



University of Tennessee, Knoxville
**TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative
Exchange**

Doctoral Dissertations

Graduate School

5-2017

Excessive Acquisition: What Is It? What Makes It Happen?

Melanie Doss

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, mdoss@vols.utk.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss



Part of the [Behavioral Economics Commons](#), [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#), [Social Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sociology of Culture Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Doss, Melanie, "Excessive Acquisition: What Is It? What Makes It Happen?. " PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2017.

https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/4456

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Melanie Doss entitled "Excessive Acquisition: What Is It? What Makes It Happen?." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management.

Ann Fairhurst, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Youn-Kyung Kim, Kiwon Lee, Daniel Flint

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

**Excessive Acquisition: What Is It?
What Makes It Happen?**

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Melanie Doss

May 2017

Copyright © Melanie Doss, 2016

All Rights Reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the process of completing the many years of graduate studies and especially this past year while I pressed to complete the writing of this dissertation, I received endless support from my family, friends, and colleagues. Words will never be able to fully express the gratitude I feel toward my husband, Chad Young, and my two children, Adam and Sarah Young, for their patience, strength, and daily inspiration throughout this journey. Also, I would like to thank my parents, who always believed in me and taught me to persevere with grace and integrity through all endeavors.

To the participants of this study and their willingness to share their personal and often emotional stories with me is the reason this dissertation exists. Their commitment to my research will contribute to the continued research of Consumer Research and advance the study of Excessive Acquisition towards a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

Thank you to the professors and supporting administrators in Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, Marketing, Statistics, Consumer Behavior, and Anthropology who have selflessly guided me during this pursuit. Without their knowledge, leadership, and friendship, I would not have confidently accomplished this challenge. A special appreciation is extended to the Graduate School and my committee members: Dr. Ann Fairhurst, Dr. Youn-Kyung Kim, Dr. Kiwon Lee, and Dr. Daniel J. Flint.

To all, I am eternally grateful,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MELANIE DOSS', written over a horizontal line.

MELANIE DOSS

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study draws on the philosophical concept of hermeneutics and theories of the self and self-regulation to investigate the underlying meanings expressed and experienced by the *self* and the *other* in the behavior of excessive acquisition. In accordance with the methods outlined by the phenomenological and grounded theory traditions, data were collected from 15 persons afflicted *with* excessive acquisition, defined as the *self* and 12 persons afflicted *by* excessive acquisition, defined as the *other*. The data content collected from in-depth interviews, field notes, observations, and electronic messages formulated the emergent Parent Themes of Emotion, Space, Economics, and Time. These four themes were supported by 10 Intermediate Categories and detailed by 72 Subcategories. The Parent Themes and their internal content described the behavioral process and defined excessive acquisition: the frequently repeated dynamic process of an autonomous act initiated by cues producing a self-unregulated desire to acquire tangible objects of epistemic value for the self through haptic experiences resulting in short-term satisfaction engendering persistent behavior despite adverse consequences.

In addition to defining the behavior and constructing a behavioral process model, the question of “Why tangibles?” was answered. Five pivotal junctures in the data collection process resulted in an all-encompassing Grand Theme. These “eureka” moments extrapolated from within the hundreds of pages of notes and transcripts identified distinguishing behavioral characteristics contributing to the excessive acquisition of tangibles. First, SPs over-obtained objects intrinsically for the self. Second, the excessively acquired objects promoted their self-image through physical adornment and

professionally-related possessions. Third, the motivational goal of the excessive acquirer was self-satisfaction through control. Fourth, the behavioral act was consistently and repeatedly conducted autonomously. Fifth, before acquisition satisfaction could be achieved, the haptic experience needed to be fulfilled. Merged with the content of Parent Themes, these findings answered the question of “Why Tangibles?” and re-labeled Excessive Acquisition as Narcissistic Commoditism. The excessive acquirers in this study focused on their own interests to the exclusion of others in the self-directed, frequently repeated selfish pursuit of objects promoting their own self-image.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Overview	1
Context and Background.....	1
Problem Statement	4
Purpose Statement.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Research Approach	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE, & PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE	9
Overview	9
Literature Review.....	10
Theoretical Perspective.....	15
Theory of Self-Regulation.....	16
Defining Self-Regulation.....	16
Self-Regulation Process	20
Self-Regulation Dysfunction	28
Philosophical Perspective	30
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	36
Overview	36
Rationale for Qualitative Research Design	36
Qualitative Strategies	37
Research Sample	41
Sample Selection	43
Self-Participants.....	46
Other Participants.....	56

