to focus on events in her past may reflect the traumatic and upsetting nature of such events, or it may be the case that her desire for practical solutions stems from her own theory of how her hoarding developed, as primarily related to genetics. Notably the participants who talked about wanting to focus on their underlying issues attributed their hoarding to these issues.

The need for understanding of any conditions underlying hoarding was a significant concern for Emma: *"you won't solve anything unless you look at how to support or manage those conditions*"

(lines 1583-1585). She also described a potential difference between people who had begun hoarding as a result of a one-off experience such as a trauma, and those whose hoarding was more of a longstanding condition with the additional complexity of underlying conditions, viewing herself as fitting into this latter category. Thus, for her it was of primary importance that these conditions and their impact on hoarding behaviour were understood and supported.

Melba illustrated the importance of getting to the root of hoarding:

> "you get to the heart … and what it is about, you have to face, it's like any alcoholic or any, any other addiction, *[Mmm]* you face your demon. That's the hardest thing, and if they *[Mmm]* don't do that, it will not change, you can have all these people come in, all these services, declutterers, that does not solve the problem because you, you're addressing *[Mmm]* the symptoms, you're not addressing that cause, *[Mmm]* and the cause is only addressed by yourself. *[Yeah]* And that is by personal awareness, personal inspection, personal, erm, responsibility" (lines 1506-1515)

Melba's suggestion that simply decluttering would not work echoed observations by Tamara and Emma that it was not simply about tidying: *"force me to think it's just a case of tidying up … it's a lot more than that"* (Tamara, lines 1855-1867). For Tamara her need to check things, even rubbish in her bins, before it could be discarded proved an additional problem: *"trying to explain to them … I have to check things before they could go. [Yeah] So it wasn't just a case of removing things, if it was that [Mmm] simple you'd have done it already"* (lines 1858-1861). Although "just" removing things is a simple task in theory, additional factors make it highly complex in practice. This may link to the notion of *Struggling to "get into an admin role"*, where the ability to manage possessions as a kind of administration task becomes difficult when the emotional impact of possessions and life experience is involved.

Melba viewed hoarding as a symptom of a wider problem, which also needed to be addressed. Her narrative of hoarding as a symptom of a deeper issue and an addiction echoed Tamara's speculation that her hoarding was symptomatic of *"something missing in my life"* (lines 1145-1146) and her description of acquiring as being like a need: *"wild horses wouldn't stop you acquiring that item"* (lines 312-313). As with several other participants in this study, Melba's suggestion for how to overcome hoarding were linked to her own views on her hoarding aetiology, again stressing the need for a person-centred approach to hoarding treatment.

6.2. i. d. Going it alone

Melba and Tara talked about respectively undergoing their own kind of therapeutic efforts and wanting to work on their hoarding alone *"without the trauma of the support"* (Tara, line 1697). The idea of *Going it alone*, with neither practical nor mental health support, echoes the experience of participants who, with the lack of local or appropriate support to tackle their hoarding, were left to their own devices to manage this challenging and difficult behaviour. Tara's description of support as occasioning trauma is also concerning, and echoes Emma's descriptions of the impact of stressful interventions on her mental health.

Melba emphasised how she had done the work of trying to overcome her hoarding herself:

> "I've, gone through this, on my own, *[Mmm]* I've done it on my own I've never taken any medication, *[Yeah]* erm, I've had, like I say very little support, from mental health teams, *[Mmm]* in fact little support through life" (lines 1497-1500)

A lack of any support, informal or formal, meant that Melba had to go it alone and tackle her hoarding herself. The catalyst for Melba to begin to work on her hoarding was the need to clear so people could gain access to her home and realising the impact of hoarding on her life. She stressed the need for people who hoard to do the work themselves and to actively want change, otherwise overcoming hoarding would not be possible: *"you've really got to want it"* (line 1525).

Tara's experience with her treatment for hoarding also echoes Emma's suggestion, discussed above, that negative experiences in treatment may result in a lack of trust in services. Such experiences may leave those with hoarding behaviours feeling that they have no choice but to try to tackle their hoarding alone, if they are able to tackle it at all.

Informal support, such as that offered by family and friends, was also described by several participants and will be discussed next.

6.2. ii. Informal support

Dylan, Tamara, Natalie, Hasan, Tara and Walter described help from friends and family. Natalie talked about how her mum would prompt her to discard things because she was *"really good at making me be ruthless"* (lines 658-659). In previous times of worse hoarding behaviour, her parents had helped her: *"go through it [Mmm] with me, get rid of a load of bags and then, [Yeah] and then it just starts piling up again"* (lines 771-773). It appeared that although Natalie acquired more when she was younger, her parents' influence helped her to get rid of things. Hasan also had a friend who helped him manage his possessions by keeping them in his home rather than Hasan's: *"he helps me manage it. [Mmm] So he says like er, leave (the) items in my house, like er, I'll do it for you, don't be*

taking them home" (lines 598-600). Hasan suggested that this help from his friend might help him to *"be better in control (have over it)"* (line 602). Although this appears to help Hasan potentially be more in control, it relies on someone else taking items for him. Despite being in someone else's home, Hasan is still acquiring possessions. Thus, although this may have helped with Hasan's tendency to want to add things to his *"collection"* (line 328) once he had acquired them even if they were for selling, it was not a long-term solution.

Even though friends and family could be helpful in managing possessions, either in promoting discarding or allowing fewer possessions to build up, certain forms of help and certain attitudes were preferred. Dylan and Walter both had friends help them in different ways to manage their possessions. Dylan's friend helped him to clear out his *"junk cellar"* (1a, lines 907) which included easily-discardable items. However, when other items needed clearing, he preferred less active involvement from her. At this stage it was more beneficial to have someone there as a presence to keep him motivated and working rather than actively involved in decision-making and clearing:

> "I said "come round one day, bring your laptop, sit upstairs and just keep an eye on me from time to time", *[Yeah]* so I know I've actually got someone checking up that I'm doing it, *[Yeah]* otherwise I'd have thought, 'oh that's enough for today'" (1a, lines 912-915)

This Dylan found *"actually quite constructive"* (1a, lines 915-916). Thus, for Dylan, although it benefitted him to a friend help him directly with items which were easier to discard, he preferred a different form of help with certain items. It may be the case then that at certain points during the process of discarding, help needs to be more hands-off and more decision-making and autonomy given to the person with hoarding difficulties.

Similarly, Walter described how a friend's intervention had helped, but that certain things would be unhelpful. His friend had *"helped me er tidy, er, the living room [Mmm] to a great extent, throw things out, put things in boxes, you know make it at least a little bit neater"* (lines 196-199). However, if such help came with *"a demand or an expectation or an attitude, [Mmm] a co-condemnation or a, looking down on me or a disapproval or any, any kind of attitude like that I just immediately resist"* (lines 210-213). This Walter attributed to part of his personality: *"my control over my own environment, [Mmm] and my, the, my individuality and integrity of choice, is at the heart of my tendencies [Yeah] (even down to) my home"* (lines 203-206). Thus, anyone helping Walter would have to respect his desire for control, individuality and autonomy, otherwise intervention would not work, and he would instead defend himself as someone who was *"quite proud of being messy"* (lines 214).

Dylan expressed a similar sentiment if confronted over one of his possessions:

> "I would probably be quite defensive, so something that I'd, left to my own I might recognise I could throw out, if someone else said you needed to throw it out I'd probably actually defend it" (1a, lines 925-927)

Here this is not just about others' influence preventing things from being managed, but a kind of defiance in the face of others' influence which made Dylan rebel where he would otherwise be able to discard. Dylan's rebellion suggests that like Walter he may feel a need for independence, choice and autonomy in making decisions about his possessions.

Similarly, while Tara received help from her daughter who also hoarded, help from her son caused a rift between them. Being able to share photographs with her daughter and encourage one another was helpful for Tara, as was her daughter's openness with others, which inspired Tara to talk to her own friends about her hoarded home. However, Tara's son had *"sorted things out for me not how I would have sorted them out"* (lines 667-668). Having to then look for things which she could not find as they were not where she would have put them "*drove me crazy"* (lines 666-667) and led to *"a massive falling out"* (line 670).

Tara's contrasting experience with her two children, the usefulness of support groups for Rose, and the emphasis on understanding hoarding and its causes described by several participants all stress the need for empathy and insight into hoarding on the part of those who help. Others with hoarding issues have the most intimate understanding of the difficulties faced, suggesting that peer support could be a key aspect of hoarding intervention. For those without direct experience, understanding and empathy are key. Although Tamara noted that *"it's very hard to explain to someone who hasn't got that, erm, what shall I say, an insight into that, [Mmm] erm, headspace you know at the time"* (lines 333-336) with acquiring possessions, there is a need for those who help hoarders to gain a level of understanding which will allow for empathy and as much insight into the *"headspace"* of those who hoard as possible.

This section has considered the role of *Formal and informal support* in helping those who hoard. There are various barriers to accessing formal support, including the lack of local services and problems encountered with the interventions available. Key aspects of support are those which allow for understanding of underlying issues in hoarding, however the most important aspect appears to be listening to the person who hoards about the meaning of their difficulties. There is a need for intervention which both solves practical problems related to the dangers posed by clutter and places the person at the heart of the solution, giving due respect to their autonomy, choices and

integrity. With any form of support, whether formal or informal, understanding and empathy are extremely important. This may best be facilitated through peer support, although developing a positive therapeutic alliance with the hoarder is also one possible route to constructive help.

The final section of this chapter will consider ways in which some participants were attempting to look beyond their hoarding and find new ways of living: *Building a life beyond the hoard*.

6.3. Building a life beyond the hoard

The attempt to build a life beyond the hoard is a later stage in the process of trying to overcome hoarding which not all participants had reached, and not all necessarily needed to as their hoarding behaviour had not impacted their lives to a severe extent. Melba and Antony described difficulties in the aftermath of overcoming their hoarding. Although both were still working towards this, they looked towards a future where they would not be hoarding but acknowledged difficulties. This imagined future is contrasted with the lives some participants described as having been blighted or dominated by their hoarding, discussed in Chapter Five: Struggling to Manage.

Building a life beyond the hoard means not only experiencing a shift in identity, changing habits and lifestyle, in some cases requiring aftercare to maintain changes, but also the need for an adjustment to a new, post-hoarding life.

Antony described how challenging his hoarding affected his sense of self:

> *"*I'm the person who keeps these newspapers, that's who I am you know it's … I'm a slightly weird, interesting guy who, picks up every newspaper. So when I wasn't picking stuff up I think there was a sense in, well when I was getting rid of stuff, you know you go oh, I was the guy who'd got, you know, two thousand ((name)) pots, in a, in a ((laughing softly)) um, bin bag or something like that, [Yeah] who kept every yogurt pot that he'd had. I was that guy, and when you get rid of it you go oh, if I'm not the guy who's keeping all of these things, who am I really, then?" (2, lines 1657-1669)

When hoarding Antony had a sense of self tied to the objects he was collecting and the process of acquiring them. Changing these hoarding behaviours meant that a corresponding change in identity appeared to be happening, prompting him to ask, *"who am I really then?"* if he is no longer picking up things and hoarding. Although he was trying to overcome his hoarding, the loss of identity associated with these behaviours meant that Antony had to find a new identity as well as dealing with his hoard. His experience of this loss of identity also underscores the link between what we own, what we do with our possessions, and who we are. The intersection of possessions, their

meaning and our life history and identity is also expressed in preferences for discarding and the meaning of discarding.

Melba implied the same kind of shift in one's sense of self when she described how a total lifestyle change helped her in curbing her hoarding: "just change my whole way of being as well ... just changing my whole approach, to how it's almost like erm, whole lifestyle change *[Mmm]* erm, for me personally" (lines 1057-1063). Part of Melba's lifestyle change involved avoiding charity shops and consumption, described in section 6.1.i: Using strategies to resist temptation. She also described the importance of certain philosophies:

> "I want to live as simply as possible ... erm, I think, yeah for me ... where I'm at in my journey I just feel like I'm, I'm trying to, I'm learning, erm, I'm taking, I take quite a lot from Buddhism *[Yeah]* 'cos again the heart of that is about attachment and detachment so, *[Mmm]* and I find it, it's again a very simple way of living *[Mmm]* and I think that that would work fantastically well for hoarders" (lines 1440-1446)

Adopting new philosophies and habits can be helpful for those who hoard, but in changing one's behaviour and thought process, identity may also change, another potential form of loss to contend with. Considering the prominence of loss in some of the narratives of hoarding in this study, the loss of identity may be a significant one requiring additional help.

Melba's description of the benefits of Buddhist philosophy, particularly in terms of *"attachment and detachment"* and simple living, also provide a source of comparison with Alan and Jeff. Both described themselves as either having Buddhist leanings (Alan) or being a Buddhist (Jeff). Alan described the negative potential of possessions: *"if an object no longer serves its purpose it's then, it could drag us down, [Mmm] keep us down, er, weigh us down"* (1, lines 1232-1234). The notion of possessions as weighing one down was also described by Susie and by Antony in his description of his *"big burden of stuff"* (1, line 787), suggesting a painful and negative attachment which did not add to the person's life but instead caused difficulty, as in the vicious spiral. Thus, cultivating a kind of non-attachment to possessions might be beneficial in lessening the feeling of obligation and weight attached to some objects.

The desire to live a simpler life was described by Jeff, who aspired to minimalism: *"this might sound a bit contradicting because I have some possessions that I'm afraid to get rid of but still I'm aiming for a lifestyle that (really) demands very little things"* (lines 499-501). Part of adopting this lifestyle was an attempt to optimise the use of the things he had: *"one tendency for people to value little thing in life is, is that they see more than one use in certain things"* (lines 491-493). Jeff talked at

length in his interview about how he would want to find uses for the things he already had rather than buying more. When he described his home, it seemed that Jeff was already living quite simply, thus his experience as one of the participants with the least severe hoarding behaviours provided an interesting counterpoint with Melba, who had some of the most severe difficulties in the sample. Their aspirations were nevertheless very similar, and Jeff's experience perhaps highlighted that a simpler way of life and adopting certain principles could be useful for some people with hoarding difficulties, as Melba suggests.

A further potential issue with life beyond hoarding is the need for some form of aftercare once the hoard has been dealt with. Melba again stressed this issue:

> "one of the problems I have with hoarding as well that, for instance if you've been a long term hoarder and you've lived that certain way of life, *[Mmm]* to go from that to living and functioning like anyone else, that's hard as well because there's no treatment *[Yep]* out there, there's no support saying, well how do you go now, you know *[Mmm]* erm trying to function (a normal) like anybody else because you haven't functioned like that. *[Yeah]* So it's almost like, okay I want to live like this but how do I maintain and, and live like that" (lines 1339-1348)

Although a lifestyle shift, adoption of Buddhist principles and a focus on a simpler life helped Melba, her attempt to live a totally new life was also a potential problem for her. This new life involved new ways of functioning which may never have been taught or developed in earlier stages, and which may have not been practiced much if living space has been compromised. For hoarders who have experienced childhood neglect, abuse or poverty, the skills needed to function as a non-hoarder may never have been taught or modelled by caregivers. Thus, help in maintaining a new way of life and achieving the goals one has set for oneself may also be beneficial for those who hoard. Melba's and Antony's experiences also stress the need for help after hoarding and give additional reasons for why merely removing the physical hoard may not be successful.

6.4. Discussion

Resisting temptation, discussed here in the context of acquiring, suggested the need for behavioural and psychological control over the impulse to acquire possessions. Participants not only tried to fight the impulse to acquire objects, but actively avoided the places and circumstances where this would be likely to happen. These experiences give insight into what it is like to experience these urges to acquire, and the actions which are attempted to try to overcome them. In addition, the findings add detail to the research base on impulse control and acquisition in hoarding, which has focused more

on the relationship between these aspects rather than how people with hoarding tendencies may attempt to overcome them.

Although excessive acquisition is a specifier for DSM-5 hoarding rather than a core criterion, around 85% of people who met criteria for clinically significant hoarding also reported excessive acquisition (Frost et al., 2009). Participants in a qualitative study of emotion regulation in HD described how acquisition was a way to manage emotions, both in terms of an escape from negative emotions and inducing positive ones (Taylor et al., 2019). Potential impulse control problems were described by Taylor et al. when participants experienced loss of control during shopping because of the "physical and emotional gratification" (p. 535) which they experienced. Tolin et al. (2015) note that many CBT protocols focus on difficulty discarding, although they also note that strategies to reduce acquisition have also been included. Given the importance of *Resisting temptation* to some participants in the present study, this could be a significant area to work on for those with such acquiring difficulties.

