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Confronting the Material Convoy in Later Life

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Abstract

We adapt a metaphor from life course studies to designate the whole of one's possessions, across time, as a convoy of material support. This dynamic collection of things supports daily life and the self, but it can also present difficulty in later life. To alleviate the purported burdens of the material convoy, a discourse has arisen that urges elders and their family members to reduce the volume of possessions. An analysis of 11 such possession management texts shows authors addressing two distinct audiences about elders' need to downsize: family members and elders themselves. Authors who speak to family members do so with an urgent, unsentimental tone that echoes mainstream clutter-control advice about disorderly, overfull households. In texts for elders, the standard critique about consumption and unruly lives is gentler, more sensitive to the meaning of things, and underplays the emotions of divestment. There is stress on the responsibility to spare the next generation and control one's legacy. These latter texts seem to respect that downsizing in later life symbolizes a narrowing of the life world.

Keywords

Aging; life course; consumption; family

People come to possess things by various means: by finding, buying, creating, or receiving them as gifts. Once held, things can reside with the acquirer anywhere from momentarily to indefinitely. Those that stay become possessions and require the "labor" of possession (Ekerdt, 2009) which involves both the physical and spatial disposition of the item and perhaps some measure of living-with or living-into that makes the thing over as "mine" (Kleine and Baker, 2004). Labor on behalf of one's things and their environs occurs not only for prized possessions but also for those that are merely tolerated or even resented.

A regard for the "lives" of things is well established in consumption studies (Appadurai, 1986). As they reside with their acquirers, single items could be described, in the language of life course studies (Elder, Johnson and Crosnoe, 2004), as having careers, trajectories, durations, transitions, entries, exits. This implies that the collection, as a whole, will have a dynamic composition over time. To enunciate this idea, we adapt a metaphor from life course studies to designate the body of one's possessions, at any one time and as borne through time, as a convoy of material support. Kahn and Antonucci (1980) originally applied the convoy metaphor to describe a structure of social support, a dynamic personal network of family and acquaintances within which support is given and received. Analogous to these authors' notion of a social convoy, the material convoy of possessions has members of more and less importance, a composition at once stable and changeable, convoy constituents that also populate the convoys of others, and predictable age-linked changes (e.g., expansion in early adulthood). The individual literally bears a material convoy from cradle to grave and from place to place. And, like Kahn and Antonucci's social convoy,

people also have affective and affirmative transactions with their things, if only imaginatively.

Social networks and material convoys share one other feature: the person at their center may regard the constituents with ambivalence (Fingerman and Hay, 2004). The stock and store of one's belongings can be a resource, achievement, delight, and comfort, but they may also by turns be a burden. This last circumstance is the premise for advice about possession reduction.

At any stage of life, the convoy gains and retains items because they support daily life as well as the ongoing project of the self (Belk, 1988). The convoy loses items under three circumstances: because things become functionally unavailable; because there is some failure in their capacity for social mediation—they no longer represent one's interests or identity; or because bodily or life course change overthrows the need of certain goods and furnishings or perhaps the desire to maintain them (Ekerdt, 2009; Lastovicka and Fernandez, 2005; Roster, 2001). In later life, however, there are three additional dimensions attending the material convoy. First, the convoy constituents are likely to have longer durations than in earlier adulthood. Things have stuck and accumulated, the perdurance of some items making them biographical and, for that reason, more meaningful. Second, the manageability and future disposition of the convoy come into question with advancing age, especially as time horizons shrink and the risk of vulnerability rises (Carstensen, 2006). Third and following from this, family members have an increasing stake in the safety and security of older relatives, and this extends to elders' property and living arrangements (Ekerdt and Sergeant, 2006).