Data Collection Methods	57
Pilot Interviews	60
In-Depth Interviews	62
Conversations	63
Field Notes	64
Text-Based Technology.....	65
Data Collection Summary	66
Data Analysis	67
Data Analysis Strategies for Validation of Findings	70
Ethical Considerations.....	71
Summary of Research Design	72
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	74
Overview	74
Emergent Themes.....	76
Parent Theme 1: Emotion	76
Intermediate Category One: Emotion I.....	76
Intermediate Category Two: Emotion II	78
Intermediate Category Three: Emotion III.....	79
Summary of Parent Theme 1: Emotion	81
Parent Theme 2: Space.....	82
Intermediate Category One: Inhabited Spaces	83
Intermediate Category Two: Ancillary Spaces.....	86
Intermediate Category Three: Degree of Clutter	88
Summary of Parent Theme 2: Space.....	89
Parent Theme 3: Economics.....	90
Intermediate Category One: Financial Economics	90
Intermediate Category Two: Behavioral Economics.....	96

Summary of Parent Theme 3: Economics.....	109
Parent Theme 4: Time	111
Intermediate Category One: Expenditure of Time	112
Intermediate Category Two: Frequency of Repetition.....	115
Summary of Parent Theme 4: Time	117
Summary of Parent Theme Findings	118
Grand Theme: Narcissistic Commoditism	121
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	128
Overview	128
Limitations	134
Future Research	136
REFERENCES	139
APPENDICES	149
APPENDIX A - Informed Consent Statement: Self.....	150
APPENDIX B - Informed Consent Statement: Other.....	153
APPENDIX C - Research Interview Guide: Self.....	156
APPENDIX D - Research Interview Guide: Other.....	158
APPENDIX E – Counseling Resource List	160
VITA.....	161

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Self-Participant Demographics.....	46
Table 2. List of Other Participants.....	57
Table 3. Data Collection Method of Self Participant	68
Table 4. Data Collection Method of Other Participant.....	68
Table 5. Subcategories of Emotion III	80
Table 6. Affected Spaces of the EA Experience.....	84
Table 7. Self-Participants' Degree of Clutter	89
Table 8. Object-Type Preferences of Self-Participants	102
Table 9. Expenditure of Time and Frequency of EA Activities	113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Theoretical Perspective of Excessive Acquisition Phenomenon	16
Figure 2. Data Analysis Process.....	75
Figure 3. External Trigger (email advertisement) Instigating Acquisition Behavior.....	98
Figure 4. Process Model of Dysfunctional Self-Regulated Acquisition Behavior	111
Figure 5. Excessive Acquisition	117
Figure 6. Narcissistic Commoditism.....	126

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This study draws on the philosophical concept of hermeneutics and theories of the self and self-regulation to investigate the underlying meanings expressed and experienced by the *self* and the *other* in the behavior of excessive acquisition. In accordance with the methods outlined by the phenomenological tradition, data were collected from 15 persons afflicted *with* excessive acquisition, defined as the *self* and 12 persons afflicted *by* excessive acquisition, defined as the *other*. The motivation of this study is situated within the desire to understand the behavior of excessive acquisition (EA) and establish a concise interpretation of the complete EA event and the state-of-affairs that result in the perceived inability to self-regulate the frequently repeated act of acquiring tangible objects.

This chapter begins with an overview of the context and background that frames the study followed by the problem statement, the statement of purpose, and accompanying research questions. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the research approach, concluding with the proposed rationale and significance of the study.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Material objects, in many forms, fulfill our basic human needs and impact our social ideologies (Wallendorf and Arnould, 1988). Paleo-archeologists have, for hundreds of years, exclaimed that material objects form the essence of ourselves as human beings while serving as the “set and props on the theatrical stages of our lives” (Wallendorf and Arnould,

1988). Material objects can therefore situate an individual's character and personality into a context expressing the quality of one's well-being. Yet, beyond the provision of sustenance, shelter, and safety, material possessions can serve as elements of destruction and impose compromised conditions of life.

Each day witnesses the birth of some new, wonderful invention, destined to make the world pleasanter to live in, the adversities of life more endurable, and to increase the variety and intensity of the enjoyments possible to humanity. But yet, notwithstanding the growth and increase of all conditions to promote comfort, the human race is today more discontented, more irritated and more restless than ever before.

This passage is an excerpt from the 1886 Victorian writings of Max Nordau titled "The Conventional Lies of Our Civilization" (Nordau, 1886; Ainslie, 1992, pg. 1). Within the same era, George Beard proposed a similar discontent he referred to as "neurasthenia." William James renamed this malaise as "Americanitis" and cited a cluster of physiological symptoms often found in businessmen and women of modern society exposed to competition, luxuries, and vices of social classes (Beard, 1869; James, 1888; Ainslie, 1992). Thorstein Veblen contributed to the conversation in the late 1800's by reminding the world that monetary gain does not consistently lead to lasting hedonic effects, that the acquisition of material goods demonstrates wealth and marks social status (Ainslie, 1992). Karl Marx's materialist methodology leads him to conclude that what matters is not merely the intellectual world, but the material world (Woodward, 2007). Further, he urges people to realize they are the creator of such an objective world including the everyday objects of acquisition in which they engage rather than taking all for granted or assuming they hold no individual responsibility (Woodward, 2007).