Previous research by Timpano and Schmidt (2013) using a resource depletion theory of self-control suggested a potential association between hoarding and self-control. Low scores on the Self-Control Scale, a self-report measure of self-control, were associated with higher hoarding severity and all subscales of the Saving Inventory-Revised. Participants who completed tasks designed to deplete self-control resources saved more items in a discarding task than those who completed control tasks which did not deplete their resources. Those with HD also had lower scores on the Self-Control Scale than participants with OCD or generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). These self-report and experimental results thus tell us that a lack of self-control may contribute to hoarding behaviours, particularly in those with HD.

It is interesting that most participants who described *Resisting temptation* in the present study (Tamara, Antony, Emma, Hasan and Melba) were those who had the most severe hoarding behaviors in the sample. The first study reported by Timpano and Schmidt (2013) in their multi-investigation paper suggested that although hoarding was associated with a lack of self-control, scores on the self-control measure only contributed an additional 4% of variance to a model which itself contributed only 35% of variance in scores on the SI-R. Additionally when considering the standardised beta for regression analyses considering the ability of low self-control to predict hoarding subscales, these values were fairly low (between -0.15 and -0.28). These results were found with a general population sample, however taken in concert with the findings that the HD group had lower self-control scores than participants with OCD and GAD, they may suggest that self-control problems are associated with more severe hoarding behaviours.

Findings on support services strongly suggest a need for more support for hoarders, and consideration of why CBT may not be working, particularly important when this is currently the most evidence-based treatment for hoarding (Wootton et al., 2019). However, a meta-analysis of CBT for hoarding disorder revealed that many participants (over 65%) were still in the pathological range for hoarding (Tolin et al. 2015). While Tolin et al. found that the severity of some symptoms decreased, particularly difficulty discarding, and clutter and acquiring also improved, the number of participants who did not make a clinically significant change in their behaviours is concerning.

The importance for many participants of tackling what they believed to be the underlying conditions and root causes of hoarding may be one explanation for why CBT may not be considered appropriate by those who hoard. If CBT focuses on the here-and-now of hoarding, and on hoarding cognitions and behaviours, the root causes are not likely to be explored. For example, Tolin et al. (2017) focus on hoarding cognitions and behaviours as they view factors such as traumatic and stressful life events in the past as beyond clinicians' remit. However, recognition of trauma-informed models and interventions in mental health are growing (e.g. Sweeney, 2016). Although Tolin et al. (2017) do not consider trauma to be a key factor in hoarding development, the approach taken by trauma-focused approaches in considering the wider context of people's lives could nevertheless be useful for some people who hoard.

For those who could access them, support groups were useful, both in terms of giving knowledge that those with hoarding issues were not alone and in providing motivation. Findings related to the appropriateness and success of support services and the benefits of support groups augment findings by Singh and Jones (2012). Two themes in their qualitative study of members of a hoarding support group focused on "Failed previous support" and "Beneficial group support". Failed previous support mentioned CBT which had never touched upon hoarding, difficult relationships with those who were providing support, a feeling that they were not making progress "fast enough" (Singh & Jones, 2012, p. 40) and worries that their care worker would "just get the blitz team in" (p. 40). Some of these concerns were also echoed by Emma and others in the present study, whose experiences shed further light on what is and is not helpful in hoarding. Issues such as CBT focusing on things other than hoarding, and interpersonal issues with those providing care echo what has been suggested by participants in other studies, and experiences of participants in the present study add further detail. For example, the imposition of unrealistic deadlines and particularly the mismatch between what the person who hoards may want and need from their therapy and their actual experiences, have not yet been described in detail thus far in any study of which I am aware.

Although very few participants talked about support groups in this study, they were helpful to Rose and her husband. The lack of discussion of support groups may reflect a lack of such in the participant's local area, although this is a highly tentative speculation. The benefits of support groups were also detailed in Singh and Jones (2012), where a support group helped participants to gain emotional support and advice from others and become motivated by others' efforts to tackle their hoards. Rose's experience, and Antony's desire to find a support group to help him, as well as observations by Tamara that an insight into a particular *"headspace"* in hoarding is useful, further suggest the usefulness of peer support in hoarding. Support groups were one form of help requested by participants who contacted a hoarding support service in a study by Bratiotis et al., (2016), second only to individual therapy in frequency of requests. The lack of local support groups suggests a need for more regional support groups in hoarding, as many UK groups are based in London. Online support groups may be one avenue to be considered.

Findings on how support is experienced augment existing research on help-seeking in hoarding by recounting the lived experiences of those who hoard. Although the rate of treatment-seeking in those with HD is unknown (Bratiotis et al., 2016), self-report data suggests that self-identified hoarders may be unsure what kind of support they need and what is available, as Bratiotis et al. note that some participants were only able to identify what would benefit them after discussion. Bratiotis et al. found that participants asked for help from individual therapists, support groups, professional organisers, cleaning services and coaches or helpers. Participants' experiences in the current study suggest that even when participants did have views about beneficial interventions, such as practical strategies (Tara) or exploration of childhood issues (Rose), the support given did not match those perceived needs.

Findings also stress the importance of empathy with the person who hoards (Tolin et al., 2017) and a positive working alliance (BPS DCP, 2015). It appears that such an alliance would involve preserving the autonomy and choice of the individual who hoards. Such desire for autonomy can be seen in quotes from Dylan and Walter, and in some other observations which participants made about wanting to make their own decisions. For example, Yvonne described how having others make decisions for her, and particularly having others throw away her things would *"disempower"* (1, line 1054) her. Susie talked about how her housemates moving her things felt like an attempt to sweep her away. Such observations echo suggestions by Warren and Ostrom (1988) and Frost et al. (1995) that part of hoarding involves concern for control over possessions and a desire for others not to touch their things.

The links which Walter and others make with autonomy and disempowerment through others interacting with and making decisions about their possessions extends these observations. Dylan, Walter, Melba, Yvonne, Susie and others in their different ways all emphasised a need for autonomy, choice and change within themselves rather than someone coming into their lives to do something *for* them rather than *with* them. A positive working alliance incorporating these aspects may be slow to build. People with hoarding problems may have been subject to stressful and traumatic interventions from others (Steketee & Frost, 2014a), thus it may take time to build trust. Concerns with autonomy and choice may also be reflected in observations made by Brien et al. (2018) that their hoarding participants appeared to want some element of control over the interaction, for example delaying return of consent forms. CBT may be a short-term process with a restricted number of sessions, potentially preventing a positive working alliance from being developed.

Finally, a minority of participants described how they felt that overcoming their hoarding required the development of a new identity and way of living. Antony questioned his identity during the process of trying to combat his hoarding, and Melba described the need for a lifestyle change as she worked on her hoarding. Previous research has considered the impact of hoarding on self and lifestyle, however the need to develop a new lifestyle and potentially new identity appears to be novel.

Possessions have been viewed as part of self in the hoarding literature, and hoarding has been described as an activity with personal meaning (Orr et al., 2019). Hoarding, when "chronic and prolonged" (Kellett et al., 2010) has previously been described as changing a person's self and identity, with one of Kellett et al.'s participants detailing how they felt hoarding had turned them into "a real sneak… a liar … somebody that you don't like and don't want to become" (Participant 10, p. 148). Changes to lifestyle, reflected in the impairment of living space in severe hoarding (DSM-5; APA, 2013) have also been described in other qualitative studies (Singh & Jones, 2012). Participants from a hoarding support group in Singh and Jones's study talked about having to crawl through small pathways of clutter in their homes, lacking anywhere to sit, and needing to wash and put things away immediately due to an infestation of mice.

Building a life beyond the hoard is also related to the notion of the extended self (Belk, 1988), who posits that possessions are part of self. Thus, involuntary loss of possessions is experienced as both traumatic and a loss of self. Although there may be a voluntary aspect for those who hoard in discarding their possessions, the distress associated with discarding suggests that letting go of possessions at least difficult, and for some is extremely traumatic. Belk (1988) suggests that if loss of possessions also causes a feeling that part of the self has been lost, then restoring the self should be

"one of the primary reactions" (p. 143) which follows. The need to build a life beyond the hoard speaks to this idea of trying to restore the self and the need to do this either after the hoard has been removed, or ideally while it is being removed.

The notion of hoarding as an activity with personal meaning, "intelligible to varying extents once the context is known" (Orr et al., 2019, p. 6) suggests that the act of hoarding can be part of an individual's system of meaning in their life. Results of the present study on the importance of *Building a life beyond the hoard* support the idea that hoarding can represent a significant part of an individual's identity. Thus, a new system of meaning may need to be developed with the removal of the hoard. Melba's adoption of certain values and habits suggests a search for a new system of personal meaning which allows her a new way to relate to objects.

The need to develop new ways of functioning in one's home and the impact of hoarding on identity and sense of self thus supports and extends the existing literature base by indicating that the impacts on lifestyle and self which can be caused by severe hoarding also need to be addressed. It thus provides more information on the impacts of hoarding on the individual, and on what may be needed to overcome severe hoarding. Additionally, it may also provide another way of understanding why existing hoarding treatments may not be working. There are potentially deeper issues related to identity and day to day functioning which are not being addressed by purely cognitive behavioural interventions, and certainly not by simply removing clutter. It is important to note here that no matter what theoretical perspective is used or what the underlying issues and conceptualisation of hoarding difficulties may be, enforced clearances are not recommended under any circumstances. Such intervention is likely to be highly traumatic, cause breaches of trust which can contribute to reluctance to engage with support (Steketee & Frost, 2014a) and in some cases have been linked to suicides (Frost & Steketee, 2010).

6.5. Conclusions

This chapter has considered the ways in which some participants were trying to overcome their hoarding behaviours, by *Resisting temptation* to acquire objects and using *Formal and informal support.* It was also necessary for some participants to engage in a further process of *Building a life beyond the hoard*. In terms of *Resisting temptation*, not only was there a need for psychological and behavioural control over acquiring impulses, but strategies were also used to avoid certain forms of acquisition and certain places. *Formal and informal support* could both help and hinder, and there was a need for empathy, understanding and awareness of the underlying issues in hoarding when formal support was utilised, however it was often difficult to access. Informal support could be useful but again needed to be implemented in ways which respected the hoarder's needs and

autonomy. Finally, some participants required help to build and adjust to a life beyond their hoard, including adopting of new lifestyles, values and habits, and support to live in a way which could be very new to them.

Having outlined the components of the theoretical model in detail, the thesis concludes with Section Three, in which the contributions to knowledge and limitations of this work are outlined. The thesis concludes with a description of future work to be done as a result of the model developed herein.

SECTION THREE: CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

The final section of the thesis details the conclusions of the research herein, including how the research questions have been addressed. It also details key limitations of this work, including sample considerations, and outlines the primary and additional contributions to knowledge of the thesis. It ends with a discussion of future quantitative and qualitative work arising from the model which has been developed. This consists of further theoretical refinement using quantitative and qualitative methods, and the development of a questionnaire scale which assesses the struggle to manage.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis details the application of constructivist grounded theory to the study of hoarding behaviours. To my knowledge it is the first to utilise this form of grounded theory to study hoarding. Constructivist GTM allows for the consideration of social context and multiple perspectives, making it useful to study hoarding as there are indications that developmental and social factors are important in the development of hoarding (e.g. Kyrios et al., 2018; Eckfield and Wallhagen, 2013). The theory developed from the foregoing analysis is one of difficulties in managing possessions and life. The development of hoarding behaviour was found to potentially involve a complex interplay of social, cognitive, organisational, interpersonal and emotional factors, and the individual's relationship with their possessions. The relationship with possessions is both physical (how they are sorted, stored, organised and otherwise interacted with in the home) and emotional, related to life experiences and the meaning of the things which are owned.

Previous theoretical approaches to hoarding have primarily considered cognitive behavioural factors in hoarding behaviour, including information processing difficulties, beliefs about the nature of possessions, and behavioural avoidance of discarding and the difficult feelings it can bring about (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Additions to the model have included more contextual factors such as the impact of early life experiences and attachment (Steketee & Frost, 2014a), and an augmented cognitive behavioural model has been proposed which incorporates attachment difficulties (Kyrios et al., 2018).

The theoretical approach described herein takes a different viewpoint, considering difficulties in managing possessions (putting like with like, making decisions about possessions, discarding them, and finding a "home" for them so that they can be found, used and returned) as part of a struggle to manage, and as embedded within the individual's life context. Thus, the activities that can result in hoarding behaviours (acquiring, difficulty discarding, clutter) are affected by and affect aspects of life such as health problems, busy working lives, bereavement, and the imbuing of possessions with meaning and emotion as a result of such life experiences.

The concept of resource depletion applied to self-control and hoarding by Timpano and Schmidt (2013) also has relevance to the struggle to manage. Managing life and possessions require psychological, physical, interpersonal, social and emotional resources. Underlying much of this is the idea that when those resources run out, or are lacking initially, problems can arise where possessions, life and in some cases both, cannot be managed. Thus, one way of helping those who hoard from this perspective could be to increase the resources available to the person, to find out what they are lacking in (motivation, time, space, interpersonal ability, support for underlying

conditions) and help them develop those resources while also tackling the relationship with possessions and the clutter. This would provide a holistic approach to hoarding difficulties which may also help with some of the barriers identified by participants in Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding. For example, underlying conditions could be supported where necessary, interpersonal skills such as assertiveness and forming secure and fulfilling relationships could be developed where hoarding is a form of protection. This could augment and support cognitive and behavioural efforts to curb acquiring tendencies, become better at discarding and think differently about possessions.

7.1. Answering the research questions

The research questions posed in Chapter Two: Literature Review were related to the development of hoarding behaviour and the meaning of possessions for those with hoarding behaviours.

7.1.1. Question one: How do hoarding behaviours develop?

This question is answered in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four details two main categories in the grounded theory in this thesis, setting the scene for what follows and detailing a process by which difficulties with managing possessions can be understood. It also considers how hoarding behaviors may develop through difficulties in managing possessions, the meaning of such possessions, and how these processes and meanings can be affected by life experiences. Furthermore, hoarding behaviours can develop through the experience of mental and physical health problems such as a lack of energy, experiencing pain, or the effect of anxiety and depression on acquiring, difficulty discarding and motivation to tackle the hoard. Additionally, life transitions such as moving to or from university, housemates or partners leaving, and moving to a new home can affect hoarding, making acquiring and saving more likely, losing someone to help manage possessions and make decisions, and sometimes allowing discarding as participants see what they own and reflect on their possessions.

Chapter Five answers the question of how hoarding behaviours develop by considering the role of emotion, experiences of loss and trauma, and the impact of becoming overwhelmed. These could cause a struggle to manage possessions in two ways. Firstly, when possessions are imbued with intense and strong emotions, neither possessions nor emotion cannot be managed. Secondly, there may be so much happening for the person emotionally and in their lives that there is neither the time nor the mental and physical energies to manage the growing hoard. The concept of the vicious spiral explains how hoarding behaviours can develop as a response to trauma and loss but then become in themselves an additional source of pain, trauma and loss for the individual.

7.1.2. Question two: What is the meaning of possessions for people with hoarding behaviours?

The question of what possessions mean to those with hoarding behaviours is also answered in Chapters Four and Five. In Chapter Four it was noted how possessions have highly personal meanings: being and becoming a part of one's self or past, part of a collective past, a repository of information and memories, and a connection with everyday life and love. The latter is a form of emotional attachment which has not been found in any other study of which I am aware. In Chapter Five possessions can be a way to cope with loss and trauma and a way to protect the self and gain comfort. However, as seen in the vicious spiral, possessions can be also be a source of pain, where interacting with them brings back memories of past hurt and trauma. All these meanings of possessions can cause problems in discarding.

Chapter Six: Trying to Overcome Hoarding represents an additional development in the analysis process. Although it is relevant to the theoretical model developed herein, and was considered important by several participants, I did not initially set out to find out how participants *overcame* their hoarding behaviour. My focus on the development of hoarding behaviour was more related to how severe hoarding situations developed. However, the stories of some of the participants in *Building a life beyond the hoard* were so resonant and represented such significant concerns for the participants that they needed to be told. There was not only a struggle to manage – answering the first research question – but a corresponding attempt at moving beyond hoarding, a hopeful narrative which also required telling. From there the notion of overcoming hoarding became an important part of the model, not just about *Building a life beyond the hoard* but about the strategies which participants used and the problems they encountered when trying to manage their hoarding.

