Hoarding

Introduction
As I started this paper I was hopeful that I would be able to find more references to hoarding in Sociology and Anthropology than I was able to find in the General and Political Science literature. I was delighted to find that there is a wealth of information about people and cultures hoarding in Anthropology literature. Although I was able to find some mention of hoarding in sociology, mostly of the sociology sources covered mental illness. I am really interested in the topic of individuals hoarding in their homes and I was able to find several articles and journals in the Anthropology literature that discussed how individuals have been hoarding resources for a long time.

Political Science
I decided to start my search by pursuing the reference section of the library, hopeful that the sociology and anthropology literature would contain some mention of hoarding. I was able to find a few sociology dictionaries that had sections on mental illness, but still no mention of hoarding. The first was The Sage Dictionary of Sociology by Steve Bruce and Steven Yearley, a 328 page volume. Although The Sage Dictionary only contains a short paragraph on mental illness, the authors discuss that there are multiple theories about mental illnesses ‘There is also a more radical sociology that considers the role of social interaction and labelling in the creation and maintenance of mental illness. In the 1960s and 1970s this radical position was taken as far as to suggest that there were no mental illnesses as such but that they were created by the medicalisation of unusual or deviant behavior’ (Bruce & Yearley, 2006). I believe that Bruce and Yearley are pointing out that what one society may consider a mental illness, another may consider normal behavior. I also found the A Dictionary of Sociology this 707 page volume
contained two pages on mental illness that explained more about how mental illnesses are often perceived.

‘The disturbance of thought and feeling that characterize mental illness, such as delusions, hallucinations, excessive elation, or *depression, are disturbing. It is this disturbed and disruptive behavior that, more than anything else, leads to mental illness being treated as a very distinctive form of illness, requiring special services and attention. What seems to be particularly problematic within society is the apparent irrationality and loss of reason that mental pathology involves. Mind and reason are the distinctive hallmarks of human beings, and their loss (full or partial) if not taken to be a sign of supernatural powers, is generally viewed as profoundly disturbing and threatening. Mental illness is therefore usually more *stigmatizing than other forms of illness.’ (Scott & Marshall, 2005)

Although I agree that ‘mind and reason’ are the characteristics that separate humans from animals, I find it hard to characterize a human that is incapable of ‘mind and reason’ as an animal. The last reference book I located was *Dictionary of Sociology* a 273 page volume that contained only a short definition of mental illness. Lawson and Garrod define mental illness as ‘a term to indicate the degree to which someone exhibits “normal” patterns of thoughts and behavior. The concept is a very controversial one, as it rests on a definition of what is a “normal” mental state.’ (Lawson & Garrod, 2001) I agree that the definition of ‘a normal mental state’ can definitely vary from country to country or even among individuals. I think that is what makes classifying mental illnesses so difficult.

Ethnic New Watch found 830 results for Hoarding, the search results included newspapers, magazines and a few scholarly journals. I found articles such as *Dealing with hoarding behaviors* that contained the following definition ‘Hoarding is a mental illness exhibited through excessive acquiring and failure to discard large numbers of possessions that may appear useless or of limited value to an onlooker. The result is overrun living spaces that may make even beds and sinks unusable. Similar to an addiction, hoarding behaviors can be managed, but not cured.’ *(Shapiro, 2011)* I find it really disturbing when a hoarding condition is so severe that the
individual is no longer able to use their kitchen or bathroom because they are so full of stuff.

‘Secret’ explores hoarding from daughter’s perspective explains how hoarding affects family members and gives some recommendations on the best way to interact with a hoarder to help them deal with their mental illness. (Booker, 2011)

SocIndex produced 180 results for hoarding that included academic journals, reviews, periodicals and conference proceedings. Articles I found included; Treatment for Hoarding Behaviors: A Review of the Evidence (Muroff, Bratiotis, & Steketee, 2010), The Disorder of Things: Hoarding Narratives in Popular Media (Lepselter, 2011) and Hoarding Cases Involving Older Adults: The Transition From a Private Matter to the Public Sector (Chapin et al., 2010). I found the article Treatment for Hoarding Behaviors: A Review of the Evidence stated that ‘Standard treatments used for obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) such as medication and/or behavior therapy have been associated with poor treatment response for those with hoarding.’ (Muroff et al., 2010) It makes me wonder what techniques are more successful with hoarders.

On JSTOR I was able to locate the International Journal of Sociology and when I searched hoarding 64 journal entries were produced. Results included Hong Kong’s Model of Economic Development (Hsueh, 1979) and Decommodification and Work Absence in the Welfare State (Esping-andersen, Kolberg, & Kolberg, 1991) I also read an article by Kolberg; Welfare States and Employment Regimes (Kolberg, 1991) that discusses how employers may encourage employees not to work as many hours when the economy is not doing well.