George Ainslie (1992) elevates the discussion through the discipline of behavioral economics. He refers to the “malaise” in his writings and research produced late in the 20th century and describes it in the following passage from his book titled “Picoeconomics”:

It is said to involve an increase in subjects’ ranges of available choices and, usually, the speed with which subjects can obtain their chosen goods...its sufferers seem unable to stop doing things that bring it on, even when they have clear indications as to what those things are. They are seduced, rather than attacked, by the destructive process (Ainslie, 1992, pg. 3).

These variants of a syndrome in which people indulge freely in new and plentiful goods describe a complex behavior afflicting consumers since the industrial revolution, but what is it? The specified pathogen for this behavior has eluded philosophers, behaviorists, psychologists, and scientists for hundreds of years. Respective of the historic writings, this study explores the phenomenon in search of a deeper understanding and possible explanation.

Excessive Acquisition (EA) is the term used in this research that envelops the historical references of Nordau, Beard, James, Veblen, Marx, and Ainslie into a current “modern day” nomenclature. It is a general agnomen found within the diagnostics statistics manual of mental disorders as a specifier to hoarding disorder (HD) (DSM-V, 2013). Active research on HD reports that 1 in 20 people living in the United States are hoarders (Frost et al, 2009). Of that population, 85% are excessive acquirers (Frost et al, 2009). These figures translate to approximately 12.75 million people afflicted with EA. Proposing that the converse is also true, that not all excessive acquirers are hoarders, the population of those afflicted with EA can potentially exceed 13 million consumers.

Despite the large population of consumers experiencing EA, researchers have focused predominately on the psychological needs and attachments to objects of consumption rather than the act of acquisition. This gap establishes the foundation of this study and postulates the conceptual framework that embraces the agency of consumers acknowledging increased reliance on manufactured goods in a consuming culture.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

With EA as a contributing behavior to HD, EA is an apparent problem among consumers. Problems of consumer behavior are believed to express a “dark side” of human character, a side many consumer behaviorists do not explore. As a result, the majority of work on consumer behavior disorders (CBDs) is conducted on acts of consumption from which the extent of literary contributions associates compulsive consumption as the primary conflict. The missing vein of inquiry in the studies of consumer behavior lies within the acts of acquisition disorders, excessive acquisition, specifically.

Acknowledging the postulated complexities of EA, this study seeks to genuinely explore the nature of EA behavior and its effects on the quality of lives of not only those afflicted *with* EA (the Self), but those afflicted *by* EA (the Other). The lived experiences shall be captured through the traditional and multiple qualitative methods of phenomenology and grounded theory. Through analysis of in-depth interviews of the *self* and the *other* in combination with observations of the conflicted self, the study will attempt to describe the nature of EA and the behavioral process from the perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of the afflicted. This study will also attempt to develop a theory-based definition that is systematically grounded through analyzed qualitative data (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990). The research problem will be assessed with intentions of postulating a theoretical framework and development of a process model describing the dynamic consumer behavior. An investigation of this vein contributes to the holistic understanding of consumer behavior and initiates the dialogue of an affliction affecting millions of consumers.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Volume Five (DSM-V) positions EA as a specifier to HD confirming that the behavior exists in some form. The complete form of EA, however, is unknown. Thus, the purpose of this study becomes situated within the investigation of the lived experiences of excessive acquirers and the interpretations of others to advance the limited knowledge of this phenomenon toward a deeper understanding of a perceived inability to self-regulate the frequently repeated act of acquiring tangible goods. Its extended purpose is to extrapolate the dimensions of the human motivational conflict that produces the significant decision to engage in a conflicting behavior, not occurring occasionally, but frequently repeated when maintaining other choices would have been better served. By constituting its inward nature through multiple methods of qualitative inquiries of *self* and *other* participants in the United States, different types of data were collected from dyadic inquiries producing content that otherwise may have been exempt through different research design criteria. The findings from this phenomenology and grounded theory study shed light on the singularity of the acquisition process afflicting a large population of consumers formulating the groundwork from which future research can be generated.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is hypothesized that EA is a behavior pattern pursuant of the frequently repeated attainment of tangibles. When behaviorists want to understand a particular behavior pattern, a method is determined by which to predict and identify influences from situation to situation; that is, aspects are sought that reveal reliable patterns and consistencies (Woods and Canter, 2007). When evaluation of behavior is approached in this pragmatic manner, actions and their contexts are observed as whole units, complete events. The aspects that are examined by behaviorists are the states of affairs that were present when an action occurred, the act itself, and the states of affairs that have been produced by those actions (Woods and Canter, 2007). The first set of events is termed *antecedents* and the last set is called *consequences* (Woods and Canter, 2007). These two considered together are the *context* of the behavior (Woods and Canter, 2007). The relationships among antecedents, actions, and consequences are the “contingencies.” The integrated whole is an operant three-term contingency simply because the behavior operates upon the environment and the integrated unit consists of three terms. It is integrated because each can only be defined in terms of the other and thus, these are aspects that assemble the whole, not a mechanical assemblage.

To study the nature of EA behavior, the integrated whole of the operant three-term contingency of antecedents, behavioral act, and consequences is incorporated into the development of research questions (RQ).

RQ1: What is the nature of the whole event of excessive acquisition?