7.2. Limitations

Results in this thesis must be viewed in light of certain limitations, primarily considering the sample. A key limitation regarding the sample is the lack of validated procedures to assess both clutter and the potential presence of hoarding disorder. It has previously been noted that some people will label themselves as hoarders while also displaying subclinical hoarding behaviours (Medard & Kellett, 2004). Thus, it is not possible to determine how many of the participants interviewed herein would meet clinical criteria for hoarding disorder or the extent to which clutter affected the home. Home visits were not possible due to potential safety concerns. Regarding HD, although clinical hoarding could not be confirmed, the in-depth questions provided important detail on impairment and severity of hoarding behaviours.

However, when considering limitations of the sample I recalled that when undertaking grounded theory studies, it is useful to reduce the number of preconceptions with which one views the data. Even from a constructivist grounded theory perspective, where the researcher's understanding of the data is an inherent part of the analysis process, it is still important to be open to as many possibilities in the data as one can be. Thus, prior knowledge of the severity of participants' hoarding symptoms and the degree of clutter in participants' homes could have influenced my interviewing and subsequent data analysis if I had assessed for these at the outset. Indeed, when interviewing I found that asking specific questions about impairment to individual areas of the home, drawn from my knowledge of the HD criteria, yielded limited responses, whereas changing the living space tour question (described in Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods section 3.2.i.c) included much more detail. In the same way, having little knowledge of participants' hoarding behaviours potentially allowed me to remain open to their experiences without drawing on assumptions related to a potential diagnosis of HD and its effects on their lives.

While not all participants could be said to have severe hoarding issues, seven participants described either having large amounts of clutter in their homes, having had serious consequences of hoarding, or having therapy for hoarding. For example, Antony described having had *"floor to ceiling"* (1, line 33) possessions in some rooms, Tamara lost her children as a result of her hoarding, and Melba described finding items buried so far under piles of other things that they had rotted. Therefore, while the participants in the study were self-selected, their descriptions of their homes suggested that at least some had serious hoarding problems given their descriptions of the effect of hoarding on their lives and homes.

There are problems inherent in recruiting people with hoarding behaviours, particularly those with more severe hoarding behaviours, which are likely to have affected the present study. Mataix-Cols et al. (2013) note that certain groups within the hoarding population are more difficult to recruit than others, which they term "low-insight individuals who may not necessarily self-define as hoarders or seek help" (p. 845). Although the issue of insight in hoarding can be contentious, with some authors suggesting that what appears to be a lack of insight could be a problem with motivation (Steketee & Frost, 2014a) or an alternative way of conceptualising hoarding (BPS DCP, 2015), it is nevertheless true that some people who hoard simply do not want to come forward to talk about their difficulties. This is a problem noted across the board with hoarding studies (e.g. Postlethwaite et al., 2020) and means that there are groups of hoarders who are not represented within the sample.

Participants in this study were able to talk about their hoarding behaviours in depth and reflect upon their lives and behaviours. They were generally accepting of the term "hoarding", although some

argued against certain aspects of the term, or noted times in their lives when they would have denied that they were hoarding. Resistance to and dislike of the term hoarding has been noted in previous qualitative studies (e.g. Orr et al., 2019). Thus, the use of the term may have excluded those who did not identify with it at least on some level. For ethical reasons I decided that using the term "hoarding" was a necessity in recruitment. One option would have been to use other terms although caution needs to be used with this strategy. To achieve broad samples, such terms would be a potentially useful strategy (e.g. Steketee & Frost, 2014b), however using this strategy to recruit those who do not identify with the term hoarding could be perceived as deceptive and a barrier to informed consent. Thus, I determined that the most ethical way to proceed with a study expressly focused on hoarding behaviour was to use the term throughout and elicit participants' views during interview.

The framing of studies, as related to hoarding or using other terms such as collecting, saving, difficulty discarding, is potentially a question of researchers' own judgement. Although my decision to use the term "hoarding" from the outset was based on ethical principles of avoiding potential deception and gaining informed consent, it nevertheless risked excluding those participants who did not relate to the term. Such participants could have provided valuable insight into their experiences which would have been beneficial not only for the present study but for the field in general. Thus, decisions related to the wording of recruitment materials in this area are complex and useful for hoarding researchers to reflect upon.

Another potential barrier to participation may have been the reference to safeguarding procedures in the information sheet. As severe hoarding can be associated with safety problems for the individual and anyone who lives with them, and with significant psychological distress and comorbid problems, safeguarding was a necessary consideration. In discussion with my supervisory team we considered the disclosure of unsafe living situations and other concerns which might necessitate safeguarding from the outset. Therefore, in the participant information sheet (Appendix E) I included information about disclosures of unsafe living situations and the procedure I would follow if such disclosures were made. This was to ensure fully informed consent and enable the setting of appropriate boundaries.

The sample thus spans those with hoarding issues related to a very restricted range of possessions, to those whose hoarding significantly impacted upon their lives and wellbeing. Hoarding has been suggested to represent a continuum rather than a discrete diagnostic entity (e.g. Timpano et al., 2013), with hoarding disorder representing serious impairment in living and functioning in one's home (DSM-5; APA, 2013). Given the nature of this impairment, it is important for researchers to

consider possible mechanisms by which hoarding behaviours can develop so that intervention strategies can be implemented before HD can take hold (Storch et al., 2011). Thus, the diversity of the hoarding behaviours in the current sample allow for a greater understanding of a possible hoarding continuum, although more research is required in larger samples and in those with diagnosed HD. It has been suggested that dimensional models of hoarding might be more useful than categorical ones (Bratiotis et al., 2019). Participants in HD and control groups studied by Bratiotis et al. made similar comments about discarding objects, with different intensities of emotion and focus of comments at times. For example, both groups talked about personal values related to responsibility and avoiding waste, emotional attachment to objects and/or people, and possible future use and need for the object. These were suggested to be universal concerns related to decisions about discarding or keeping objects. Meanwhile HD participants talked twice as much as their community control counterparts about objects as memories. Thus, while there are differences in groups of participants with HD and community controls, there are also similarities.

However, it needs to be noted that participants with hoarding disorder do have notable differences from those without the condition, for example patterns of brain activation (Tolin et al., 2009; 2012) and differences in networks in those with hoarding disorder and without (Timpano et al., 2020). Timpano et al. describe network analysis as a statistical approach to studying the associations between symptoms in a psychological disorder which follows from clinical network theory. Nodes in such a network represent symptoms, and edges between them represent association between symptoms. According to Timpano et al., the underlying assumption of clinical network theory is that symptoms of disorders are related to each other in a meaningful way and thus are not interchangeable. Networks of HD participants and those without suggested that for example the relationship between hoarding symptoms and emotional attachment was different in hoarding and control groups. Timpano et al. suggested that although the *symptoms* of hoarding are likely dimensional, the way they relate to one another in people with and without HD may be different. It is therefore a natural next step to assess which aspects of the theory developed within this thesis apply to hoarding behaviours generally and which ones apply to hoarding disorder specifically.

A further limitation of the thesis involves the sample demographics, which has implications for the applicability of the theory, particularly in older age groups and non-Western samples.

The sample was 58% female, most participants were from white British backgrounds and their mean age was 46. Two participants were from Asian backgrounds and one participant was born in Germany but grew up in the UK. Most of the participants were in their 30s (five) or 40s (six), with only one participant in their late 20s, three participants in their 50s and two participants in their 60s.

Thus, the theory herein would apply primarily to people with hoarding behaviours in their 30s and 40s, an important consideration as hoarding is suggested to follow a chronic course with worsening hoarding in successive decades of life (Ayers et al., 2010). Hoarding in an older age sample reached moderate severity levels by the mid-40s (Ayers et al., 2010) Although the mean age of participants in this study falls within this age range, there may not be sufficient numbers of older participants to capture the full progression of hoarding beyond this age range and thus potentially beyond the moderate severity level. In this study, seven participants described situations that were potentially consistent with HD or severe hoarding, several others categorised themselves as on a borderline between hoarding and collecting or described milder hoarding behaviours, for example difficulty discarding a restricted range of possessions, or less clutter than would be required for an HD diagnosis (as outlined in Appendix D). The age of the sample may not have allowed for the progression of hoarding across a longer lifespan, limiting its applicability. Testing the model in a sample of older age hoarders (65+) would therefore be useful to identify its applicability to an older age group, and whether any specific categories applied more to this group than others. For example, consistent with findings from Eckfield and Wallhagen (2013), health problems related to a lack of mobility and energy may be more pronounced for an older age group.

The lack of participants from a non-Western background means that results apply primarily to those in Western cultures. Although a recent transcultural study of hoarding (Nordsletten et al., 2018) suggested that core features of HD were stable across samples from the UK, Spain, Japan and Brazil, hoarding studies have been almost entirely conducted with Western samples (Nordsletten et al., 2018). The results of the present study therefore do not tell us about the development of hoarding behaviours in non-Western cultures and should be tested with a wider range of participants from different ethnic backgrounds. Some researchers have also noted for instance the lack of research on anxiety disorders and OCD in African American participants (Williams et al., 2017). They found that African American participants with hoarding and OCD were also more affected by pathological doubting, indecisiveness, and pathological slowness than those with OCD but without hoarding. The authors suggested a need for more research on biological and psychological factors in hoarding in this group (Williams et al., 2017). These findings suggest that there may also be a need for more research into hoarding in the Black community in general, particularly as Nordsletten et al.'s (2018) transcultural study of hoarding did not include African or Caribbean countries, for example.

7.3. Original contributions to knowledge

The primary contribution this research makes to the field is a substantive theoretical model of the development of hoarding behaviours (see page 101) which locates a process – that of managing possessions – within the life context of the individual. *Managing possessions* includes a series of

actions: putting like possessions with like, making decisions about them, finding a "home" for those possessions which are to be kept, and discarding others. Difficulties can arise at several points of this process, particularly related to decision-making and discarding. The meaning which participants with hoarding behaviours gave to their possessions, their life experiences, and discarding itself, can also provoke difficulties in managing possessions.

Taken together, these experiences form a struggle to manage. The struggle to manage could be a longstanding one, where problematic hoarding behaviours and relationships with possessions in childhood follow the individual through their life. It could also be more transient and potentially temporary, triggered by a life event such as trauma or the loss of a loved one. Some participants' struggles may be a combination of both, where longstanding issues which have been kept at bay become overwhelming due to the experience of trauma, stress or other difficulties and changes in their lives.

The focus of the model is thus what has happened to the person and how they have responded, both in terms of the physical management of their possessions and managing in a wider sense of coping. It asks how their struggle has manifested in their lives, rather than assuming their hoarding comes from problems and deficits in information processing, attachments to possessions and behavioural avoidance. The notion of a struggle to manage in hoarding gives a framework to understand some key questions regarding the development of hoarding behaviour, for example:

- What is most problematic? What does the person struggle with the most in attempting to manage their possessions? (For example, putting like with like, making decisions, finding a home for things, discarding, doing the bare minimum)
- What makes these things difficult?
- How did these difficulties arise? What meanings do participants ascribe to the events giving rise to the difficulties? What meaning do their possessions have for them?
- When and how do these difficulties manifest?
- What maintains them?
- How long have these difficulties been going on?
- What kind of intervention does the person need and want?

These questions and the insights that a struggle to manage can provide have practical benefits for clinicians and others who work with hoarders and could supplement assessment schedules suggested by the BPS DCP (2015) in their guidance for working with those who hoard. The notion of a struggle to manage possessions, focusing on what has happened – and is happening – in their lives and the actions they undertake with their possessions may also be more palatable to those who

hoard. Instead of discussing cognitive deficits and distortions with the attempt to change thinking and behaviour, a struggle to manage considers the person in a more holistic way and asks how they can move from struggling to overcoming their hoarding. A struggle to manage also has applicability across the continuum of hoarding behaviours, with the possibility that this can decrease feelings of shame and marginalisation, with HD a potential endpoint of struggling to manage rather than a problem within the person.

An additional and significant contribution which the thesis provides is a conceptual framework and theoretically derived item pool for future quantitative work, including further theoretical triangulation "demonstrating the verifiability of their proposed GTM in a subsequent study" (Rosenbaum, 2011, p. 238) and verification of the model in larger samples, including participants with diagnosed HD. This framework is based on the categories and subcategories developed in the theory and can also be used to develop a scale to assess the struggle to manage. Future work involving development, validation and further contributions which could be made using this scale are detailed in section 7.5. Future directions.

Further contributions which are made in the thesis are:

The importance of life experiences in a wider participant group than has previously been considered (e.g. Eckfield & Wallhagen, 2013), for example health concerns and life transitions such as moving to and from university and changes to household composition. Previous research by Eckfield and Wallhagen suggested that life changes such as changes to social roles could impact hoarding behaviours in older adults. Thus, the findings of the present study extend this observation by suggesting that life changes in the form of life transitions and health problems can affect a wider age range of people with hoarding behaviours. Findings also extend the results of Landau et al. (2011) by providing explanations of how and why life circumstances such as living alone or moving to a new home may affect hoarding behaviours.

The effect of pain on ability to manage possessions was a novel finding, as this has not yet been considered in any studies of which I am aware. Although this finding primarily came from Yvonne's experience of migraine, her description of its impact on her cognitive functioning and thus ability to manage possessions is one which may have important implications. Hoarding has been found to be comorbid with several physical and mental health conditions (e.g. Frost, Steketee, et al., 2011; Spittlehouse et al., 2016), and aspects of cognitive functioning are a key feature of the cognitive behavioural model (Frost & Hartl, 1996; Steketee & Frost, 2014a). It may thus be important to consider and assess the presence of pain and other health problems in those who hoard and the potential impact of this on their ability to make decisions and attend to tasks. This would not only be

beneficial for assessment and treatment, as treating pain and other aspects of physical health could increase the ability to manage possessions and thus deal with clutter and participate in therapies. It may also be useful in considering potential confounding variables in experimental studies. Studies where attempts are made to identify underlying cognitive deficits in hoarding could benefit from assessing the impact of any health conditions on cognitive functioning. This would allow for further understanding of the origins of any such deficits and how to best treat them.

The pinpointing of university as a key life transition with a potential impact on hoarding behaviours was also a point of novelty. Moving to and from university is likely to represent a shift in the person's level of responsibility for managing possessions and life, perhaps for the very first time. Such a finding is likely to indicate that children and teenagers who have hoarding tendencies may need more support in managing possessions and life at the point when they leave the family home. Additionally, hoarding tendencies could be assessed as part of student mental health intervention. These findings are particularly important given the need for early intervention suggested by some researchers (e.g. Storch et al., 2011) and the chronic course of hoarding over time (Ayers et al., 2009). University, moving away from the family home for the first time, and other life transition points in early life give ideas for when early intervention may be most useful. From a conceptual perspective, these observations give support to the suggestion that hoarding behaviours are kept to a minimum while parents have some control over their children's hoarding for example by tidying rooms and discarding possessions (Tolin, Meunier, et al., 2010).

Findings related to the importance of emotion also make a novel contribution to the field. Emotional aspects of hoarding have been given more consideration in the literature in recent years. Several findings in this thesis refer to the importance of emotion: *Struggling to "get into an admin role"* and *Experiencing a "vicious spiral"*. These findings suggest that strong emotional resonance of possessions – and their associated life experiences and events – form a significant part of the struggle to manage for some participants with hoarding behaviours. The vicious spiral represents an aspect of the struggle to manage for some participants with more severe hoarding behaviours, where the consequences of hoarding become sources of trauma and loss, creating an additional struggle. This concept extends what has been suggested about vicious cycles in hoarding by providing a metaphor which expresses not only a non-linear relationship with hoarding and life experience, but which also includes the notion of downward progression and constriction.