For these reasons, older adults' ability to maintain and manage the material convoy may become a matter of concern. The accumulation of belongings, each acquired or kept for some reason, is recast as a problematic batch of "stuff" wherein the subjectivities of things are eclipsed by their sheer materiality. The material convoy becomes a potential drag on well being. Our research examines a genre of advice literature on possession-reduction that has arisen to address the purportedly overfull material convoys of later life. This literature's age-specific advice is an accentuated variation on a more general message to consumers of all ages (and a staple of popular media) that they should feel an imperative to downsize and declutter their households. To be fair, we note that the advice literature advocating possession-reduction in later life coexists with a larger genre of pro-consumerist messages for the "mature market" (Gilleard and Higgs, 2005; Katz, 2005). Such lifestyle manuals and magazines promote products and experiences that risk an enlargement of the material convoy, even as the sources for this article counsel the opposite.

Self-help discourse and advice about possessions

Elder-oriented advice about possessions is nested within the general body of advice on possession reduction, itself nested in the self-help discourse of contemporary life. Here we focus on written sources of advice—literature—but self-help advice to the public about health, appearance, households, work, and relationships flows from every kind of media. Self-help manuals reflect and reinforce our broader cultural anxieties and do so with remarkably consistent messages (McGee, 2005; Gauntlett, 2002).

A pair of common themes emerges within this self-help framework. First, advice literature requires that there be problems. A strong matrix of difficulties and troubles must undergird the work in order for it to be of value to consumers. Often these are problems born out of societal realities, but presented to the reader as "individually generated and solvable" obstacles (Simonds, 1992; 133). Authors may expound on social factors, such as the enormous influence of consumer culture, but they always return the problem to the

individual plane. Second, advice literature impels readers to personal self-mastery (McGee, 2005) in keeping with American ideals of individualism and personal responsibility. The literature enjoins readers to seek self-fulfillment, to live life to the fullest, and find their authentic self and lifestyle through this self-control (Hazleden, 2003; McGee, 2005).

The general literature on possession reduction partakes of these motifs—individual problems and self-mastery—in order to lay out why and how one should discipline the household’s material convoy. In popular works, such as It’s All Too Much! An Easy Plan for Living a Richer Life with Less Stuff (Walsh, 2007) and Living with Less: The Upside of Downsizing Your Life (Tabb, 2006), the generic moral imperative of personal mastery extends to mastery of personal possessions and space (see also Culbertson and Decker, 2005; Ward, 2007). The core problem complex is this: overactive consumption clutters the household and diminishes the quality of life. The individual symptoms of this cultural pathology are homes inundated with “stuff.” Authors urge readers to limit their purchasing, purge their belongings, and restrain the sheer volume of possessions. Over-consumption is fashioned as both a symptom and a cause of the need for personal discipline and attention to the self. In their survey of decluttering texts in the U.K., Cwerner and Metcalfe (2003) distill the message as one “primarily concerned with the relationship between personal therapy and spatial organization: if people can clear their homes of the detritus and junk that continually invade them, then they will be happier and healthier” (p. 232). The underlying ontology of this clutter problem is that we *are* what we *own*, and if our belongings are a mess then, by extension, so are we.

Our examination of the elder-oriented subgenre reveals some continuity with the general clutter-management literature (especially as regard to tips and practical advice) but also highlights the special or accentuated circumstances of the material convoy in later life. The critique of consumption, as will be shown, differs noticeably when it problematizes elders’ “stuff” to their family members versus problematizing the possessions to elders themselves.