RQ2: What are the environmental forces of influence that produce the behavior of excessive acquisition?

RQ3: What are the acquiring goals of the self?

RQ4: What are the distinguishing characteristics of the excessive acquiring act?

RQ5: What are the consequences related to excessive acquisition behaviors?

RESEARCH APPROACH

With the approval of the university's institutional review board and the acknowledgment of the sensitive nature of the topic, the researcher studied the experiences and perceptions of 27 participants. These participants included 15 *selves* and 12 *others*. In-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection although additional methods were implemented as the study progressed. Two pilot interviews were conducted, one with a *self* and one with the spouse of the self, which is identified as an *other*. These interviews formed the basis from which the comprehensive research was designed. The inclusion of the *other* participant in the study provided secondary data that significantly expanded the collected knowledge on the topic.

The conclusive data collection process resulted in 8 audio recorded and transcribed interviews, 12 interviews documented in detailed notes scribed during and immediately following the sessions, 4 observed participants, and 3 *self* participants from which information was obtained from *others*. This descriptive data collection process provided the content for data analysis and defined the overall findings of the study. Each participant was identified by a pseudonym and names were re-coded throughout the documentation. Triangulation of self-participant interview content was achieved from data collected and corroborated by the *others*. Thematic and similar coding categories were developed and

refined on an ongoing basis, guided by the study's conceptual framework. In addition, various analysis strategies were employed, including the search for discrepant evidence and peer review at different stages of the study.

All collected data and investigator journal notes remain in the possession of the investigator and will exist in a secure location for a minimum period of three years per the requirements of the university's IRB guidelines. This outlined procedure allows maximum confidentiality of study participants which is an important criterion in establishing trust, respect, and integrity between the investigator and those willing to engage in the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE, AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of 27 people afflicted *with* or afflicted *by* excessive acquisition. Anticipating the emotional sensitivity of the participants, the researcher sought to understand the components of the behavioral act, its consequences, and specifically, why tangibles. Before the research framework could be designed, it was necessary to conduct a critical review of current literature for development of background knowledge and insightfulness into theoretical underpinnings. This review was ongoing throughout the data collection and data analysis phases of the study.

The literature review, theoretical perspective, and philosophical perspective contribute to a rationale for the proposed qualitative study illustrating the importance of addressing this research problem and verifying the limits on the subject of EA. EA appears as a term only within the discussion of HD; thus, this review begins with the analysis of documentation based on the direct association with HD and extends accordingly to include a discussion on consumer behavior disorders. The theoretical perspective, also presented in this chapter, is an explicit assertion that relates to the analysis of the theory of self-regulation. The chapter concludes with a philosophical perspective of the self and the other as told by Kant, Mead, and other renowned philosophers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Frost and Steketee (2010) explore HD behavior through a series of compelling case studies in the vein of Oliver Sacks, a British physician and author of *Awakenings*. With vivid portraits that expose particular traits of the hoarder ---“piles on sofas and beds that make furniture useless, homes that have to be navigated by narrow ‘goat trails,’ stacks of paper that are ‘churned’ but never discarded, even collections of animals, [feces], and garbage” --- these authors describe the insatiable appetite of subjects hoarding material possessions regardless of value. The massive accumulation of material objects leads to the physical destruction of the living environment, erodes the family unit, induces poor health, and propagates financial ruins. However, the amassment of possessions is a function not only of item retention, but also the rate of object acquisition (Nordsletten, 2013). Thus, the term *excessive acquisition* is presented.

EA has been strategically embedded within the definition of compulsive hoarding (CH) since 1994 when CH was included in the fourth edition of the Diagnostic Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders. Within the DSM-IV (1994), hoarding was defined as a compulsive disorder with dual characterizations: a behavior initiated by excessive acquiring exacerbated by the inability to discard. Medical professionals prescribed to this definition until advanced research over a nine-year period produced evidence justifying revisions of the original definition. In the DSM-V (2013), CH was redefined as a discrete behavior and re-named hoarding disorder (HD). EA is now coded as a specifier of HD (Nordsletten et al., 2013). As such, it is recognized that EA is a significant phenomenon within itself.

The importance of EA is discussed in a peer reviewed article in the American Journal

of Medical Genetics: Neuropsychiatric Genetics. This study presents research conducted by Nordsletten et al. on the genetic and environmental influences on EA and the implications for HD (2013). This research was designed to study the consistent co-occurrence of EA and HD and whether EA and difficulties discarding possessions “share a common etiology” (Nordsletten et al., 2013, pg. 380). The findings confirmed that difficulty discarding and EA are strongly related phenomena and a strong genetic correlation between the two is revealed in approximately 60% of the phenotypes (2013). Although the implications of this study are significant, knowledge on specific EA attributes and its theoretical existence are not expanded beyond a suggested method of excessive acquiring:

Our results suggest that future studies should prioritize the investigation of potential environmental risk factors that are unique to difficulties discarding and excessive acquisition, as well as risk factors common to both. The study of individuals who hoard but do not excessively acquire --- and vice versa (e.g., compulsive buyers) --- will be particularly useful in this endeavor (Nordsletten et al., 2013, pg. 385).