Findings related to emotion also add to an expanding literature base on an emotional relationship with possessions which encompasses but is broader than emotional attachment and emotions as responses to thoughts and drivers of behaviour. In this model emotions are a key aspect of the

struggle to manage. Objects can be imbued with emotion, triggers for the return of strong trauma-related emotions and can evoke emotion-laden memories which make them difficult to manage and particularly to discard. This emotional complexity in the meaning of possessions and the struggle to manage them extends findings related to object-affect fusion (Kellett & Knight, 2003) in hoarding. Kellett and Knight described how in object-affect fusion, emotions are projected into objects rather than being aspects of the individual. The present study demonstrates how such processes may be occurring and relates them to life experiences. For example, attempts to manage possessions brought back emotion-laden memories and experiences related to past traumatic and difficult experiences. These findings extend observations of object-affect fusion by demonstrating that emotional experiences related to possessions and the imbuing of objects with emotion can affect attempts to manage the contents as well as discarding. Additionally, much like research on memory which takes a qualitative perspective (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010; Cherrier & Ponnor, 2010), participants' descriptions of their emotional reactions to their possessions in the present study suggest an embodied and experiential aspect to hoarding which is not yet fully explored by pure cognitive theories.

Some participants in the present study described an emotional attachment based on the experience of possessions as related to a form of love and intimacy. This finding extends suggestions about the "deep-rooted 'self-connectedness'" (Mogan et al., 2012, p. 311) to possessions and indicates the ability of possessions to relate to the connectedness of self, loved ones and home. Thus, for some people with hoarding tendencies, possessions can be not only related to themselves, but to an intricate web of meaning involving those they love and the passage of time in everyday life. This kind of affection for things which may be considered mundane and commonplace may contribute to explaining why people who hoard have difficulty discarding things which are considered to be of little objective value (DSM-5; APA, 2013).

Some useful – and unexpected – findings related to the experience of interventions, both formal and informal support, and the need to build a new life beyond hoarding. These findings are particularly important when considering the success of existing interventions for hoarding. Such interventions range from successful but with some problems, in the case of CBT where hoarding scores tend to remain in the clinical range despite improvements (Tolin et al., 2015), to extremely unhelpful in the case of forced clearances (Frost & Steketee, 2010). Participants in the present study tended to emphasise that their hoarding was not simply about the need to tidy and develop strategies for managing possessions. Instead it required a more holistic intervention strategy, often involving considering the underlying problems and issues, the *"demons" and "triggers*" to which they attributed their hoarding. The need to build a life beyond the hoard also suggested a need for

aftercare and an approach to hoarding which involved making changes to functioning and even identity, and adjustment to these which would enable lasting change.

7.4. Clinical recommendations

Although this study did not utilise a clinical sample (i.e. participants diagnosed with hoarding disorder), there are some potential clinical recommendations which could be made, particularly related to the category of trying to overcome hoarding.

Firstly, and consistent with literature on the role of compulsive acquisition in hoarding, clinicians could consider assessing the ways in which hoarding clients resist the temptation to buy and otherwise acquire objects. While this has received less attention in the literature than difficulty discarding (Frost et al., 2013) some researchers have suggested that difficulties with acquisition in people who hoard can become apparent in therapy when clients are not able to engage in behaviours such as avoiding certain shops (e.g. Frost & Hristova, 2011). This avoidance of shops and other places in which objects could be acquired was also a feature of resisting temptation in this theory. Less obvious forms of avoidance were also described by a minority of participants, including not engaging in watching TV and cancelling broadband to prevent the use of internet auction sites. It may therefore be useful for clinicians to frame questions about compulsive acquisition difficulties broadly, for example asking hoarding clients how they resist the temptation to buy or acquire objects and whether they have changed their behaviour and routines to prevent acquisition.

Secondly, a minority of participants in the study emphasised the impact that their hoarding had on their functioning and identity, and Melba particularly stressed how difficult it was transitioning from her hoarding life to a new way of functioning. There are two potential implications here: a need for aftercare for people who hoard to develop ways of functioning in their home which allow them to manage their living spaces, and the importance of developing an identity which does not involve hoarding.

Thirdly, participants' experiences of seeking and receiving formal support suggest a need for help with both the practical and emotional and psychological aspects of hoarding, thus one clinical recommendation would be to utilise multidisciplinary teams in tackling hoarding. A lack of local support services was also evident. Given the usefulness of support groups for some participants, a further tentative clinical recommendation would be to utilise peer support groups, particularly in areas where no such groups exist.

7.5. Future directions

7.5.1. Theoretical verification and expansion

While the product of a GTM study can stand on its own, having been derived from collected data (Rosenbaum, 2011), it is also possible to test models developed from GTM analyses. Rosenbaum suggests that such testing can involve using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) techniques to evaluate the fit of models in new data sets. This is a natural next step given the diversity of the sample in the present study as it can involve testing in clinical, sub-clinical and non-clinical hoarding samples. Several researchers have noted that hoarding behaviours, e.g. saving, appear to form a continuum (e.g. Mataix-Cols et al., 2010) or suggested an underlying dimensional structure to hoarding (e.g. Timpano et al., 2013), however differences in groups of participants with and without HD have also been found (Timpano et al., 2020). A model testing approach which considers the fit of categories and subcategories in different groups would thus have several benefits if hoarding does indeed form a continuum with HD representing an extreme.

Firstly, the investigation of the latent structure of hoarding by testing model fit with different groups. Secondly, the study of potential differences in participants with and without HD. Although the diversity of the sample in the present study allows for a wide range of hoarding behaviours to be described, specific relationships between HD and concepts within the theory cannot be determined, nor can a hoarding continuum be ascertained. However, quantitative methods can be used to investigate continua of mental health phenomena. For example, using latent class analysis (LCA) to assess groups of participants and assess predictors of hoarding severity using Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR) to investigate a psychosis continuum (e.g. Shevlin et al., 2007). A similar approach could be applied to a possible hoarding continuum, assessing hoarding groups and phenomena which can potentially influence the development of hoarding behaviour, for example becoming overwhelmed, living alone, experiencing health issues and experiencing trauma and/or loss. This would allow for further consideration of social and developmental factors which can influence hoarding behaviour and HD. A dimensional approach (compared to a categorical one) has several benefits.

Categorical and disease-based models of mental illness have been questioned in recent years, particularly around the DSM-5 diagnoses (e.g. Cuthbert & Insel, 2013). The use of set criteria such as the diagnostic criteria in the DSM-5 has implications for both treatment and research. Cuthbert and Insel (2013) note that in traditional clinical studies, participant groups include those who meet clinical criteria for a specific disorder. One concern noted by Cuthbert and Insel with such approaches to clinical groups concerns the unknown number of people “whose conditions are

essentially invisible to researchers by virtue of failing to meet criteria" (p. 5), who are thus excluded from research studies. With some disorders, such as eating disorders, Cuthbert and Insel suggest that an approach using the 'not otherwise specified' diagnosis can be utilised, however with HD no other such diagnosis exists. A categorical view of HD versus non-HD would potentially push research into these situations, a scenario which Steketee & Frost (2014b) appear to caution against in their argument for including a wide range of participants in hoarding studies.

Of further concern with categorical views of HD as something which people either have or do not have is access to treatment. If treatment accessibility is based on the presence or absence of HD and clinical levels of impairment, the same invisibility of some sections of the population occurs not only in research, but in the ability to access helpful interventions for problematic hoarding. Given the progressive course of hoarding (Ayers et al., 2009) and calls for preventative measures in hoarding (Storch et al., 2011), supplemented in the present study by Emma's experience of asking for help which was not forthcoming until her hoarding reached severe levels, a dimensional approach appears particularly useful.

7.5.2. Development and validation of a struggling to manage scale

This model has produced several novel findings which could be fruitfully explored further in a questionnaire scale. Appendix K presents a conceptual framework derived from Chapters Four, Five and Six and some concepts from extant hoarding research. Major categories (*Managing possessions, Managing life, Struggling to manage, Trying to overcome hoarding*) are represented as subscales of a multivariate scale. Subcategories are represented as subdomains, and potential items are given, forming a theoretically driven item pool.

Development of the scale will proceed along lines suggested by Furr (2011): identifying the construct and context for the scale, deciding on the response format and writing the initial item pool, data collection, and finally assessment of the psychometric properties of the scale (dimensionality, reliability and validity). It is likely that this would be an iterative process as Furr notes that analysis of the psychometric properties of scales can yield new understanding of such scales during test construction. Work on the initial item pool has begun, as seen in Appendix K.

To initially evaluate and refine the item pool, cognitive interviews could be used. Cognitive interviewing techniques allow for an understanding of how respondents answer questions and are useful pre-testing methods (Collins, 2003). These methods can involve either asking participants to talk about what they were thinking while answering questions (think-aloud technique) or using specific prompt questions (Collins, 2003). Cognitive interviews could involve participants who meet clinical cut-off for HD (a score of 41 on the Saving Inventory-Revised; Muroff et al., 2014) as well as

those meeting subclinical criteria (e.g. a score of one standard deviation below 41; Spittlehouse et al., 2016). Potential inclusion of subclinical participants is predicated upon the notion that the conceptual framework of the proposed scale was not drawn purely from a clinical sample, thus scale development and testing should also utilise a wider population.

After revision of the item pool, data collection and assessment of the psychometric properties of the scale could begin, including factor analysis. As there is already a hypothesised latent structure for the scale based on the theory herein and existing hoarding research, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) would be the most appropriate form of factor analysis to employ (Suhr, 2006). CFA can also be useful in assessing the dimensionality, reliability and validity of scales (Furr, 2011). Considering the number of items in the scale, in order to test a model using CFA between three and five indicators per latent variable is considered appropriate (Kenny, 1979; Kline, 2016). As there are 14 subcategories, between 42 and 70 items would thus be necessary, therefore in the testing stages reducing the length of the scale to this range would be the goal. If the factor structure is confirmed, further exploration of the model using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is also a possibility.

A SEM model of the theory developed herein would likely be complex, with both direct and indirect effects of variables (e.g. life transitions) on measures of hoarding (acquisition, difficulty discarding/saving, and clutter). Currently it would likely be the case that acquisition could be predicted by difficulty resisting temptation; attempting to manage negative emotional states (e.g. depression) and induce positive ones by acquiring; life transitions; and experiencing a vicious spiral. Difficulty discarding could be predicted by discarding preferences, the meaning of discarding and of possessions, problems in decision-making, physical and mental health problems, life transitions, and experiencing a vicious spiral. Clutter could be predicted by doing the bare minimum, being unable to find homes for things, and being unable to put like with like. The effects predicted above would likely be direct, however there is also the possibility for indirect effects with some variables acting as mediators. For example, the effect of life context factors in the model in this thesis such as life transitions may be mediated by the effect of managing possessions. For example, struggling to “get into an admin role” may have a direct effect on aspects of managing possessions such as decision-making, which then affect levels of clutter and difficulty discarding. The latter may act as a mediating variable itself. For example, as clutter is an outcome of difficulty discarding/saving and acquisition, modelling the effect of variables on clutter may involve including difficulty discarding/saving and acquisition as mediating variables.

Such quantitative work will have several benefits. Firstly, providing an additional contribution from the thesis in the form of a scale which can be used to assess managing possessions and managing

life. Existing hoarding scales assess symptom severity (e.g. the SI-R), the extent of clutter (the CIR) and a limited range of saving cognitions (the SCI) but do not at present assess the relationship between life events and hoarding, nor how people who hoard think about and attempt to manage their possessions. Several hypotheses have been put forward relating to the organisational and categorisation skills of people who hoard, for example that hoarders may not know what people normally save or discard (Frost & Hartl, 1996), but categorisation and organisation have not yet been assessed in self-report studies beyond hoarding participants' own views of their cognitive skills.

Secondly, questionnaire scales can be administered to a large population along with additional relevant hoarding measures, for example the SI-R and the CIR. This allows for investigation of the model in a wider population, augmenting findings from the present study and extending to involve larger populations. The latter is important given that the present study draws on the experiences of seventeen participants with self-identified hoarding behaviour, of whom seven appeared to have significant problems with hoarding. Extending to wider populations allows for insights to be gained beyond this specific group. Additionally, it may be more likely that those with severe hoarding behaviours will take part in questionnaire studies. These are anonymous and do not involve face-to-face or telephone contact with unknown researchers or the potentially intense and in-depth conversation involved in interviews. Such methods may overcome some of the shame which participants who hoard may feel (e.g. Kellett et al., 2010), or potential fears that disclosure of unsafe living situations may trigger safeguarding policies and lead to stressful intervention.

Thirdly, developing and testing a scale allows for further theoretical refinement as relationship between categories, subcategories and their related items (from domains and subdomains) can be quantitatively explored in larger populations. Their relationship with clinical, subclinical and non-clinical hoarding symptoms can also be investigated. Although GTM is a primarily qualitative approach, quantitative data can be utilised in the development and refinement of theory. Glaser (2007) asserts that "all is data" (para 1) and while Charmaz (2006) cautions researchers to consider carefully how data is constructed and collected, various data sources *can* be used in GTM. Quantitative relationships between categories, subcategories and items which attempt to measure them could be used as a further source of theoretical sampling, with new interview questions developed to explore the nuances in these relationships, adding to the richness of the theory.

7.5.3. Further qualitative work

In addition to further conceptual development using quantitative relationships between categories and subcategories as detailed above, wider theoretical development still utilising a qualitative approach would be a useful next step. Specifically, investigation in participants with diagnosed HD.

One way to do this would be to administer a hoarding measure such as the SI-R and a measure of clutter in the home to confirm clinical levels of hoarding and assess participants' living situation. Alongside these, further interviews with participants from clinical and subclinical groups, using these as a source of comparison and theoretical sampling to add further detail about which categories are most applicable to HD and which represent more universal life experiences and relationships with possessions.

7.6. Concluding remarks

Overall, the locating of hoarding and difficulties with managing possessions within the life context of the individual allows for a holistic consideration of the person's difficulties with their possessions and the various influences in their life which affect, and are affected by, their relationship and interaction with their belongings. Such conceptualisation of hoarding extends existing cognitive behavioural understanding which primarily sees hoarding as the result of erroneous beliefs about possessions, maladaptive attachments to them, and learned emotional responses to them. This is in line with suggestions made about the meaning of hoarding by Orr et al. (2019). Participants in their study made sense of their hoarding using various explanations, making hoarding "intelligible to varying extents once the context was known" (p. 6) rather than as "the predetermined result simply of cognitive, affective, genetic or neurochemical deficits" (p. 6). This argument, plus the findings in Chapter Six of this thesis related to help and support, suggest a desire on the part of those who hoard to be understood beyond their perceived deficits in cognition, information processing or biology. The model in this thesis represents one such attempt to understand, and it is my fond hope that both those who hoard and those who wish to help them find value and usefulness in it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Phase one participant recruitment flyer

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

Psychology Department
School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street
Nottingham, NG1 4QF

<u>Is your home full of items which you feel you can't part with?</u>

Call for participants in a psychological research study on hoarding:

* **Do you find it hard to discard possessions?**
* **Does the thought of discarding your possessions make you upset, distressed or worried?**
* **Do you feel the need to save the majority of the items you own?**
* **Does not being able to get rid of possessions make you upset or worried, or cause problems in your work or personal life?**
* **Do you have so many things in your home that it is hard to move around or use rooms for their intended purpose?**
* **Does the number of possessions in your home make you feel upset, distressed or worried, or cause problems in your work or personal life?**

If you can answer **Yes** to <u>two or more of these questions</u>, I would like you to participate in an interview about your relationship with possessions and how this has developed.

Contact Victoria Barnes at: victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk or 07546948326 for further information.

This research has received ethical approval from the NTU College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Hoarding behaviour study, for more information please contact Victoria: 07546948326 victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk

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Appendix B: Phase one interview guide

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Interview schedule

Some general conversational questions to ask to get the participant comfortable, e.g.

- How has your day been so far?
- What sort of things have you been doing?

Participant Background

To begin with I would like to get to know a more about Your Background, who you are as a person and your life in general, so could you please start by telling me a little bit about yourself?

- Prompts:
    - Age, gender, family, marital status, employment status, place of birth.

About the Things You Collect/Save:

Now I've found out a little bit about you, I'd like to move on to talking about the things you collect/save, and what they mean to you. So, can you tell me:

1. What type of things do you collect/save?
    - Prompts:
        - What words would you use to describe what you collect/save? (e.g. "treasures, collection") Are you happy for me to use this same word when we talk about the things you own?
        - What words do you think other people might use? (optional prompt)
        - What were the first things you began collecting/saving?
        - What was the most recent thing you collected or bought?

2. What are your favourite things?
    - Prompts:
        - What is it about these that you like the most?
        - What are your least favourite things?
        - Thinking about all of your possessions, what item or items hold a special meaning for you?

Middle of interview: background to hoarding, development of hoarding and daily life

As we've discussed the things you collect/save/hoard, I would like to find out about the background to your saving/collecting, how it has developed throughout your life, and some more about what daily life is like for you.