METHODS

To generate items for analysis, previous studies of advice literature have relied heavily on aggregates of best-sellers such as the New York Times and Independent best-seller lists (Zimmerman, Holm and Haddock, 2001; Simonds, 1992; Hazleden, 2003) and The Reader’s Guide to Periodic Literature (Coleman, Ganong and Gingrich, 1995). In order to conduct a close reading of the most popular relevant material within a very small (but growing) category of books, Amazon.com was used to gather texts within the elder subgenre of clutter-management literature. Amazon.com is the most popular online source of information on books; it is a primary resource for those seeking books on any subject (Kauffman and Lee, 2004) including “self-help” among its thirty-five established book categories. The search terms “elder,” “senior,” “age,” and “parents” were used in conjunction with “clutter,” “declutter,” “organize,” “downsize,” “simplify,” and “junk.” Through the various iterations of search terms, a list of decluttering literature aimed at elders took shape. Amazon.com’s automatic recommendations for related literature were explored until all paths for references were exhausted and no new recommendations surfaced. To ensure that our sample of the subgenre was sufficiently broad, any titles mentioned within our sample books were examined to see if they met our criteria of dealing with the issue of dispossession in later life. A total of eleven works were analyzed; a list of these works is shown in Table 1. In these sources, such terms as “elder” and “senior” are not precisely defined, but they can be understood, based on the authors’ anecdotes, to indicate persons in their 60s, 70s, and beyond. This conventional meaning is also our meaning here.

The goal of the analysis was to learn how authors adapt the general critique of overfull households—that clutter requires mastery of materials and the self—to the situation of later life when possessions have endured longer, when the future grows less certain, and when family members take an increased stake in the safety and security of elders. The approachable, mainstream character of these books belies the fact that complex, overlapping ideologies of consumption, aging and self-help exist within them (Saukko, 2003). To achieve our analytic goals we conducted a “directed” content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This type of qualitative content analysis builds upon previously established categories and applies them in a new context or uses them to expand a conceptual framework. In this case, our analysis built upon categories utilized in examinations of self-help literature (Hazleden, 2003; Hochschild, 1994) and inquiries into de-cluttering texts and media (Cwerner and Metcalfe, 2003).

FINDINGS

One can assume that readers approach these eleven texts having already perceived some need to control the material convoy, perhaps due to failing health, a household reduced by widowhood, or under the exigency of a residential move (Ekerdt, Sergeant, Dingel and Bowen, 2004). There is also a cultural habit of reducing material possessions and making special dispositions ahead of impending death (Stevenson and Kates, 1999; Unruh, 1983). In the texts examined here, the authors’ main task is to reinforce these inclinations and suggest how the work might get done.

Authorial Expertise: The ‘How’ and the ‘Hire’

Authors of advice literature need to establish authority through claims of expertise (Hochschild, 1994; McGee, 2005; Simonds, 1992; Zimmerman et al., 2001). The late-life possession-management genre requires a dual assertion. The authors must claim special skills in organization and managing personal possessions, and they must speak knowingly about the challenges specific to older adults. Ability to organize closets only takes one so far in claims to legitimacy, but organizing the sheer volume of possessions amassed at the later stages of the material convoy, along with sensitivity to health factors, emotional attachment to items, and family politics, requires additional affirmations of expertise.

Consistent with Hochschild’s (1994) analysis of the self-help genre, the authors surveyed offer stories of personal experiences to cement their legitimate command of the topic, highlight credentials, and cultivate a relationship with the reader. The authors specifically identify how excess possessions created difficulty in their own lives, telling tales of over-stuffed storage facilities, empty nests where children’s still-full rooms could not be reclaimed as hobby spaces and offices, and aging parents who could not move to more suitable housing because they would not part with a single cake pan or back issue of *National Geographic* magazine. For example, the authors of *Just Pencil Me In* and *Rightsizing Your Life* draw on their own numerous moving and downsizing experiences. The authors of *Moving Mom and Dad*, *Moving On*, *Don’t Toss My Memories in the Trash*, *No Ordinary Move*, *Family Realities*, *Moving for Seniors*, *Moving in the Right Direction*, and *The Boomer Burden* all base their expertise on having helped seniors deal with their unwieldy possessions, either through training, business, or personal experiences. With the exception of *Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate?*, published by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, all books located for this study are authored by self-help or lifestyle management professionals.

These guides never present a hard sell (they never explicitly say “hire me!”). Instead, the authors focus on when and how to bring in paid assistance. Yet the overall message leans heavily toward hiring various professionals rather than taking on downsizing as a

completely do-it-yourself project. Hiring professionals (such as those in the author's own fields) is presented as an empowering way for people to exercise control. These authors contend that researching and hiring professionals to tame the material convoy is a wise use of both money and time. After all, who *really* has the time to sort through a lifetime of items while maintaining a busy life? The irony is that these authors are advocating the consumption of services even as they promote the dispossession of belongings.