In another article, Timpano et al. address EA through the epidemiology of HD and the exploration of the acquisition specifier in an earlier study conducted in 2010 and published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, Physicians Postgraduate Press, Inc. The objective of this study extended beyond the US to the German population and although growing evidence warranted hoarding to have its own diagnosis, these authors sought to investigate the symptoms along with “correlated features” that may be diagnostically relevant (Timpano et al., 2011). Three items within their survey assessed types of acquisitions including compulsive buying, collecting free things, and stealing (Timpano et al., 2011). Compulsive buying and collection of free things were significant predictors of

HD (Timpano et al., 2011). The results of this study concluded that HD is a “highly prevalent syndrome” and the actual population rate may be higher than currently estimated (Timpano et al., 2011). The contribution of this study to EA is the confirmation of compulsive buying and frequent collecting of free things as types of excessive acquisitions, one of which meets the criteria of consumer behavior disorders (CBDs).

Compulsive buying alone is the most pervasive CBD (McGregor, 2010) afflicting roughly 6% of the U.S. population (Koran et al., 2006). This behavior was first identified and described as “chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to negative feelings or events” (O’Guinn and Faber, 1989, pg. 155). While initially providing some positive benefits, such behavior typically becomes “very difficult to stop and ultimately results in harmful consequences” (O’Guinn and Faber, 1989, pg. 155). These consequences are not only economic, but psychological and societal (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

The age of onset for compulsive buying appears to be in the late teens and early twenties (Black, 2001). The preponderance of people identified as compulsive buyers are female constituting on average 80-95% of clinical samples (Schlosser et al., 1994; McElroy et al., 1994). However, a more recent study using a large general population sample found that the prevalence rates of CBD between men and women were only marginally different (Koran et al., 2006).

Co-morbidity rates among the compulsive buying population are exceedingly high. The most commonly associated co-morbidities are moodiness, anxiety, substance abuse, and eating disorders (Schlosser et al., 1994). Schlosser et al. (1994) conducted a clinical sample of 46 people with CBD, 60% met the criteria for at least one personality disorder

which was most commonly obsessive-compulsive disorder. Other negative emotions such as depression, anxiety, boredom, and self-critical thoughts were common, whereas euphoria and relief of negative emotions were often consequences (McGregor, 2010). Thus, compulsive buying appears to be primarily an emotional response to stress in individuals with CBD (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989) and buying is used as a means of positive mood elevation, at least as perceived by the study participants. It has also been determined that people who compulsively buy display higher rates of compulsive traits, have lower self-esteem, depressed moods, low self-perceptions, and perfectionist expectations (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989). They exhibit more decision difficulties and are more prone to fantasy than people with normal buying behavior (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989; Kyrios, Frost, and Steketee, 2004).

In many cases, compulsive buying may be impulsive (Gilliam and Tolin, 2010). Research by Rook reports that impulse purchasing is widespread among the consumer population and extends across numerous product categories (Rook, 1987). Subsequently, one study found that as many as 62% of consumers' purchases in brick-and-mortar stores fall into the impulse category (Rook, 1987). Marketing innovations such as credit cards, cash machines (ATMs), "instant credit," 24-hour retailing (on and off-line), and home shopping networks make it easier than ever before for consumers to purchase on impulse (Rook, 1987). Rook re-conceptualizes impulse buying as a "psychologically distinctive type" of behavior that differs significantly from thoughtful modes of consumer choices. He suggests that "buying impulses are often forceful and urgent...a fast experience and more likely to involve 'grabbing' rather than 'choosing'" (Rook, 1987, pg. 191). A buying impulse is more emotional than rational and is more likely to be perceived as "bad" rather than as

“good,” according to Rook (1987).

Although consumers initially deem impulse purchases as “thrilling” and “exciting” (Gilliam and Tolin, 2010), Rook’s exploratory research documented a myriad of negative consequences. Over 80% of his sample indicated negative experiences as a result of their impulse purchases:

Financial Problems	56%
Disappointment with Product Performance	37%
Guilt	20%
Disapproval by Others	19%

Conspicuous consumption is another type of CBD (e.g. owning expensive artwork, jewelry, clothes, and cars), and is the most relevant type of consumption from a social class perspective. Veblen coined the term “conspicuous consumption” in the late 1890s to describe the behavioral characteristics of the “nouveau riche” social class who emerged as a result of the accumulation of capital wealth during the Second Industrial Revolution (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996). Conspicuous consumption applied most specifically to the upper class who advertised their great wealth to achieve power and social status (Bagwell and Bernheim, 1996).