1. How did your hoarding/saving/collecting begin?
    - Prompts:
        - What was happening in your life then?
        - What happened before then?
        - What happened after?
        - Who was involved? (optional)

2. How have you acquired your things? (optional)

3. How has the way you save/collect things changed over time?
- Prompts:
    - What do you think brought about that change?
    - What happened before then?
    - What have you stopped saving/collecting?
    - Why was this?

Some of the things I'd like to talk about with you now could be a bit more sensitive than the previous questions. Just let me know if you would like to take a break during this part of the interview or at any other time, and remember that you don't have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

4. Have you ever lost something you had collected/saved? (Could be losing something but knowing it's somewhere amongst other things, or not knowing where it is, or someone taking or borrowing without giving back)
- Prompts:
    - If yes, how did that feel?
    - If not, how would that feel?

5. Have you ever tried to part with one of your possessions?
- Prompts:
    - If yes, can you talk me through what happens when you try to do this?
    - Which items would you part with?
    - What prompts you to clear things?
    - What are you thinking? Feeling? Doing?
    - If no, what do you think prevents you from getting rid of possessions?
    - What would prompt you to get rid of possessions?
    - How would you feel if you had to get rid of one of your possessions?
    - What would happen? (to the person and the object)
    - How would you prefer to part with a possession? (E.g. charity shop, recycle, throw)

6. Has anyone else ever tried to get you to part with your possessions?
- Prompts:
    - If yes, who was this?
    - What was happening at the time?
    - What did they do?
    - How did you feel?
    - What could they have done differently?

7. Please describe a typical day in your life.

8. What would a typical day in your life have been like before you started hoarding/saving/collecting?

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your living space, and learn a little more about how you feel about how you and others describe collecting/saving/hoarding. Again these questions could be quite sensitive so please remember that you can take a break at any time.

9. Earlier in the interview you described your living space as ____, how would others describe it?

10. How do you feel about your living space?

11. Earlier in the interview you described your relationship with possessions as collecting/saving/other. What is it about this description that appeals to you?

12. Some people would refer to having lots of things and finding it hard to part with them as hoarding. How do you feel about this?

13. If behaviour described as hoarding: before you began to view your behaviour as hoarding, what would you have said or thought if someone had described what you were doing as hoarding?

14. What might be the difference between hoarding and collecting?

End of interview

Thank you for answering my questions, your contributions are much appreciated and valued. I just have a couple of questions left.

1. Earlier in our interview you mentioned _____ (person/thing which was important). What were they like?

2. Tell me about any strengths you have developed from the challenges you've told me about.

Now I'd like to give you the opportunity to tell me anything which is important to you which we haven't covered.

3. Is there something else you would like to say? Something that we haven't already covered?

4. Do you have any questions for me?

Some conversational questions to end, such as:

- Do you have anything planned for the rest of the day?
- Are you going anywhere after this?

Somewhere a question about whether the interviewee's behaviour might be similar or different to other people who hoard that they might have seen on TV, but not sure where to put this.

Appendix C: Phase one amended interview guide

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Interview schedule

Some general conversational questions to ask to get the participant comfortable, e.g.

- How has your day been so far?
- What sort of things have you been doing?

Participant Background

To begin with I would like to get to know a more about Your Background, who you are as a person and your life in general, so could you please start by telling me a little bit about yourself?

- Prompts:
    - Age, gender, family, marital status, employment status, place of birth.

About the Things You Collect/Save:

Now I've found out a little bit about you, I'd like to move on to talking about the things you collect/save, and what they mean to you.

Before we begin, as you know this interview focuses on hoarding behaviours, can we discuss **the words you like to use** [8]to describe your things and your relationship with them?

- Prompt:
    - Some people might describe their things as a **collection, others as their treasures, and others as a hoard**
    - Are you happy **for me to use this same word** when we talk about the things you own?
    - Is the term **"hoarding behaviours" one that you are comfortable with?**

So, can you tell me:

1. What type of things do you consider that you hoard?

- Prompts:
    - What were the **first things** you began collecting/saving?
    - What was the **most recent thing** you collected or bought?

2. What are your **favourite things?**

- Prompts:
    - What is it about these that you **like the most**?
    - What are your **least favourite** things?
    - Thinking about all of your possessions, **what item or items hold a special meaning** for you?

Middle of interview: background to hoarding, development of hoarding and daily life

[8] Underlined and bold text represented a way of highlighting important aspects of the questions so I could more easily see them on the page while I was interviewing.

As we've discussed the things you collect/save/hoard, I would like to find out about the background to your saving/collecting, how it has developed throughout your life, and some more about what daily life is like for you.

1. **How did your hoarding behaviours/saving/collecting begin?**
   - Prompts:
     - **What was happening** in your life then?
     - What happened **before** then?
     - What happened **after**?
     - Who was involved? (optional)

2. How have you acquired your things? (optional)

3. How has the way you save/collect things **changed over time?**
   - Prompts:
     - What do you think **brought about that change?**
     - What happened **before** then?
     - What have you stopped saving/collecting?
     - Why was this?

Some of the things I'd like to talk about with you now could be a bit more sensitive than the previous questions. Just let me know if you would like to take a break during this part of the interview or at any other time, and remember that you don't have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

4. Have you ever **lost** something you had collected/saved? (Could be losing something but knowing it's somewhere amongst other things, or not knowing where it is, or someone taking or borrowing without giving back)
   - Prompts:
     - If yes, **how did that feel?**
     - If not, **how would that feel?**

5. Have you ever **tried to part with** one of your possessions?
   - Prompts:
     - If **yes**, can you **talk me through what happens** when you try to do this?
     - **Which items** would you part with?
     - **What prompts** you to part with things?
     - What are you **thinking? Feeling? Doing**?
     - If **no**, what do you think **prevents you** from getting rid of possessions?
     - **What would prompt** you to get rid of possessions?
     - How would you feel if you had to **get rid of one** of your possessions?
     - **What would happen**? (to the person and the object)
     - How would you prefer to part with a possession? (E.g. charity shop, recycle, throw away)

6. Has **anyone else** ever tried to get you to part with your possessions?
   - Prompts:
     - If **yes**, **who** was this?
     - **What was happening** at the time?
     - What did **they do**?
     - How did you feel?
     - What could they have done differently?

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your living space, and learn a little more about how you feel about how you and others describe collecting/saving/hoarding. Again these questions could be quite sensitive so please remember that you can take a break at any time.

9. Earlier in the interview you described **your living space as ____, how would others describe it**? If they haven't described their living space: please can you describe your living space? **Can you talk me through your living space? If I were to walk around your house, what kind of things would I see, starting from the front door and moving through the house?**

10. How do you **feel about your living space**?

11. Earlier in the interview you described your relationship with possessions as collecting/saving/hoarding/other. What is it about this description that appeals to you?

13. If behaviour described as hoarding: **before you began to view your behaviour as hoarding, what would you have said or thought if** someone had described what you were doing as hoarding?

14. What might be the difference between hoarding and collecting?

15. How do you feel about the way hoarding behaviours are portrayed in the media?
- Prompt:
    - How are the hoarding behaviours different from your hoarding behaviours?
    - Are there any ways in which they might be similar?

End of interview

Thank you for answering my questions, your contributions are much appreciated and valued. I just have a couple of questions left.

1. Earlier in our interview you mentioned _____ (person/thing which was important). What were they like?

2. Tell me about any strengths you have developed from the challenges you've told me about.

Now I'd like to give you the opportunity to tell me anything which is important to you which we haven't covered.

3. Is there something else you would like to say? Something that we haven't already covered?

4. Do you have any questions for me?

Some conversational questions to end, such as:
- Do you have anything planned for the rest of the day?
- Are you going anywhere after this?

Appendix D: Participant profiles

This appendix presents short profiles of each of the participants in the study. These are given for context and transparency regarding the kinds of hoarding behaviours exhibited by participants, and do not represent the entirety of their hoarding trajectories.

Dylan described how he had concluded that he was a hoarder due to his friends' reactions to his home. Although there were some clear spaces, and he described having storage space which he was reluctant to utilise, he described how some of the rooms in his home were difficult to access and that he had at one point only a narrow path between his desk and door in his study.

Tamara described how her hoarding had begun in childhood as collecting, to perpetuate her father's memory and a potential way of compensating for loss in her younger years. She described how the consequences of her hoarding had been serious, having had her children removed by social services. The television shows about hoarding had made Tamara realise she was a hoarder.

Lily described herself as somewhere on the border of hoarding and collecting, with some possessions she was unable to discard although she did not necessarily know why. She described some spaces in her home as being untidy and needing to be addressed.

Ava attributed her hoarding to experiences of deprivation in her childhood, describing wanting to hold onto things as she had had so little during her early years. Although she did not describe her hoarding as having had serious negative consequences, she described how others may be surprised at the extent to which she had possessions packed into spaces. She considered herself somewhere between a hoarder and a collector, and expressed difficulties getting rid of things, sometimes even those which were broken.

Daniel described having some problems with hoarding and getting rid of some of his possessions, particularly centred around electronics and paperwork. He also described wanting to proactively manage his hoarding tendencies, as he believed hoarding behaviours could worsen after traumatic experiences, although he had not experienced trauma at the time of his interviews.

Emma described longstanding hoarding tendencies, disliking the idea of throwing things away from a young age and wanting to hold on to things. Her hoarding had been triggered by a number of traumatic experiences, and she detailed problems with her mental health, her housing association and for example being unable to change the mattress on her bed due to a lack of space.

Natalie attributed her hoarding tendencies to her Asperger's syndrome. She described rails of clothes which would hang down due to the weight of them, although she thought that her hoarding

tendencies had gotten better with age as she matured. She previously found that she did not like to throw anything away, but at the time of her interview felt that she was improving.

Antony also described longstanding hoarding tendencies from childhood, starting with picking up objects. His hoarding involved both buying and picking things up, and he described how his home had been full from floor to ceiling in some rooms. At the time of his interviews he was making a great deal of effort to overcome his hoarding.

Alan described himself as a borderline hoarder. He was concerned with waste, preferred to recycle things and talked about a kind of hoarding of interests.

Yvonne struggled to get organised and her hoarding behaviours focused particularly on paperwork. She also struggled to throw some things away, including possessions which had belonged to her parents and the paperwork.

Susie described hoarding behaviours but not to the extent where she felt distressed or which impacted on her social functioning. Her hoarding behaviours appeared to have begun in childhood, although she described having little space for her own things as she grew up in a hoarded home. Although she had a lot of possessions, these did not prevent her or her partner from being able to use their active living spaces.

Hasan described longstanding issues with hoarding, a desire to accumulate things and difficulty discarding since childhood. He also described how his family were concerned about the amount of possessions he had in his home and their impact on his living space.

Tara described longstanding concerns about discarding things. Viewing information about hoarding made Tara realise that she was also hoarding, and she began receiving CBT after talking to her GP about her behaviours and her home. She described tripping over things which could not be put away, considered her possessions to be unmanageable due to the volume of things she owned, and described not having enough space to prepare food in her kitchen.

Jeff strove for a minimalist life, although he seemed to have very little, he did have an aversion to throwing things away, preferring to find new uses for possessions. Jeff considered his main hoarding behaviour to be around holding onto money.

Rose described her hoarding as having progressed over time particularly during certain times in her life, and she speculated that she may have had underlying hoarding tendencies. She speculated that she had not had the opportunity to hoard much during childhood due to her parents' influence. Rose's husband became aware of hoarding through the media and through this Rose realised that

she was hoarding. She described embarrassment about inviting people into her home and how it could be difficult to use some parts of her house due to the volume of possessions.

Walter described a tendency to collect and accumulate which appeared to begin at university with books and music. He also described how he found it difficult to throw things away. Although his home was not so full that he could not live in it, he did talk about difficulties in socialising as things would need to be moved so people could sit down, and not having enough floor space to be able to exercise.

Melba described how her hoarding had begun at university, although she also talked about hoarding tendencies in her earlier life and hoarding as a result of trauma and loss. She became aware of her hoarding through her partner expressing concerns about the volume of possessions and her housing provider needing to access the home and expressing concerns about health issues.

Appendix E: Phase one participant documents: information sheet, consent form, debrief sheet

Psychology Division
School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
Burton Street
Nottingham, NG1 4BU

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Participation Information Sheet (Face-to-Face Interview)

Thank you for agreeing to consider participating in this research project. Before deciding whether to participate, we feel it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. We would be grateful if you would take the time to read the following information carefully. Please do not hesitate to contact one of the research team if anything is unclear or if you wish to discuss your participation in this project.

What is the purpose of the study?
The aim of this research is to develop a new theory of how hoarding behaviours develop, the relationships people have with their possessions, and what possessions and living space mean to people with hoarding behaviours. If you do decide to participate you will be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher.

Who is running the study?
The project is being conducted by myself, Victoria Barnes. I am a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). The project is being supervised by a team of experienced researchers led by Dr David Wilde (my main supervisor) and including Dr Eva Zysk, Dr Sarah Seymour-smith, and Dr Fraenze Kibowski, who are all lecturers in Psychology at NTU. The contact details for myself and my main supervisor appear at the end of this information sheet.

Remuneration:
As a thank you for your participation, we can offer you a £10 gift card which you can use in a variety of outlets. You may withdraw from the study at any time before, during or after the interview, whether you have received a gift card or not.

Why have I been chosen to take part?
You have been chosen to take part as you were able to answer "yes" to two or more of the questions in the participant information flyer/advert you read, or you have expressed an interest through a mutual contact, and have volunteered as a potential participant.

Do I have to take part?
No, your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You can also withdraw from the study **at any point (up to 31/05/2017)** either by contacting me or my main supervisor, Dr David Wilde, before, during or after the interview. You can also withdraw your data **at any time after the**

interview has taken place. You will not be asked to give a reason for withdrawing at any stage, and there are no penalties for withdrawing your participation. If you wish to withdraw your data, please contact myself or my main supervisor using the contact details at the end of this sheet and quote your unique identifier (pseudonym) that you were given at the interview.

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to read and fully understand the information on this sheet, and then sign and complete a separate informed consent form. If you decide not to take part in the research then you will not be asked to give a reason.

What will I be asked to do?
You are being asked to take part in an interview with myself, Victoria Barnes, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be carried out at a date and time of your choosing. This could mean you coming to the university or the interview could take place in a private room in a public place, such as a room in a community centre or library. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure that an accurate record is kept of what we talk about.

If you would prefer not to be interviewed in person, we can also arrange an interview via telephone or by using Skype (a video phone conferencing software on a computer) if you have a computer with access to the Internet. If you would prefer to use one of these methods instead, please let me know and I can give you additional information about how we would go about this.

Whichever way we connect to do the interview, the same method will be used during the interview. I will ask you a series of questions about your behaviour regarding your possessions, your feelings and experiences about your possessions, and your daily life. Your responses will be recorded with your permission to ensure the data you provide is accurately documented. During the interview, please let me know if you would rather not answer some of the questions, or if you would like to take a break. If you wish to end the interview, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason why.

What questions will be asked in the interview?
The interview will be in a semi-structured format meaning there will be a few set questions that will be asked and some questions that will be in response to the answers you provide. You will be asked a series of questions about yourself as a person, the things you have, your life history with possessions, your current life and relationship with possessions, and you will also have the opportunity to tell me about anything else which is important to you. If you are unsure about any of the questions then you may contact me at any time to discuss this. In addition, if you feel uncomfortable and do not want to answer a question, then just let me know and I will continue to the next question.

What will happen to the information I provide in my interview?
The audio recording of your interview will be written out word-for-word on a computer and then what we have talked about will be analysed. This information will then form the findings and conclusions of this research. The analysis will involve summarising what we talk about and this will be compared with what others who are being interviewed in the study also say on this topic. From this information I will build up a theory which attempts to explain how hoarding behaviours develop and increases our understanding of the relationships people have with their possessions.

How will the research team ensure the security of the data I provide?
All digital audio data files will be kept on a secure, password protected computer. Any paper-based data such as your consent form and typed transcript (the word-for-word record of our interview) will be kept either in a locker in the NTU graduate school which only the research team have access to,

or a locked cabinet in my home. All data will be destroyed securely after ten years. Results from the study will be written up in the form of a final report, which will be submitted as part fulfilment of my PhD research degree at NTU. All data in the report will be anonymised so that you will not be identified. I may publish word-for-word quotations from our interview, for example, in academic papers and at conference presentations. In such instances, you can be assured that all names and information that could personally identify you will be removed so that you cannot be recognised.