Somewhat surprisingly, sections on the actual mechanics of downsizing and disposal take up a relatively small amount of text in the works surveyed. The procedural techniques for tackling household disbandment in later life closely follow those given in the general decluttering literature. Each work carries the oft-repeated advice to separate all items into piles designated “keep/donate/trash” or “keep/don't know/get rid of.” Outlets for personal possessions show little variation. All volumes suggested selling items through yard/garage sales or estate sales. Several books mentioned auctions – both online and traditional—as well as consignment or second-hand shops. Donation to favored charities and/or historical societies rounded out the dispossession options for items of any value. Disposal is a constant recommendation, with recycling highlighted frequently in addition to the ubiquitous dumpster. One difference between general downsizing literature and the elder-specific genre lies in the addition of measured advice about equity—how to make fair decisions about distributing cherished items among potentially competing relatives. Strategies include having relatives place colored stickers on items they desire, notebooks with distribution instructions, and familiar heuristics for deciding which items to keep (e.g., take photos of beloved items instead of keeping the items themselves). Overall the works reflect fairly routine practices of possession divestment (Gregson, Metcalfe, and Crewe, 2007), but with a special emphasis on the unique challenges of giving legacy items to family and friends.

With stories of their personal encounters with the material convoy, the authors often place themselves in a sympathetic hero role (Lunt and Livingstone, 1992). In these authors' telling, they are the battle-hardened veterans of “stuff wars” that have left them with accumulated knowledge and insight for the further attack on clutter.

Writing about Elders

Of the eleven manuals examined, five were aimed primarily at seniors themselves and six were written primarily for an audience of family members, who are usually assumed to be adult children (Table 1). The special burden of the material convoy in later life is stressed in both types of works, but works aimed at family members—The Boomer Burden, Moving Mom and Dad, Don't Toss My Memories in the Trash, Moving On, Family Realities, and No Ordinary Move—are closer in tone to mainstream decluttering literature. The message is that overfull households threaten well-being and must be tamed. The interesting twist is that these are other people's (elders') households that threaten the well-being of both generations. This twining of interests in elders' belongings stems from families' increasing concern for the welfare and living environments of their older relatives (Ekerdt and Sergeant, 2006), as well as a narrowing time horizon for continued well-being. Works written for family generally present consistent practical downsizing advice, whether parents are deceased, of decreased capacity, or capable of playing an active role in managing material possessions.

Such volumes exhibit an urgency not found in works aimed at elders. The authors of Moving Mom and Dad admonish children to “take action. Try open communication about their situation and let them know they're not alone. Don't wait until a crisis hits; begin discussing alternatives [to current housing] while they can be part of the solution” (Morse and Robbins, 1998: 27). Time is of the essence because elders may grow frail. Chapter titles illustrate the pressing tone found in these volumes: “Help! I can hardly cope with my own

life, and now my parents are falling apart!” (Morse and Robbins, 1998); “Early Tremors,” “Seven on the Richter Scale,” “What You Resist, Persists,” “Finger in the Dike,” and “Time Famine” (Perman and Ballard, 2007); and “First Signs” and “The Hearse Doesn’t Have a Trailer Hitch” (Hall, 2008).

Books aimed at family members frequently repeat the claims of general decluttering literature – that everyone in our society suffers from an overabundance of possessions and we must do what we can to avoid increasing our load. However, in the stories spun by these authors, the problem to be addressed is twofold. One issue is the sheer volume of possessions that elders have amassed, and the other is the possibility that this convoy will visit you, overwhelm you, and become your responsibility. Accepting possessions from a downsizing elder increases one’s own material inventory, and potentially that of the next generation. If not vigilant in this matter, adult children will end up with responsibility for their own possession load, that of their children, and that of their aging parents.