The value of discussing CBDs and their attributes contributes to the background development of EA and presents a potential typology of the excessive acquirer. However, it should be noted that at this stage of understanding, this study does not suggest the excessive acquirer attains objects compulsively or impulsively. In actuality, the behavioral act of EA may occur normally and rationally. The differentiating characteristics of the EA domain from compulsive and impulsive buying behaviors are predicted to be the rate or frequency at which tangibles are acquired and the degrees of self-regulation influencing the

afflicted *self* throughout the complete event. In theory, the distinctive mark of the excessive acquirer becomes not the behavioral act itself, but the antecedents and consequences that lead to the discontent and physiological discord. It is proposed that the excessive acquirer exists in perpetual motion, a type of feedback loop, producing the inability to achieve equilibrium thus realizing a non-normative consumer behavior pattern.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

In qualitative research, it is acknowledged that the development of a theoretical framework emerges from the evaluation of collected data on the phenomenon itself, but a working knowledge from a theoretical perspective develops a rich background for data collection, especially for grounded theory research. The value of this approach enhances the understanding of the unknowns of the phenomenon and directs the research toward an improved understanding on its own terms.

The perspective for this study is a theoretical application based on intuitive and cognitive background analyses surrounding aspects of EA behavior. Realizing that any single contemporary theory cannot capture all the complexities of consumer behavior, the interest of this study is to identify and explicate the situational, individual, and intrapsychic conditions responsible for the failure of self-regulation in the behavior of excessive acquisition. Hence, the theoretical perspective is examined through the lens of the *Self* and *Other* theories and Self-Regulation theory. The perspective begins with a thorough explication of Self-Regulation theory and concludes with the philosophical contributions of Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Cooley, and Mead on the paradoxical experiences of the self and others. Figure 1 graphically communicates the theoretical approach to EA.



Figure 1. Theoretical Perspective of Excessive Acquisition

THEORY OF SELF-REGULATION

It is by refraining from pleasures that we become temperate, and it is when we have become temperate that we are most able to abstain from our pleasures.

--- Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics

The human capacity for self-regulation has been an enduring theme in philosophy, sociology, politics, and theology throughout the history of mankind. It could be argued that self-regulation is the oldest psychological question and that philosophers have labored through the ages to “reconcile the conundrums created by radical arguments for either free will or determinatism” (Heatherton and Baumeister, 1996, pg. 90).

Defining Self-Regulation. The large body of work on this subject encompasses physical action in the form of motor control and body control such as body temperature, blood pressure, and blood chemistry as well as behavioral regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1998). It is the latter in which this study is most concerned. The level of interest, as

pertaining to self-regulation, is how behavior --- at the level of abstraction --- happens. This includes an understanding both in action and in affect.

The interpretation of *self-regulation behavior* is that it is a process of managing and changing behavior of the self through goal-directed actions (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Baumeister, 2015). It is the self's capacity to alter responses toward one's thoughts, emotions, impulses, or task performance behaviors promoting attainment of personal goals (Baumeister et al., 1994; Heatherton & Ambady, 1993; Scheier & Carver, 1988). These behaviors are changed in accordance to some standards, ideals or goals either stemming from internal or societal expectations (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). The presence and quality of these actions depend on one's beliefs and motives (Zimmerman, 2000).

In general, self-regulation increases the degree that human behavior is flexible, possibly tolerant, and able to adapt (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). This flexibility allows adjustment to societal and situational demands encountered on a daily basis (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). When functioning properly, self-regulation places one's "social conscience" over selfish impulses, "allowing people to do what is right and not simply what they want to do" (Baumeister & Bushman, 2008, pg. 43). The process prevents impulses that could produce long-term effects, even when there are short-term benefits (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

Zimmerman (2000) comments that self-regulation is important to human survival in that self-regulation is directly connected with the goal of social acceptance. Historically, social acceptance was crucial for survival. Techniques of survival proved to be easier with social acceptance rather than facing isolation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Humans, unlike other animals, attain what is needed from social groupings more often than attaining

directly from nature (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Due to this heavy reliance on the social group, social acceptance becomes crucial for survival.

The consequences of self-regulated behavioral change have both a shorter-term effect and a longer-term effect. The shorter-term effect is captured in a feedback process (Carver & Scheier, 1998). The longer-term effect is learning (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Learning is about the linking together of information of particular actions that are effective in moving toward a particular goal. Thus, the person learns that the actions are positively reinforced when the goal is experienced in similar circumstances. Therefore, in familiar and positive encounters, the person may well repeat the action based on learned consequences (Carver & Scheier, 1998). The consequence of an act becomes stored information and determines whether or not the act will be repeated. In the short term, that information is useful in continuing the action, changing the action, or perhaps discontinuing the action all together. The information conveyed by the act's consequences thus constitutes feedback.

In the minds of many people, the feedback loop concept has esoteric origins; but, it has actually been within the annals of psychology for centuries, hidden inside a more familiar concept: the goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998). A goal is inherently embedded in the feedback process. Though not constituting the whole of the feedback loop, "a goal is essential to the feedback loop" (Carver & Scheier, 1998, pg. 4).

There is great diversity among human goals, and one way to think of this difference is to think of goals as ordered in a hierarchy, such that very abstract goals subsume many goals that are more concrete (Buck, 1999; Chaudhuri, 2006). Another distinction to address among goals that underlie human behavior is in association with social behavior.