How will the research team protect my confidentiality?
Due to the nature of the research, I may use the things you say as data in the form of quotations for the final report or other publications arising from this research. However, your data will be fully anonymised by removing all identifying information, for example, your name, and other names of people and places you mention. The data will be stored on a password protected computer at all times. Paper-based data such as your consent form and typed transcript will be stored in lockable cabinets or lockers. Only the researcher and the supervisory team will have access to your data. Your name will be changed to remain anonymous and any personal information will not be included in the report.

In this kind of research there is a very rare and unlikely situation where we may have to break confidentiality if we are concerned that participants and/or their loved ones may come to serious harm. This is based on ethical concerns for participant safety and is detailed in the section below on risks/disadvantages of participation.

What are the possible risks/disadvantages of participating?
The main cost to you will be the time that you take to participate in this interview. The risks to you may include providing information that is of a very personal nature to you or information you do not feel comfortable sharing. However, as mentioned above, all information you provide will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified with any information you have given. In addition to this, please do not forget that if at any time you feel uncomfortable participating in the study you may either refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the study entirely.

If you have become upset or distressed at any point either during or after the interview, or you feel you need support with any difficulties you are facing, there are a range of support services listed at the end of this information sheet which you can access.

Please be aware that in exceptional circumstances people may disclose that their living situation is highly unsafe for them or vulnerable dependents, e.g. young children or elderly people. If during the interview I become concerned either for your immediate safety or that of your loved ones, I will discuss this with you. I will then talk to the rest of the research team. If we have serious safeguarding concerns and we are worried that you or your loved ones will come to harm, we may have to break confidentiality. This could involve disclosing our concerns to safeguarding officers at the university or other professionals such as your GP. I will discuss this with you before this happens. The research team will only act on safeguarding concerns based on a duty of care for the participants we work with and our responsibility to abide by ethical principles.

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behaviours and our relationships with possessions. I would also be happy to send the findings, such as published papers and completed chapters from my PhD thesis, to you so you can see how others in similar situations describe and understand their relationship with their possessions.

What will happen to the results of the research?
The findings will be written up in a final report at the end of my programme of research and which will be submitted as an assessment for my PhD degree at NTU. Throughout the research I will aim to publish the findings in scientific journals and present them at scientific conferences. If this is the case all names and identifiable material will be removed so that they cannot be recognised.

How can I find out more about this project and its results?
For more information about this project, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my main supervisor. A final version of the report will be available upon request should you wish to see this.

Who is responsible for the study?
The main supervisor and supervisory team will be responsible for the conduct of this research.

Has anyone reviewed the study?
The project was initially reviewed by an independent panel of referees from the NTU Psychology department who judged the project worthy of funding on the basis of its scientific merit. The project has since received favourable ethical approval from the NTU College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Contact details:
Please feel free to contact myself or my main supervisor using the following details:

Researcher
Victoria Barnes
Candidate for PhD
Email: victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 07546948326

Main Supervisor
Dr David Wilde
Lecturer in Psychology
Email: david.wilde@ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 0115 848 2718

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

Nottingham Trent University
Chaucer Building
Burton Street
Nottingham
NG1 4BU

Support services

Online support:

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www.cloudsend.org.uk

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http://www.hoardinguk.org/HoardingUK-HelplineandGroupSkypeSupport.html

In person support groups:

http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/resources/ - this webpage lists support groups in various places in the UK.

You can also access help via your GP or the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service (http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008) if you feel you need more structured support.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information, and for your interest in this research.

Psychology Department
School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street
Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Participation Information Sheet (Interview by Telephone)

Thank you for agreeing to consider participating in this research project. Before deciding whether to participate, we feel it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. We would be grateful if you would take the time to read the following information carefully. Please do not hesitate to contact one of the research team if anything is unclear or if you wish to discuss your participation in this project.

What is the purpose of the study?
The aim of this research is to develop a new theory of how hoarding behaviours develop, the relationships people have with their possessions, and what possessions and living space mean to people with hoarding behaviours. If you do decide to participate you will be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher.

Who is running the study?
The project is being conducted by myself, Victoria Barnes. I am a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). The project is being supervised by a team of experienced researchers led by Dr David Wilde (my main supervisor) and including Dr Eva Zysk, Dr Sarah Seymour-Smith, and Dr Fraenze Kibowski, who are all lecturers in Psychology at NTU. The contact details for myself and my main supervisor appear at the end of this information sheet.

Remuneration:
As a thank you for your participation, we can offer you a £10 gift card which you can use in a variety of outlets. You may withdraw from the study at any time before, during or after the interview, whether you have received a gift card or not.

Why have I been chosen to take part?
You have been chosen to take part as you were able to answer "yes" to two or more of the questions in the participant information flyer/advert you read, or you have expressed an interest through a mutual contact, and have volunteered as a potential participant.

Do I have to take part?
No, your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You can also withdraw from the study **at any point (up to 30/06/2018)** either by contacting me or my main supervisor, Dr David Wilde, before, during or after the interview. You can also withdraw your data **at any time after the interview has taken place**. You will not be asked to give a reason for withdrawing at any stage, and there are no penalties for withdrawing your participation. If you wish to withdraw your data, please contact myself or my main supervisor using the contact details at the end of this sheet and quote your unique identifier (pseudonym) that you were given at the interview.

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to read and fully understand the information on this sheet, and then sign and complete a separate informed consent form. If you decide not to take part in the research then you will not be asked to give a reason.

What will I be asked to do?
You are being asked to take part in an interview with myself, Victoria Barnes, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be carried out at a date and time of your choosing. We can decide between us the best time for me to call. I will call you so that you will not incur any charges for using the telephone for this interview. The interview will be audio recorded at my end of the line to ensure that an accurate record is kept of what we both talk about.

I will ask you a series of questions about the development of your hoarding behaviour, how you manage your possessions and your life, and what possessions mean to you. Your responses will be recorded with your permission to ensure the data you provide is accurately documented. During the interview, please let me know if you would rather not answer some of the questions, or if you would like to take a break. If you wish to end the interview, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason why.

What questions will be asked in the interview?
The interview will be in a semi-structured format meaning there will be a few set questions that will be asked and some questions that will be in response to the answers you provide. You will be asked a series of questions about yourself as a person, your life history with possessions, how you manage your possessions, what they mean to you, and your relationships with your possessions. You will also have the opportunity to tell me about anything else which is important to you. If you are unsure about any of the questions then you may contact me at any time to discuss this. In addition, if you feel uncomfortable and do not want to answer a question, then just let me know and I will continue to the next question.

What will happen to the information I provide in my interview?
The audio recording of your interview will be written out word-for-word on a computer and then what we have talked about will be analysed. This information will then form the findings and conclusions of this research. The analysis will involve summarising what we talk about and this will be compared with what others who are being interviewed in the study also say on this topic. From this information I will build up a theory which attempts to explain how hoarding behaviours develop and increases our understanding of the relationships people have with their possessions.

How will the research team ensure the security of the data I provide?
All digital audio data files will be kept on a secure, password protected computer. Any paper-based data such as your consent form and typed transcript (the word-for-word record of our interview) will be kept either in a locker in the NTU Doctoral School which only the research team have access to, or a locked cabinet in my home. All data will be destroyed securely after ten years. Results from the study will be written up in the form of a final report, which will be submitted as part fulfilment of my PhD research degree at NTU. All data in the report will be anonymised so that you will not be identified. I may publish word-for-word quotations from our interview, for example, in academic papers and at conference presentations. In such instances, you can be assured that all names and information that could personally identify you will be removed so that you cannot be recognised.

How will the research team protect my confidentiality?
Due to the nature of the research, I may use the things you say as data in the form of quotations for the final report or other publications arising from this research. However, your data will be fully anonymised by removing all identifying information, for example, your name, and other names of people and places you mention. The data will be stored on a password protected computer at all times. Paper-based data such as your consent form and typed transcript will be stored in lockable cabinets or lockers. Only the researcher and the supervisory team will have access to your data. Your

name will be changed to remain anonymous and any personal information will not be included in the report.

In this kind of research there is a very rare and unlikely situation where we may have to break confidentiality if we are concerned that participants and/or their loved ones may come to serious harm. This is based on ethical concerns for participant safety and is detailed in the section below on risks/disadvantages of participation.

What are the possible risks/disadvantages of participating?
The main cost to you will be the time that you take to participate in this interview. The risks to you may include providing information that is of a very personal nature to you or information you do not feel comfortable sharing. However as mentioned above, all information you provide will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified with any information you have given. In addition to this, please do not forget that if at any time you feel uncomfortable participating in the study you may either refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the study entirely.

If you become upset or distressed at any point either during or after the interview, or you feel you need support with any difficulties you are facing, there are a range of support services listed at the end of this information sheet which you can access.

Please be aware that in exceptional circumstances people may disclose that their living situation is highly unsafe for them or vulnerable dependents, e.g. young children or elderly people. If during the interview I become concerned either for your immediate safety or that of your loved ones, I will discuss this with you. I will then talk to the rest of the research team. If we have serious safeguarding concerns and we are worried that you or your loved ones will come to harm, we may have to break confidentiality. This could involve disclosing our concerns to safeguarding officers at the university or other professionals such as your GP. I will discuss this with you before this happens. The research team will only act on safeguarding concerns based on a duty of care for the participants we work with and our responsibility to abide by ethical principles.

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What will happen to the results of the research?
The findings will be written up in a final report at the end of my programme of research and which will be submitted as an assessment for my PhD degree at NTU. Throughout the research I will aim to publish the findings in scientific journals and present them at scientific conferences. If this is the case all names and identifiable material will be removed so that they cannot be recognised.

How can I find out more about this project and its results?
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The main supervisor and supervisory team will be responsible for the conduct of this research.

Has anyone reviewed the study?
The project was initially reviewed by an independent panel of referees from the NTU Psychology department who judged the project worthy of funding on the basis of its scientific merit. The project has since received favourable ethical approval from the NTU College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Contact details:
Please feel free to contact myself or my main supervisor using the following details:

Researcher
Victoria Barnes
Candidate for PhD
Email: victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 07546948326

Main Supervisor
Dr David Wilde
Lecturer in Psychology
Email: david.wilde@ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 0115 848 2718

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

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50 Shakespeare Street
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Support services

Online support:

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www.cloudsend.org.uk

Hoarding UK helpline:

http://www.hoardinguk.org/HoardingUK-HelplineandGroupSkypeSupport.html

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You can also access help via your GP or the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service (http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008) if you feel you need more structured support.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information, and for your interest in this research.

Psychology Department
School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
50 Shakespeare Street
Nottingham, NG1 4FQ

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Participation Information Sheet (Interview by Skype)

Thank you for agreeing to consider participating in this research project. Before deciding whether to participate, we feel it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what your participation will involve. We would be grateful if you would take the time to read the following information carefully. Please do not hesitate to contact one of the research team if anything is unclear or if you wish to discuss your participation in this project.

What is the purpose of the study?
The aim of this research is to develop a new theory of how hoarding behaviours develop, the relationships people have with their possessions, and what possessions and living space mean to people with hoarding behaviours. If you do decide to participate you will be asked to take part in an interview with the researcher.

Who is running the study?
The project is being conducted by myself, Victoria Barnes. I am a PhD student at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). The project is being supervised by a team of experienced researchers led by Dr David Wilde (my main supervisor) and including Dr Eva Zysk, Dr Sarah Seymour-Smith, and Dr Fraenze Kibowski, who are all lecturers in Psychology at NTU. The contact details for myself and my main supervisor appear at the end of this information sheet

Remuneration:
As a thank you for your participation, we can offer you a £10 gift card which you can use in a variety of outlets. You may withdraw from the study at any time before, during or after the interview, whether you have received a gift card or not.

Why have I been chosen to take part?
You have been chosen to take part as you were able to answer "yes" to two or more of the questions in the participant information flyer/advert you read, or you have expressed an interest through a mutual contact, and have volunteered as a potential participant.

Do I have to take part?
No, your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You can also withdraw from the study **at any point (up to 30/06/2018)** either by contacting me or my main supervisor, Dr David Wilde, before, during or after the interview. You can also withdraw your data **at any time after the interview has taken place**. You will not be asked to give a reason for withdrawing at any stage, and there are no penalties for withdrawing your participation. If you wish to withdraw your data, please contact myself or my main supervisor using the contact details at the end of this sheet and quote your unique identifier (pseudonym) that you were given at the interview.

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to read and fully understand the information on this sheet, and then sign and complete a separate informed consent form. If you decide not to take part in the research then you will not be asked to give a reason.

What will I be asked to do?
You are being asked to take part in an interview with myself, Victoria Barnes, lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be carried out at a date and time of your choosing. We can decide between us the best time for me to call. I will call you on Skype on my computer. Video calls using Skype from computer to computer are free of charge. As the software uses both audio and video when making a call, you will need to have a computer with either a built in camera or a plug and play camera that connects to the computer via a USB port. Although we will be communicating by video call, the recording of our interview will only involve recording the audio. I will record the interview on my computer to ensure that an accurate record is kept of what we both talk about.

I will ask you a series of questions about the development of your hoarding behaviour, how you manage your possessions and your life, and what possessions mean to you. Your responses will be recorded with your permission to ensure the data you provide is accurately documented. During the interview, please let me know if you would rather not answer some of the questions, or if you would like to take a break. If you wish to end the interview, you can do so at any time without having to give a reason why.

What questions will be asked in the interview?
The interview will be in a semi-structured format meaning there will be a few set questions that will be asked and some questions that will be in response to the answers you provide. You will be asked a series of questions about yourself as a person, your life history with possessions, how you manage your possessions, what they mean to you, and your relationships with your possessions. You will also have the opportunity to tell me about anything else which is important to you. If you are unsure about any of the questions then you may contact me at any time to discuss this. In addition, if you feel uncomfortable and do not want to answer a question, then just let me know and I will continue to the next question.

What will happen to the information I provide in my interview?
The audio recording of your interview will be written out word-for-word on a computer and then what we have talked about will be analysed. This information will then form the findings and conclusions of this research. The analysis will involve summarising what we talk about and this will be compared with what others who are being interviewed in the study also say on this topic. From this information I will build up a theory which attempts to explain how hoarding behaviours develop and increases our understanding of the relationships people have with their possessions.

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What will happen to the results of the research?
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Candidate for PhD
Email: victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 07546948326

Main Supervisor
Dr David Wilde
Lecturer in Psychology
Email: david.wilde@ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 0115 848 2718

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

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In person support groups:

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You can also access help via your GP or the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service (http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008) if you feel you need more structured support.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information, and for your interest in this research.

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

Psychology Division
School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
Burton Street
Nottingham, NG1 4BU

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

This consent form will be stored separately from your data and in order to protect your right to withdraw your data following your immediate involvement, you will be given a pseudonym which you can use to withdraw. To do this, contact me or my main supervisor using the contact details on the information sheet you were given and quoting this pseudonym. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time during the study, or afterwards. You do not have to give a reason for your withdrawal and you do not have to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable.

	Please tick the box to say YES
1. I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet	☐
2. I have received enough information about the study, I have been able to ask any questions and have had these answered to my satisfaction.	☐
3. I agree to the interview being audio recorded	☐
4. I am aware data from my interview will be anonymised and can be used in publications arising from this research	☐
5. I understand that I do not need to take part in the study and if I do enter I am free to withdraw:- * **at any time (until 31/05/2017)** * **without having to give a reason for withdrawing** * **and without detriment to myself**	☐
6. I understand that in rare circumstances the research team may not be able to keep information confidential if they are seriously concerned about my safety or that of my loved ones	☐
7. I agree to take part in this study voluntarily	☐

Name of participant: ..... **Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

Name of researcher: ..... **Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

This research has been approved by the

Nottingham Trent University College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Ethics Committee

Psychology Division
School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
Burton Street
Nottingham, NG1 4BU

Debriefing Sheet for Participants (Skype/telephone interviews)

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Thank you for your participation in this study. The purpose of the study was to investigate your experiences related to possessions, your relationship with your possessions, and your daily life. You are reminded that there are no right or wrong answers and that no judgment will be placed on you for the answers that you have provided. The aim was to gain an insight into hoarding behaviours, people's relationships with their possessions, and the meanings which possessions and living space have for people, and for that reason your input has been very helpful and is very much appreciated.