The authors surveyed also drive home the many ways that attachment to “stuff” breeds family conflict: battles over who should inherit what, how possessions should be valued, what constitutes a fair distribution system, and the rights of extended family members. These authors adopt the familiar rationale of general decluttering literature, that control of possessions is vital to a fully actualized life. Elders and their family members need personal discipline and mastery over unhealthy emotional attachments to mere stuff – no matter the sentimental or heirloom value - because this is the only way to tame the elder’s material convoy and stop it from becoming a transgenerational burden.

Within books written primarily for family members, authors commonly include sidebars specifically addressed to elders that mediate the blunt, urgent tone of the main pages. For example, in Moving On, the authors include a shaded section of text specifically for parents to guide them in communicating with their children as the family home is being downsized. The Boomer Burden author Julie Hall peppers her text with shaded boxes “For Parents.” While parents and adult children are often cooperating on a disbandment project, each generation merits its own advice.

Whether speaking to adult children or parenthetically to elders, authors nevertheless maintain (in the general style of advice manuals) an imperative voice. They can, however, shade toward paternalism, implying that elders are incapable of the self-control needed to thin their own material convoy because of their attachment to “stuff,” and by extension they sabotage their potential to live an age-appropriate lifestyle.

Writing for Elders

By contrast, the literature addressed to elders takes a gentler tone, with an emphasis on the positive aspects of downsizing and moving and the ways that later life can be more enjoyable when unburdened by the excess possessions that need constant management and care. Along with a streamlined collection of belongings comes the added psychological benefit of making decisions on one’s own behalf. Unlike the literature for family, these manuals do not have a time-is-short urgency about downsizing. What they do feature is an outright deference toward long-held possessions that are personally meaningful.

Clutter and excess stuff remain pejoratives in the elder-targeted literature, but the emotional connection to possessions is not vilified to the extent that it is in general or family-focused divestment manuals. Whereas volumes targeting general or younger audiences stress the emotional baggage that possessions represent and treat attachment to biographical items as a symptom of self-indulgent consumerism, the elder literature promotes divestment with more sensitivity. Authors affirm the sentimental value of items and acknowledge how possessions

represent personal and family history. However, the size of the material convoy in later life still remains an issue, so disbandment methods and dialogues shift to stress ways that dispositions can nonetheless honor one's belongings.

One strategy highlighted in Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?, Moving for Seniors, Rightsizing Your Life, and Just Pencil Me In is the "safe passage" disposition. Safe passage involves making sure that personal items are placed in new quarters in ways that protect and honor the particular article, and it can be accomplished by a variety of means (Roster, 2001). These methods include gifts to family during one's own lifetime, or donation to historical societies or to non-family members who will truly appreciate the value of items, giving them a "home." Each author in this subset stressed the need to share the stories behind seemingly ordinary objects, to place them in the context of family history. "That small vase that doesn't look like much to others may be a special treasure from your childhood, travels, heirlooms, work life or activities...If you don't let someone know [the stories behind the objects], those treasures may be on the dust heap before you know it...This could be one of the most valuable projects you can undertake" (Morris, 1998: 21). The meaning of things to their owners, both monetary and symbolic, gets considerable respect in these manuals.

The consumption critique in elder-targeted literature works hard to esteem the values that older readers may hold. An emphasis on thrift, often packaged with reference to the Great Depression or the sacrifices of the Greatest Generation, is a rhetorical device that recasts the problem of excess possessions as a matter of impractical saving. These habits of frugality are painted as unrealistic and potentially self-defeating because many elders need to downsize their homes. Frugality is also unwise because our modern convenience culture has a ready availability of low-cost replacements for storage containers, rubber bands, etc. In Just Pencil Me In, Wilma Willis Gore empathizes with a woman who moved into a new retirement community. This woman kept a seemingly useless box of old jelly glasses and was embarrassed to recall: "It took me a while to get out of the habit of storing things I thought I might use in the future" (Gore, 2002: 95). Overzealous saving and sentimental attachment to items are gently discouraged as they inhibit downsizing of the material convoy, which in turn hinders seniors from living their "best" lives today. For example, Ciji Ware counsels her readers to "Accept that the past is past... This acceptance, in turn, can open doors to new worlds, along with an appreciation for the advantages of the age you are now" (Ware, 2007:16).