The distinction between personal goals and goals that involve others becomes apparent. Whether they are communal or self-presentational, entail the consideration of one's relationships to others and how others view one's self. These classes of goals influence action (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

The discussion of self-regulation behavior has thus far focused on goals, actions, and how actions are managed; yet, no model of human action can be extended without considering emotional experience. Carver and Scheier (1998) argue that the principles of feedback control apply to the understanding of feelings as well as to the understanding of action. Emotion matters in the sense that it serves as a signal pertaining to the current consequences of action (Carver & Scheier, 1998).

There are various forms of emotions and various types within these forms. According to Buck (1985, 1988, 1999), emotion takes on three forms. He refers to these forms as Emotion I (EI), Emotion II (EII), and Emotion III (EIII). EI serves to adapt the body to changes in the environment and to establish equilibrium. It consists of physiological responses like heart rate, blood pressure, and sweating, all of which are altered in support of action (Buck, 1999; Chaudhuri, 2006). EII is spontaneous, expressive behavior, such as facial expressions, gestures, and posture which serves the function of social coordination. Although the outward display of rules may affect this emotional behavior, these responses, by being accessible to others, reveal a person's motivational-emotional state (Buck, 1999; Chaudhuri, 2006). EIII is immediate and direct subjective experience, "although it may also be experienced indirectly as feedback from the other readouts" (Chaudhuri, 2006, pg. 5). Buck refers to this form of emotion as *affect* (Chaudhuri, 2006; Buck 1999). There are many different affects: sorrow, joy, fear, envy, anger, pride, for example. These affects are

“knowledge by acquaintance” and are a subset of emotional responses referring to subjective feelings such as happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and the like (Chaudhuri, 2006). Emotional responses also include physiological reactions (EI) and facial expressions (EII). The third emotion (EIII) serves as the cognitive (rational) system for appraisal, labeling, and self-regulation resulting in rational knowledge which can be symbolically communicated (Buck, 1999; Chaudhuri, 2006). Rational knowledge is sequential, analytic, and left brain-oriented, whereas knowledge by acquaintance is more holistic, synthetic, and right-brain oriented (Chaudhuri, 2006). One is immediate knowledge, the other is knowledge based on appraisal (Buck, 1999; Chaudhuri, 2006).

It is important to note the interaction between the emotional and rational systems of behavior control that is suggested by this explanation. Although an emotional stimulus impinges first on the emotional system, the subjective experience engendered informs the rational-cognitive system and is itself informed through the appraisal of internal and external information (Chaudhuri, 2006). Thus, these systems of behavior control interact and inform each other, leading to goal-directed behavior (Chaudhuri, 2006).

Self-Regulation Process. The dynamic process of self-regulation behavior is defined through the cyclical relationships of four main components (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). These components are standards, monitoring, strength, and motivation.

Standards are defined ideals, norms, values, goals, peers, and one’s past self. As the aforementioned definition of self-regulation points out, the change that the individual makes in one’s behavior is often based on some standard that is interpreted from society or from one’s self (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Meta-level standards vary in stringency and depend on what behavior the person is engaged (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Sometimes the

standard is demanding, sometimes less so. Sometimes the standard is imposed from outside (i.e., work deadline) or is self-imposed (i.e., personal timetable). Regardless of the origin, the standard must be adopted by the person in order for affective consequences to occur. The stringency of the standard for any given activity has straightforward implications for emotional life (Carver & Scheier, 1998). If the reference point is too high, it will rarely be matched, even if the person's rate of progress is extraordinarily high (Carver & Scheier, 1998). This person will experience negative affect often and positive affect rarely. If the reference point is low, progress will be frequently exceeded (Carver & Scheier, 1998). This person will experience positive affect more often and negative affect more rarely. The stringency of the standard, thus, influences the person's overall subjective experience. Baumeister & Vohs (2007) suggest that effective self-regulation requires clearly defined standards. When standards are conflicting or ambiguous, self-regulation is proven difficult to maintain and failure often occurs (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007).

This is presumably one reason that alcoholics anonymous and other treatment regimens insist on complete abstinence, because the standard is perfectly clear and one can easily evaluate whether one has had zero versus any alcohol (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007)). In contrast, trying to pursue moderate drinking requires the person to evaluate (while under the influence) whether one more drink would be too many (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Even if the person establishes a three-drink rule, it may be difficult to compare a shot of tequila against a mug of beer, or a martini against a margarita.