The data will be used to develop a new theory of how hoarding behaviours develop, the relationships people have with their possessions, and what possessions and living space mean to people with hoarding behaviours.

You are reminded that we follow ethical and legal practice throughout the course of this research and all information about you will be handled to protect your privacy. As mentioned earlier, due to the nature of the research, I may use the things you say as data in the form of quotations for the final report or other publications arising from this research such as journal articles or conference presentations. However, all data will be made anonymous and only identifiable through the use of unique ID pseudonyms. A list of participant names and associated unique ID pseudonyms will be stored in a separate location to the data. Similarly, all interview transcripts will be made anonymous and all personally identifiable material such as names of places or people removed. Interview transcripts will only be able to be linked to participant names through the use of your unique ID pseudonym.

The unique ID pseudonym we gave you for this study was: _____

All data, including audio files and transcripts of interviews you produce will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet at Nottingham Trent University where this study is being carried out, or at the researcher's own home. All digital data files, i.e. audio/video recordings and transcripts in Word document format will be stored in secure, password-protected computers at Nottingham Trent University. Data will be retained for ten years and destroyed after this date.

You may withdraw from the study **at any time (up to 31/05/2017)** without giving a reason (although you can still withdraw your data after this time if you wish to**)**. If you wish to withdraw please contact myself or my main supervisor, Dr David Wilde using the contact details at the bottom of this debrief sheet and quote your unique identifier (the pseudonym noted above).

If you do withdraw, all of your data will be destroyed and no analysis that was included within its considerations will be disseminated further. Please be assured that if you choose to withdraw your data it would then be destroyed and would not be included in any articles or conference presentations developed from the research. If you withdraw your data after it has been used in an article or presentation, it will not be used in any subsequent presentations or articles and the raw data, i.e. recordings and transcripts, will be destroyed.

If you have terminated our interview by logging off or hanging up the phone, or you have had technical issues with your phone or internet connection, please read the following information.

- If you are distressed or upset by anything in the interview, you can contact me or my main supervisor to discuss this further and ask any questions at a time you feel comfortable to do so. You can also access the support services listed if you feel you need additional support, advice or help.

- If you are having internet or phone connection issues but still wish to participate in the study, please contact me via email or post so we can arrange a suitable time and date for another interview.

- Please contact me if you do **NOT** wish for your data to be used in this study. If you have terminated the interview, we will assume that your original statement of consent to use your data still applies.

If you feel you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this interview or wish to speak to someone, you can access the following support resources:

Online Support:

www.helpforhoarders.co.uk
www.cloudsend.org.uk

Hoarding UK helpline:

http://www.hoardinguk.org/HoardingUK-HelplineandGroupSkypeSupport.html

In person support groups:

http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/resources/ - this webpage lists support groups in various places in the UK.

You can also access help via your GP or the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service (http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008) if you feel you need more structured support.

Thank you once more for your help with this research.

Contact details:
Please feel free to contact myself or my main supervisor using the following details:

Researcher
Victoria Barnes
Candidate for PhD
Email: victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 07546948326

Main Supervisor
Dr David Wilde
Lecturer in Psychology
Email: david.wilde@ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 0115 848 2718

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

Nottingham Trent University
Chaucer Building
Burton Street
Nottingham
NG1 4BU

Psychology Division

School of Social Sciences
Nottingham Trent University
Burton Street
Nottingham, NG1 4BU

Debriefing Sheet for Participants (Face to Face interviews)

Developing a model of hoarding behaviour

Thank you for your participation in this study. The purpose of the study was to investigate your experiences related to possessions, your relationship with your possessions, and your daily life. You are reminded that there are no right or wrong answers and that no judgment will be placed on you for the answers that you have provided. The aim was to gain an insight into hoarding behaviours, people's relationships with their possessions, and the meanings which possessions and living space have for people, and for that reason your input has been very helpful and is very much appreciated.

The data will be used to develop a new theory of how hoarding behaviours develop, the relationships people have with their possessions, and what possessions and living space mean to people with hoarding behaviours.

You are reminded that we follow ethical and legal practice throughout the course of this research and all information about you will be handled to protect your privacy. As mentioned earlier, due to the nature of the research, I may use the things you say as data in the form of quotations for the final report or other publications arising from this research such as journal articles or conference presentations. However, all data will be made anonymous and only identifiable through the use of unique ID pseudonyms. A list of participant names and associated unique ID pseudonyms will be stored in a separate location to the data. Similarly, all interview transcripts will be made anonymous and all personally identifiable material such as names of places or people removed. Interview transcripts will only be able to be linked to participant names through the use of your unique ID pseudonym.

The unique ID pseudonym we gave you for this study was: _____

All data, including audio files and transcripts of interviews you produce will be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet at Nottingham Trent University where this study is being carried out, or at the researcher's own home. All digital data files, i.e. audio recordings and transcripts in Word document format will be stored in secure, password-protected computers at Nottingham Trent University. Data will be retained for ten years and destroyed after this date.

You may withdraw from the study **at any time (up to 31/05/2017)** without giving a reason (although you can still withdraw your data after this time if you wish to**)**. If you wish to withdraw please contact myself or my main supervisor, Dr David Wilde using the contact details at the bottom of this debrief sheet and quote your unique identifier (the pseudonym noted above).

If you do withdraw, all of your data will be destroyed and no analysis that was included within its considerations will be disseminated further. Please be assured that if you choose to withdraw your data it would then be destroyed and would not be included in any articles or conference presentations developed from the research. If you withdraw your data after it has been used in an article or presentation, it will not be used in any subsequent presentations or articles and the raw data, i.e. recordings and transcripts, will be destroyed.

If you feel you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this interview or wish to speak to someone, you can access the following support resources:

Online Support:

www.helpforhoarders.co.uk
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Thank you once more for your help with this research.

Contact details:
Please feel free to contact myself or my main supervisor using the following details:

Researcher
Victoria Barnes
Candidate for PhD
Email: victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk
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Main Supervisor
Dr David Wilde
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Email: david.wilde@ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 0115 848 2718

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

Nottingham Trent University
Chaucer Building
Burton Street
Nottingham
NG1 4BU

Appendix F: Email to participants if disconnected from Skype

Hi, I notice we have lost contact over Skype.

Please read the following information carefully.

If you have lost your internet connection, please feel free to contact me when you are able to, and we can arrange an alternative time and date to continue our interview. If you would like to contact me immediately, please feel free to do so.

If you have become distressed or upset by any of the things we have discussed, attached to this email is a document including a list of services which you can contact for help and advice. This attached document is a debriefing sheet which contains information on your rights as a participant, including the right to withdraw your data. If you would like to withdraw your data, please contact me via email (victoria.barnes022005@my.ntu.ac.uk) and I will destroy all data you have given.

If you do not wish for your data to be withdrawn, there is nothing you need to do as you have previously consented for your data to be used in this project, and I will honour this statement of consent.

If you have any questions or would like to clarify anything, please let me know.

Best wishes,

Victoria

Appendix G: Phase one memo on Resisting temptation

9th November 2017

Resisting temptation

Various participants described strategies to resist the temptation to primarily acquire objects: Tamara, Ava, Antony, Emma.

Pretty straightforward, strategies employed: **cancelling broadband** (Tamara) (later she had it reinstalled to try to get rid of some things on eBay), **resisting looking at sales, shopping online** (both Ava), linked codes as the shopping online meant that she didn't go through sales aisles etc. and buy stuff she didn't need, I think this was particularly about buying food. **Being able to cope by cutting herself off from TV** (Emma) so she wouldn't get into a new TV series or film and feel that she had to buy a box set or a DVD thus reducing her buying and possessions.

Resisting and avoiding temptation was a code from Tamara's codes, and Emma also had a code about avoiding temptation so the above resisting and avoiding covers all of the above and subsumes the avoiding. ***Resisting temptation* to pick up flyers** was also one of Antony's codes, so he's *Resisting temptation* to do something rather than employing strategies to resist temptation. Either way still about *Resisting temptation* to acquire something wanted.

Also part of a process maybe: **getting better at resisting buying** (Tamara) So not just a *Resisting temptation*, but a process of getting better (perhaps succeeding and failing at *Resisting temptation* would also be part of this process. Might be useful to look at ways in which other participants resist temptation to acquire things, and how successful they are. What the process is. Are there any things which prompt the need/desire to resist temptation?

So a general category around resisting and avoiding temptation (to acquire objects) with various strategies employed including cutting oneself off from ways to acquire or things which might be appealing, general *Resisting temptation*, and improving in resisting certain things, e.g. buying.

Removed

Having broadband reinstalled this isn't really about *Resisting temptation*, more about reversing a previous decision so she could get rid of stuff, perhaps this could be about barriers participants might face when trying to discard, they do things to avoid temptation but then have to use the same things they've been avoiding to try to discard stuff.

Appendix H: Phase two theoretical sampling interview guide

Questions to get into general chat mood: how has your day been? What have you been doing?

In this interview I am aiming to find out about how your hoarding behaviours have developed and how you manage your possessions and life in general. I am also interested in what your possessions mean to you, and your feelings about your living space. There are no right or wrong answers, so if I ask about something which does not apply to you, or you have a different view on the topic, please feel free to say so. Some questions may be quite sensitive, but with all questions you are free to answer in as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable with. You can also refuse to answer any question without giving a reason.

First I am interested in exploring the development of your hoarding behaviours: how they began, how they might have changed, and where you are now.

Development of hoarding behaviours

1. Please talk me through how your hoarding behaviour began, [9]from when you first remember hoarding up to the present day
    - Prompts:
    - What were the first things you recall hoarding?
    - What made you hoard these?
    - Has your family's relationship with possessions influenced you at all? If so, how?

2. When did you realise that what you were doing could be called hoarding?
    - E.g. saw TV programme, other people thought it was hoarding, realised there was a lot of stuff in the home which potentially needed dealing with, etc.
    - What was happening before?
    - Have you ever wanted to stop hoarding? What did/would make you decide to stop or reduce your hoarding?
    - What happened afterwards? (Attempts to clear, sort, organise? Asking for help?)

3. Some research suggests that hoarding behaviours increase over time, but some of my previous interviewees have talked about phases or cycles of hoarding behaviour. How has your hoarding progressed?

4. What do the following terms mean to you:
    - **"Wanting to hold onto/keep items"**
    - **"Not wanting to get rid of things/having difficulty discarding items"**
    - How do these motivate you?
    - What makes you reluctant to discard items?

5. Tell me about the strength of your relationship with your possessions. What makes this so strong?

Now I would like to find out more about the meaning of your hoarded possessions for you. Previous interviewees have talked about a variety of ways they might value items, and what items might mean to them. As before, if the questions do not apply to you or you have different ideas on these topics, please feel free to say so. Remember also that you are free to answer in as little or as much detail as you are comfortable with for any question.

[9] Bold and underlined text in the interview guide represented key points which I highlighted so they could be easily seen while I was interviewing.

Meaning of possessions

Valuing possessions

1. Which items have special meaning?

2. What do you consider to be rubbish?

3. What about the things you hoard make them appealing? For what reasons might you value an item?

Prompts:

- Potential – to be used? To give opportunities: creative, activities, etc.
- Seeing value in things others might not appreciate?
- What they look like?
- Usefulness?
- Emotional and sentimental value? What do these terms mean to you?
- Monetary value?
- Relevance in your life?
- Souvenirs/mementos/reminders of times in life?
- Representing their time/historic importance?
- The physical, tangible nature of possessions, especially in relation to their digital counterparts? If so why?

4. How does the value of an item you hoard change?

Prompts:

- Do you begin to value the item more?
- Value it less?
- Does it become valued for different reasons?
- What influences how the value of an item changes?

Interacting with items

Previous participants have talked about a variety of ways they might think about or use their possessions.

1. Can you tell me about any ways in which objects help you connect with people you care about?

2. Are there any ways in which your possession allow you to make up for something you may not have, or may not have had in the past? *Clarification (if needed), e.g. material possessions or sources of comfort in childhood, a connection with others.*

3. Are there any ways in which your hoarded objects might help you feel safe? Secure? Protected?

- Prompts if yes: What would you feel protected from?

4. Can you tell me about any ways your objects help you remember and see the past?

5. Are there any ways you collect and acquire objects to tell people about your life?

6. Are there any ways you feel objects have personalities and/or emotions?

- Do you think about them in the same way as you might think about people?

8. How do you feel about sharing items?
    - If positive: What is appealing about sharing?
    - If negative: What might make you reluctant to share objects?

9. Is there anything about what your hoarded items mean to you that we haven't yet covered?

Managing possessions and life

Now I would like to ask you about how you manage your possessions: for example, how you keep them organised and stored, sort them, clear and discard them.

1. Do you see your possessions as manageable?
    - If not, what prevents you from being able to manage them?
    - What helps you manage your possessions?

2. Optional: How do you manage your possessions?

3. Previous participants have talked about sorting, organising and clearing their things. What do these terms mean to you?
    - **Sorting** – What does sorting your possessions involve? Give me an example of when you did that? What inspired you to do that sorting? What did it feel like?
    - **Organising** – What does organising your possessions involve? Give me an example of when you did that? What inspired you to do that organisation? What did it feel like? What helps you get better at organising?
    - **Clearing** – What does clearing your possessions involve? Give me an example of when you did that? What inspired you to do that clearing? What did it feel like? What helps you get better at clearing?

4. How might sorting, organising and clearing be different for you?

Now I'd like to know some more about what happens when you make decisions about your hoarded items.

5. What makes you decide to keep something?

6. What makes you decide to discard something?
- Prompt: a sense of closure or a complete transaction has been mentioned by some participants, would this influence you in getting rid of something?
- In what ways do you prefer to discard a possession?

Another area I am interested in is how managing life events, such as dealing with traumatic events or doing a demanding job, can affect hoarding behaviours.

7. Were there any events in your life which caused your hoarding behaviour to change?
    Prompts:
    - Get worse/hoard more
    - Hoard less
    - Be less able to organise and sort things
    - Find it harder to discard items

8. Have there been any times in your life when you have felt overwhelmed, either by your possessions or by things which have been happening to you? Have these affected your hoarding behaviours? If so, in what ways?

Prompts:

- Emotionally overwhelmed: too many emotionally charged events and possessions to be able to manage
- Cognitively overwhelmed: too many decisions to make and too much to think about when *Managing possessions* (organising, sorting, clearing)

Now I would like to find out about your living space, how it affects you and others, and how you manage and use the space you live in.

Living space

1. How do you feel about empty space?

2. How does your living space affect you? How does it affect others?

3. What would your ideal living space be like? How could you achieve this?

4. What affects your ability to manage your living space? How does managing your living space contribute to hoarding?

5. Is there anything else about your living space which is important to you and which we haven't discussed?

We have now come to the end of the interview, thank you for your participation, your answers and your time are both very much appreciated.

General additional questions to move back into conversational mood: do you have anything nice planned for the rest of the day?

Appendix I: Example theoretical sampling memo on Managing possessions

30th October 2018

Final phase two codes/categories to integrate:

***Managing possessions*: managing what's there (sorting, organising, tidying, other)**

- Prompts for sorting, e.g. when things get out of hand (Tara). *Look for other prompts, and prompts for organising/managing what's there.*

- What participants are actually doing, e.g. putting like with like (Tara), tidying in phases, doing the bare minimum/doing what's necessary (either needing or choosing to do only what one can immediately do, just enough to allow people in, to be able to function, not enough so things are properly sorted/organised and stored, which contributes to things being left unfinished). The latter includes: putting muddles of things together, piling up clutter in out of the way spaces, needing to just move things so others can get access, and could also link to churning, which some participants do. Harder to manage as a result because there needs to be space to deal with things, and they're not organised, also Antony and clearing individual items rather than rooms). Can lead to feeling overwhelmed by having to move things.

- Barriers to *Managing possessions*: time it takes to do things, especially at certain points in the process of sorting/organising/etc. (Melba being able to spend a whole day on paperwork – *but why?* Rose and the slow progress with individual items – *again why?).* Cognitive effort (needing to question everything, feeling overwhelmed by number of decisions which need to be made). Lack of consistent systems to organise/"homes" or designated spaces for items to "live": Rose, some things where they "should" be, others not, several participants talked about things not being in a "home"/where they belong or should be. One consequence was that Tara forgot what she had *(led to more buying things)* Getting around to things a general barrier. Attitudes from others could make Walter dig his heels in and not want to do things (*discarding or tidying, or both?*). Some procrastination-type stuff too: feeling she can't sort til things are clean (Tara), keeping things for sorting later instead of reducing distractions (distractions were an issue for quite a few participants), putting things aside so they can be read/dealt with later. Organising as a way of avoiding clearing/discarding (*so is this most related to clearing or organising*?)