Texts aimed at seniors frequently highlight the surprising ease of disbandment and the freedom and exciting choices that a downsizing can promise, as opposed to the stress. Authors such as Gore and Ware who speak of their own moves touch lightly on the challenges that they faced and keep the tone upbeat and lighthearted. The emotional stresses of dispossession, especially the potential for family strife, are not elaborated to the same extent as it is in literature targeted at family members.

In arguing for the mastery of possessions, the elder-oriented manuals clearly stress the exercise of agency and the satisfactions of being in control. There are advantages for one's family, legacy, and personal sovereignty. Ware, Gore, Nemovitz, and Stum encourage seniors to take control of disbandment projects (or at least as much control as their personal health allows) as a way of preserving autonomy. Personal supervision of disbandment decisions is advanced as way for seniors to maintain control over the path of their lives. "You'll get lots of advice from people," Gore advises, but "an individual really has no choice but to reject all but the advice she or he wholeheartedly agrees with and take charge—whatever the consequences" (Gore 2002: 70). Possession reduction, authors say, can be a parental gift to children. Possession reduction also preserves one's privacy by keeping family members from sorting through personal items and papers. Downsizing is often

framed as a parental responsibility to avoid passing undue burdens to loved ones. And ultimately, a sifted and slimmed material convoy is also a way to control one's postmortem image and legacy.

DISCUSSION

There is a material convoy of possessions that accompanies an individual from birth to death. Whereas its size and manageability may be an issue at any stage of life, this paper examined arguments as to why these matters must be confronted in later life. For adults generally, a genre of self-help literature has emerged that critiques the accumulation of possessions, urges discipline and self-mastery, and offers practical advice about their divestment (Cwerner and Metcalfe, 2003). When older adults are the focus of downsizing texts, the view is that possessions threaten to overwhelm not only elders but also their families. Our examination of this subgenre—11 recent popular books—shows authors addressing two distinct audiences about the material convoys of elders: family members and elders themselves. The manner of address is analogous to two stances that family members have been found to take toward the downsizing projects associated with household moves by elders (Ekerdt and Sergeant, 2006). These lie on a continuum anchored at each end by the inclination to assist or assert.

In the “assist” stance, family members are supportive of an elder's disbandment efforts while respecting their autonomy and values. In a similar way, decluttering manuals addressed to elders are quite resolute about the need to downsize, but the standard critique about consumption and lives out of control is softened by a sensitivity to the meaningfulness of elders' things. The “assert” stance is paternalistic and preemptive of elders' decision making, and this is likewise the manner of literature aimed at family members who are aiding the household downsizing of an elder. With a tone and urgency that is close to mainstream clutter-control advice, authors emphasize the trouble posed by the elder's convoy: its burdens, threat to safety, and potential for family discord. It is possible that this less sentimental, summary view of the elder's possessions resonates with family readers because it voices a displaced impatience and frustration with the stress of caregiving.

Why the gentler tone in works addressed to older adults? We believe that authors, who claim practical experience in these matters, understand that episodes of downsizing in later life are not primarily undertaken to yield a cleaner, freer household ready for further consumption. Rather, the divestments urged by these texts will occur in anticipation of and preparation for a narrowed life world. There is a liminality and lower horizon to life at this stage (Carstensen, 2006) that these authors seem to appreciate and respect. The focus on living a good life as elders is presented with the appreciation that time is precious. For all the confidence that these experts have in their advice, the usefulness of their messages lies in the encouragement to maintain a material convoy that is proportionate to one's stage of life.