JSTOR also has the journal Sociological Perspectives which produced 36 results for hoarding. The search results included Modernization and the Family: A Theoretical Analysis (Mann & Margavio, 1989), Why Regular Gamblers Don’t Quit: A Sociological Perspective (Rosecrance, 1986), Probable Collective Responses to Ecological Scarcity: How Violent? (William R. Catton,
Rosecrance explained more about the increase in the number of people gambling and how they hoard information.

‘An individual player will not openly reveal sources of information when he is considering an unusually large wager. This secretiveness is termed "keeping it quiet" and "not broadcasting." The reason for keeping it quiet stems from the possibility that a large number of patrons might also bet on the gambler's selection. Such an eventuality could cause the casino management to restrict wagering on the horse race or sporting event. The individual gambler would then be unable to bet the desired amount of money. The hoarding of information only applies to the general body of regulars. Inveterates always inform other clique members of a large wager and also explain the reason for their decision.’ (Rosecrance, 1986)

I find it interesting that these gamblers will give out information about their bets to close friends, it seems like they would keep it secret from everyone until after they had won (or lost).

**Anthropology**

*America: History & Life* produced 49 results for hoarding. Results included mostly academic journals with a few periodicals and reviews. Search results focused on markets, productivity and regional wealth and how hoarding can affect these things. I really like the article *Suburban Advantage: Opportunity Hoarding and Secondary Attainment in the Postwar Metropolitan North* (Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011) which discussed how suburban communities hoarded resources in schools for their own children and youth.

The Anthropological Index Online produced four search results for Hoarding, results included *Sharing, hoarding, and theft: exchange and resistance in forager-farmer relations* (Fortier, 2001), *Hiding the (fabric) stash: collecting, hoarding, and hiding strategies of contemporary US quilters* (Stalp, 2006), *Hoarding, storing value and the credit crunch* (Peebles, 2009) and *Hoarding wealth: when virtue becomes vice* (Gudeman, 2009). These articles focused on how hoarding can negatively affect communities and industries.
JSTOR: American Anthropologist produced 46 results for hoarding; *Egalitarianism among Hunters and Gatherers* (Cashdan, 1980), *Physical and Physiological Observations on the Navaho* (Hrdlička, 1900) and *Unstable Households in a Stable Kalahari Community in Botswana* (Kent, 1995). These articles focused on how hoarding affects communities, I found it interesting that hoarding was a problem hundreds of years ago and still remains a problem today.

JSTOR: Current Anthropology found 41 results for hoarding. *The Obsidian Dating Method* (Clark, 1961), *Social Responses During Severe Food Shortages and Famine* (Dirks et al., 1980), and *Food Sharing on Ifaluk* (Betzig & Turke, 1986). I really liked the article by it explained how many cultures reacted to food shortages by hoarding supplies; ‘In famine-prone Ethiopia, the fact that Orthodox Christians may abstain from food for as many as 165 days each year has the possible advantages of reduced pressure on food supply, relatively uniform distribution of inanition throughout the year, and maintenance at a high level of food-related anxiety, fostering tendencies toward precautionary hoarding.’ I thought the only reason for fasting were religious, I did not know that food shortages may have also been a reason to encourage fasting.

AnthroSource: AS produced 4 results to hoarding and all of them were journals. *A Deluge? Which Deluge?: Archeology and Metallurgical ‘Technology in Prehistoric* (LAL, 1968), *The Passage of Arms: An Archaeological Analysis of Prehistoric Hoards and Votive Deposits* (Levy, 1990). Levy discusses how artifacts and weapons have been hoarded; ‘Many of the enormous number of artifacts from later European prehistory come from single finds and hoards, outside of ordinary burial and habitation contexts. These artifacts have formed the basis of culture-historical studies for well over 100 years.’ It is amazing to think that someone hoarding these things
allows people in the 21st century learn more about a culture and way of life that does not exist anymore.

My Anthropology searches led me to a great website Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment, the website was a great resource to locate biographies and books that contained information about hoarding. The search results included biographies such as *Journal of a Voyage to North-America Undertaken by Order of the French King* (Charlevoix, 1761), *The History and Present State of Virginia* and *History of the Indian tribes of North America* (Beverley, 1705). In *History of the Indian tribes of North America* the author does not view hoarding kindly ‘But we are not inclined to accord much praise to isolated acts of generosity, that glimmer, at distant intervals, through a long career of brutal violence. The miser who devotes all his life to the hoarding of gold, gains no applause for an occasional freak of generosity; nor does the savage, who pauses, in the midst of a prolonged series of murders, to spare a woman, or a trembling child, deserve the laurel of the hero.’ (McKenney, 1849) This author seems to scorn a man that spends his time hoarding gold and caring little for others well-being.

**Conclusion**

Anthropology searches led

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**Bibliography**


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