- Things which help: Antony: a hierarchy of items he could get rid of/clear and working through them, Hasan and Melba wanted to use their own strategies for managing. Antony and Tara found it helpful to clear in small portions, to do a bit at a time and work through individual items. Yvonne thought doing a bit would be better than adding more, but found it hard to stay motivated. Help from others was a benefit for Walter in tidying (and clearing). Ava thought about the end goal of the process as way of motivating herself as she didn't like organising and sorting but did enjoy cleaning, which she did afterwards.

- Consequences of not managing: lacking sufficient space for the amount of stuff (Tara, Yvonne) – can compound issues as no space for things. Having designated spaces impeded by overflow, so even if there IS a space, overspill of possessions can mean that they have to go in a space for something else.

***Managing possessions*: Discarding/clearing**

- Motivations to discard/clear (perhaps?): using importance of space as a reason to get rid (*other reasons to discard? This not with actual discarding as it's motivations*)

- Actual discarding/clearing: donating things that can still be used to charity, throwing things if there's no use in keeping them, Jeff would also get rid of things if he could see no use for them, (so usefulness is a consideration in keeping/discarding), having massive clear outs (Ava) (contrast with Dylan's incomplete purges).

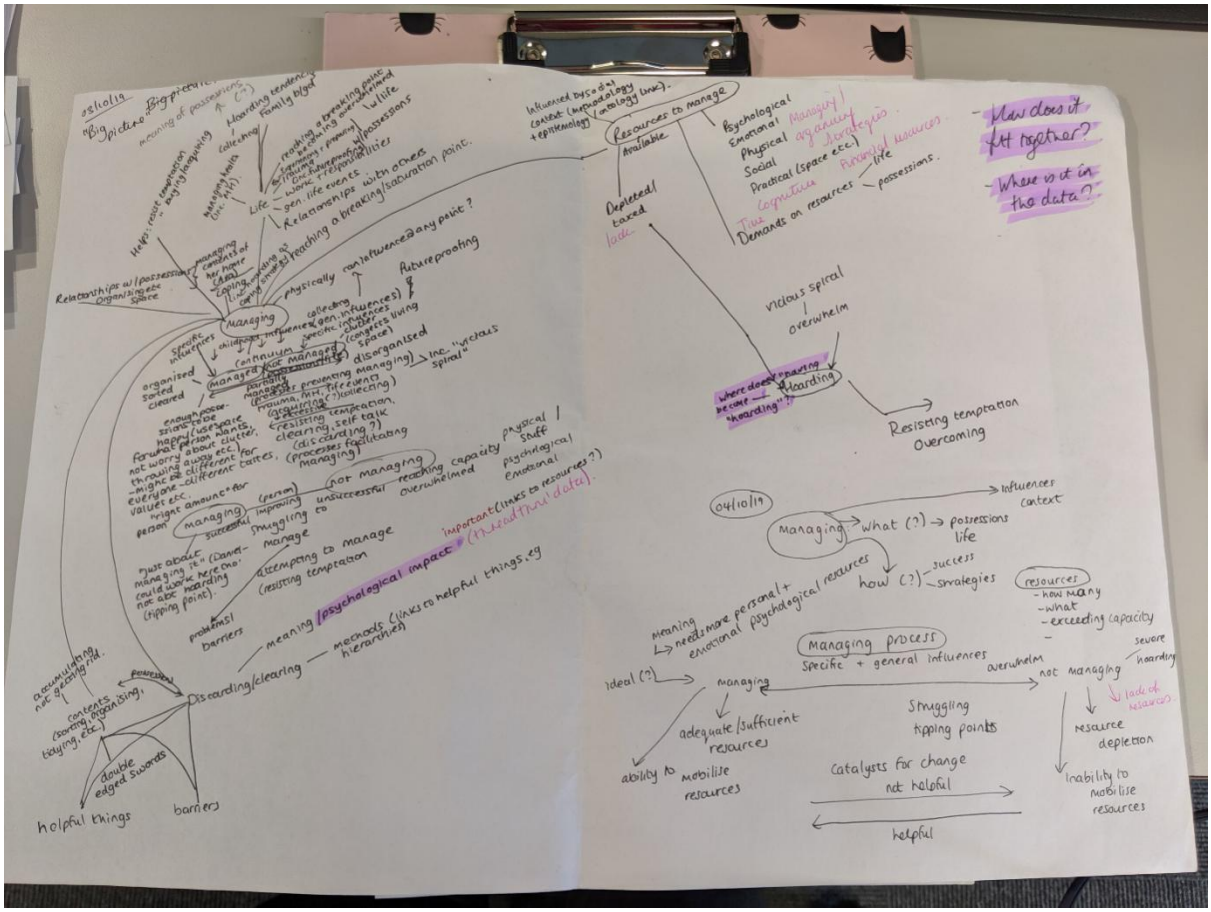
- Barriers to discarding/clearing: the finality of getting rid of things/not being able to retrieve them, distressing feelings about discarding: threatening, stressful, disrespectful/hurtful, linked with bereavement, and the need/desire to get rid of things in a way which is comfortable (links with needing to know what she's doing with cleared things and where they will go - both these codes from Ava). Things being unfinished also made it harder to get rid of them. The nature of some things made it harder to get rid of them, e.g. Antony and his items with cultural relevance, individuality, etc.). Note also decision-making: if clear/definite, then get rid, if uncertainty then ppts tend to keep.

- Things which help with discarding (previously in *Managing possessions* categories): needing to keep momentum (Melba talked about this in terms of working on one's self). Tara needed to allow herself to let go of things that she regretted buying (*did anyone else need to allow themselves to let go of things?*). Daniel asked himself questions about his items and would get rid of things that were *potentially* – as opposed to *actually* – useful if they didn't meet those criteria. For Walter having a friend's help was beneficial.

Appendix J: Overview of model from phase two analysis

Figure 6

Overview of the Model from Phase Two Analysis and Theoretical Integration



Appendix K: Potential item pool of questions to be developed into a questionnaire scale

This appendix presents an item pool based on the conceptual framework developed from the grounded theory described in this thesis. Subscales represent the major categories in the theory (*Managing possessions*, *Managing life*, *Struggling to manage*, and *Trying to overcome hoarding*) and subdomains represent subcategories. Potential items are mapped onto these domains and subdomains. Some items are phrased positively (e.g. "I find it easy to make decisions about my possessions") and some are phrased negatively (e.g. "I don't know how to sort my possessions"). In the final version of the scale a mixture of positively and negatively keyed items would be used to create a balanced scale which would minimise bias (Furr, 2011). Thus, the item pool presently includes several examples of both types of item.

Subscale: Managing possessions

Domain	Subdomain	Items
Process of managing possessions	Putting like with like/sorting/organising	I don't know how to sort my possessions I don't know what people normally do when they try to manage their possessions I don't know how to tidy I don't know how to organise my possessions I don't know how to group similar possessions together I don't know how to tell if possessions are similar to each other I categorise possessions differently to other people I know how to sort my possessions I know how to tidy I know how to group similar possessions together
	Making decisions	If a decision about a possession is not clear cut, I will keep the item I find it hard to make decisions in my everyday life
	Discarding	I can discard things if they definitely have no more use I could discard things if I found the right place for them to go

Domain	Subdomain	Items
		I could discard things if I found the right person to give them to
		I can't discard things if I am under stress
		I can't discard things if I am not in a calm frame of mind
	Finding a home for things	I put things down anywhere instead of finding a home for them
		If I can't find where something belongs, I will just put it down anywhere
		No matter how hard I try I can never find a home for things
		I find it hard to know where things should go
		I have to continually try to move things to put them in a home
Difficulties	Discarding: preferences	I need to discard things in a way that is meaningful to me
		I prefer to donate things rather than throw them away
		I prefer to recycle things rather than throw them away
		I prefer to give things to someone else rather than throw them away
		I need to give things to the right person
		I need to donate/give things to the right place
		I keep things because I haven't found the right way to discard them
	Discarding: meaning of possessions	It is hard for me to discard things which might be useful
		It is hard for me to discard things that are beautiful
		It is hard for me to discard things because they have memories attached
		It is hard for me to discard things because I want to remain connected to loved ones
		It is hard for me to discard things because they are associated with intimacy and love

Domain	Subdomain	Items
		It is hard for me to discard things because they are connected to people that I love
		I hoard things because they are unappreciated by others
		I hoard things because otherwise they will go to waste
	Discarding: meaning of discarding/feelings about discarding	Discarding things is disrespectful to the people who gave them to me
		Discarding things means wasting opportunities
		Discarding things means polluting the environment
		Throwing things away is wasteful
		Throwing away my possessions means I am throwing away my memories
		Throwing away my possessions means I am throwing away a part of myself
		Throwing away my possessions means I am cutting off a connection to someone I care about
		Throwing something away means I am throwing away part of history
		Throwing something away means throwing away a part of my past
	Discarding: decision-making	I find it hard to know whether to get rid of something
		I find it easy to make decisions about my possessions
		I can discard things without checking them
		I need to check things before I discard them
	Doing the bare minimum	Sometimes I must just move my things anywhere so I can make space
		When I move things to make space, they get muddled up
		When I move my things to make space, I struggle to find them again
		When I move things to make space, I find it hard to manage them

Domain	Subdomain	Items
		When my things are muddled, I struggle to manage them

Subscale: Managing life

Domain	Subdomain	Items
Health	Mental health	I have a mental health condition which prevents me from managing my possessions
		If I am depressed, I do not have the energy to manage my possessions
		I can still manage my possessions if I feel depressed
		Anxiety prevents me from discarding my possessions
		Anxiety does not prevent me from discarding my possessions
		Anxiety prevents me from managing my possessions
		Anxiety does not prevent me from managing my possessions
	Physical health	I have a physical health condition which prevents me from managing my possessions
		My physical health does not prevent me from managing my possessions
		A lack of physical energy means I cannot manage my possessions
		My health problems cause me so much pain that I cannot manage my possessions
Life transitions	Moving to a new home	Moving house lets me see how much I have
		Moving house is an opportunity to discard some possessions
		I don't discard anything when I move house
	Change in household: someone moves in or out	If a housemate or partner moves out, I hoard more
		In my household I am the one who makes decisions about discarding
		My partner/housemates make decisions about discarding
	Change in household: living alone	If I live on my own, I do not discard anything
		If I live on my own, I acquire more

Domain	Subdomain	Items
	Leaving the family home/starting and finishing university	When I was a child my parents made me throw things away Moving away from my parents made me hoard more Moving into my own home made me hoard more Being responsible for my possessions made me hoard more Being responsible for my own life made me hoard more

Subscale: Struggling to manage

Domain	Subdomain	Items
Taking on too much	Tasks	I take on so much in my life that I have no time or energy to manage my possessions I try to do too many things at the same time I take on too much at one time
	Possessions	I try to organise my possessions in so much detail that I become overwhelmed and cannot finish the task
Becoming overwhelmed	General	I can still manage my possessions even if I feel overwhelmed by life I get so stressed that I cannot manage my possessions Trying to manage my life is overwhelming I spend so much time trying to manage my life that I cannot manage my possessions as well I have enough time to manage my life and my possessions I have enough time in my life to manage my possessions
	Single life events	I have experienced a life event which has been overwhelming
	Concurrent life events	I can manage my possessions even if a lot is happening in my life

Domain	Subdomain	Items
	Possessions	I become overwhelmed by how many possessions I have
		I do not feel overwhelmed by the amount of possessions I have
		Feeling overwhelmed by my possessions prevents me from managing them
		It is not overwhelming for me to manage my possessions
Trauma	Vicious spiral	I have experienced a traumatic event in my life
		I hoard things because I have experienced trauma
		Dealing with my possessions brings up such strong emotions that I cannot manage them
		My possessions can remind me of my previous trauma
		Trying to manage my possessions is traumatic
Loss	Vicious spiral	I have experienced a significant loss in my life
		I hoard things because I want to make up for what I am lacking in life
		I hoard things because I have experienced loss
		I do not hoard to make up for something I lack in life
		I do not hoard to make up for something I have lacked in life
		My possessions will not leave or abandon me
		I have lost a lot in life, so my possessions give me something to hold onto
		I had very few possessions in childhood
		I lacked love or nurturing when I was a child
		My possessions give me the comfort I have lacked
		My possessions give me the safety I have lacked
		My possessions are a substitute for relationships
		My possessions are not a substitute for relationships

Domain	Subdomain	Items
		I can connect to my possessions more than other people I have lost things of significance to me (e.g. relationships) because of my hoard I feel cut out of life because I have spent so much time on my hoard I have missed out on life because of my hoard I have missed out on opportunities because of my hoard I have not missed out on life because of my possessions I have not lost anything of significance to me (e.g. a relationship) due to the amount of possessions I have

Subscale: Trying to overcome hoarding

Domain	Subdomain	Items
Resisting temptation	Need to resist temptation to acquire	I need to resist the temptation to acquire new possessions I feel compelled to pick things up I do not feel compelled to pick things up I feel compelled to buy new things I do not feel compelled to buy new things When I see an item I want, I must have it no matter what I can resist the temptation to acquire new things I am okay with not having an item I want I try to avoid being tempted to acquire new things I do not have to avoid the temptation to acquire new things

Domain	Subdomain	Items
	Strategies	I need to avoid certain places because I will buy things
		I do not have to avoid certain places so that I do not buy things
		I avoid sales because I will acquire things
		I avoid certain shops because I will want to buy things
		I do not have to avoid sales so that I do not buy things
		I have changed my routine so that I do not acquire new things
		I have not needed to change my routine so that I do not acquire new things
Formal and informal support	Finding support	I cannot find any support for my hoarding
		I can find support for my hoarding issues
		Hoarding support is available to me
	Accessing appropriate support	Previous support for my hoarding was not appropriate
		Previous support for my hoarding was appropriate
		The help I ask for and the help I need are not compatible
		There is no appropriate support for my hoarding
		There is appropriate support for my hoarding
		Previous support I had has made my hoarding worse
		CBT is not appropriate for hoarding
		CBT is not helpful for hoarding
		CBT is appropriate for hoarding
		CBT is helpful for hoarding
	Managing underlying issues	I need support for underlying issues with hoarding
		I do not need support for underlying issues with hoarding

Domain	Subdomain	Items
		My hoarding is about more than just my possessions
		I need support for the reasons why I hoard
		I do not need support for the reasons why I hoard
		All I need is for someone to help me tidy up
		All I need are practical solutions to help me manage my possessions
		I need support for an underlying condition which influences my hoarding
		I cannot just tidy my possessions
		I cannot just remove my hoard
		There is an underlying reason why I hoard
		People need to understand the reasons behind hoarding
		It is not necessarily for people to understand the underlying reasons for hoarding
		People need to understand the mindset around hoarding
		People need insight into how hoarders think
		People need to understand why I hoard
	Support groups	I have been to hoarding support groups
		I have never been to a hoarding support group
		I have found hoarding support groups helpful
		I have not found hoarding support groups to be helpful
		I can find local hoarding support groups
		I cannot find a local hoarding support group
		Support groups are focused on OCD
		I would go to a support group if I could find a local one
		I want to find a local support group
		It would help me to go to a support group

Domain	Subdomain	Items
		A support group would not help me
		Support groups make me feel less alone
		Talking to other hoarders makes me feel less alone
		It would not help me to meet other people who hoard
	Informal support	My friends and family help me with my hoarding
		My friends and family help me control my hoarding
		My friends and family make my hoarding worse
		My friends and family do not help me with my hoarding
Building a life beyond the hoard	Developing a new identity	I would need to develop a new identity to overcome my hoarding
		My hoarding is a part of who I am
		My hoard is a part of who I am
		I would be the same person whether I hoarded or not
		I would not need to develop a new identity to overcome my hoarding
		If I did not hoard, I would be a different person
		If I tried not to hoard, I would not know who I was
		I would not be me if I was not a hoarder
		I cannot imagine not being a hoarder
	Developing new habits	I would need to develop new habits to overcome my hoarding
		I would need to change my routine to overcome my hoarding
	Finding new ways of functioning/Adapting to a new way of life	I have lived with my hoarding for so long that I cannot imagine my life being different
		It would take a lot of changes to my life for me not to be a hoarder