Self-help books about possession reduction, especially those addressed to family members, appear to trample on the value that older people may place on their things. The significance and meaningfulness of possessions in later life have been confirmed in numerous studies (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Kroger and Adair, 2008; Price, Arnould, and Curasi, 2000). Older people prize possessions that symbolize their selves and their ties to others. Widows, for example, will maintain a bond with the deceased partner through certain possessions (Gentry et al., 1995; Shenk, Kuwahara, and Zablotsky, 2004). Our view is that these possession-reduction books actually affirm the significance of the material convoy even as they contend with it. These authors do appreciate “the comfort of things” (Miller, 2008), which is why they are keen to objectify the convoy as a batch of “stuff” and urge family members to recognize its threat to welfare and family harmony.

And, in addressing elders, these authors tread more carefully and with explicit deference toward the meaning of possessions. If it were easy to part people and their things, these authors could be less resolute and imperative.

The tone of the literature analyzed here is one that is simultaneously upbeat about the benefits of possession reduction as well as deferential to the value of prized possessions. In this, the authors demonstrate qualities that have been identified by critics of self-help media, namely, emotionality and a certain amount of “dumbing down” (Gauntlett, 2008; Squire, 2001; Zimmerman et al, 2001). The complexities of downsizing in later life are often glossed over while the benefits are highlighted in the “pursuit of a happy identity” (Gauntlett, 2008). The somewhat patronizing tone of some of the works analyzed does not so much signal a denigration of older adults, but rather a soothing condescension that is found throughout the self-help genre.

The works analyzed here demonstrate the complex relationship that people have with their belongings and how the problems of possession reflect broader cultural anxieties (McGee, 2005). This matter of the material convoy and its disposition is the intersection of anxieties about aging, aging “well,” family roles and responsibilities, and consumption. Family members are warned not to take on the burden of elders’ stuff, even though research shows that families play a valuable role as conduits for disposition (Curasi, Price, and Arnould, 2004; Hunter and Rowles, 2005; Marx, Solomon, and Miller, 2004). By contrast, elders are advised toward family solutions and how the disposition of their convoys can be a significant material and symbolic benefit to others. Thus, an assembly of personal belongings, tended for years and conveyed to later life, becomes at this life stage a collective and transgenerational matter.

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Table 1

Possession management manuals for households in later life.

Guides Addressed to Families

Vicki Dellaquila: *Don't Toss My Memories in the Trash: A Step-by-Step Guide to Helping Seniors Downsize, Organize, and Move* (Mountain Publishing, 2007).

Julie Hall: *The Boomer Burden: Dealing with Your Parents' Lifetime Accumulation of Stuff* (Thomas Nelson, 2008)

Linda Hetzer and Janet Hulstrand: *Moving On: A Practical Guide to Downsizing the Family Home* (Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2004)

Sarah C. Morse and Donna Quinn Robbins: *Moving Mom and Dad: Why, Where, How and When to Help Your Parents Relocate* (Lanier Publishing, 1998)

Barbara Z. Perman and Jim Ballard: *No Ordinary Move: Relocating Your Aging Parents* (Author House, 2007)

Lucy F. Wold and Ann E. Anderson: *Family Realities: Closing the Family Home, Dividing Family Possessions, Putting Affairs in Order* (Harmony House Press, 1998)

Guides Addressed to Elders

Wilma Willis Gore: *Just Pencil Me In: A Guide to Moving and Settling in After 60* (Quill Driver Books, 2002)

Barbara H Morris: *Moving for Seniors: A Step-by-Step Workbook* (Self published, 1998)

Bruce Nemovitz: *Moving in the Right Direction: The Senior's Guide to Moving and Downsizing* (Book Publishers Network, 2007)

Marlene Stum: *Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate? Workbook: A Guide to Passing on Personal Possessions* (University of Minnesota Extension Services, 1999)

Ciji Ware: *Rightsizing Your Life: Simplifying Your Surroundings While Keeping what Matters Most* (Springboard Press, 2007)