The second component of the self-regulation behavioral process is monitoring. It is

necessary to keep track of behaviors in order to successfully self-regulate. According to Zimmerman (2000), the self-regulation cycle evaluates “feedback from prior performance and is used to make adjustments during current efforts” (pg. 14). This type of adjustment from feedback is necessary since personal, behavioral, and environmental factors are constantly changing over the course of performance (Zimmerman, 2000). Carver & Scheier (1981, 1982, and 1998) first adapted this highly influential feedback-loop model based on cybernetic theory defined by Weiner (1948). Cybernetics is the science of communication and control through feedback processes and translates to the model of self-regulation in the form of monitoring (Carver & Scheier, 1998). This feedback loop is represented by the acronym TOTE (test, operate, test, exit). Explaining, Carver and Scheier (1998) propose that the loop begins with the *self* testing against various standards. If the test reveals an unwanted discrepancy, the self performs an operation to reduce the discrepancy and then tests again (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Self testing can be repeated intermittently until the operation reaches what is determined to be a successful alignment. Once the test indicates that event discrepancies match the standard, the loop is exited and that self-regulation process is terminated or closed (Carver & Scheier, 1998). TOTE is the closed-loop process. A thermostat on a heating and cooling system is a frequently used example to explain the TOTE concept. The thermostat is set to 72 degrees and the thermostat tests the room temperature and compares it to the standard. If the test produces results below or above the standard of 72 degrees, the system will operate and adjust to achieve the desired temperature. When the room temperature reaches the thermostat setting, the system will shut off (exit).

The closed-loop is a system in which the effects of actions have an impact on the

future perceptions of the systems and ultimately on subsequent outcomes. In contrast, if the output of the system is triggered by the recognition of a particular state of affairs, and output simply executes, this defines an open loop system. This means that the self does not perform a check or test on the consequences. There is an assumption that the consequences will be as intended and the outcome is always preprogrammed (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Can a person self-regulate as a hybrid, conducting frequent self-regulating tests on certain behaviors and conducting no tests on other behaviors? There is substantial disagreement on this hypothesis, but it is recognized as an important discussion among movement control. However, at this time, there is agreement that open-looped systems or untested systems produce dysfunctional outcomes.

Another implication of monitoring and the feedback loop system is that anything that reduces self-awareness will weaken self-regulation, because it compromises the monitoring process. Distractions (e.g., social settings), intense emotions, and other factors may reduce self-awareness and contribute to self-regulation failure. In particular, Hull (1981) showed that alcohol consumption reduces self-awareness. In an early and exploratory survey of multiple self-regulation literatures, Baumeister et al. (1994) observed that alcohol users had been shown to have impaired self-regulation in many different spheres: they ate more, smoked more cigarettes, spent more money, left bigger tips (after controlling for the size of the bill), were less modest, and consumed more alcohol, as compared to people who had not had any alcohol. Thus, loss of self-awareness from alcohol use (and possibly other substances) can impair self-regulation, creating a vicious cycle of increasing dysfunction (Baumeister et al, 1994).

To summarize the monitoring factor, the self-regulation model developed by Carver

and Scheier (1998) explains that human behavior is a continual process of advancement toward goals and intentions and this movement occurs by a monitoring process of feedback control. Human behavior, then, is a system of self-regulation producing positive or negative outcome expectancies using information feedback from memory as a guide to progress (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1996; Carver & Scheier, 1998). Thus, the process entails more than meta-cognitive knowledge and skill; it also includes affective and behavioral processes and a resilient sense of self-control.

Self-regulatory strength is the third component. This idea is more commonly referred to as self-control (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007) which is a limited resource that must be regulated in the same manner as strength or energy. Self-control capacity can be compared to a muscle: when left alone, it becomes flaccid; but, if exercised judiciously, it becomes strong (Baumeister et al, 1998). Thus, self-control can be viewed as a strength that develops and can become weakened or strengthened by circumstances. This is not exactly a novel view on volition in that Aristotle argued that just as the artist and crafter became expert through training and practice, the virtuous person became temperate by repeatedly refraining from temptations (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1998). However, it is found that changing (regulating) the self or resisting temptation is difficult and therefore requires a certain amount of strength (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Each individual is equipped with a limited supply of willpower and when the supply is low or even depleted, self-regulation is not effective (Schmeichel & Baumeister, 2004). Baumeister et al. (2000) suggest that the process of self-regulation taxes a limited resource and thus produces a state of resource depletion. This state reduces people's capacity to self-regulate in the period following their previous self-regulatory effort.

The state of reduced self-regulatory capacity stemming from prior exertion of self-control was dubbed *ego depletion* by Baumeister et al. in 1998 as a chosen homage to Freud's ideas that the human self consists partly of energy and processes. The basic ego depletion pattern has been well replicated with many different procedures in numerous experiments by different laboratories (Baumeister, 2014). The findings from these studies show that inhibition is impaired during ego depletion together with decision-making, initiative, and planning. As a result, persons with depleted resources fail to inhibit a broad range of actions and responses that they would otherwise inhibit successfully. These include aggression (DeWall, Baumeister, Stillman and Gailliot, 2007), inappropriate sexual responses (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007b), prejudice (Muraven, 2008), overeating of unhealthy food (Vohs & Heatherton, 2000), alcohol consumption (Muraven, Collins, & Neinhans, 2002), and impulsive spending (Vohs & Faber, 2007).

As a result of ego or resource depletion, Wegner (1994) believed the automatization of tasks and strategies become less taxing over time and self-regulatory strength increases as a function of increasing sophistication or efficiency of the skill. From a strictly cognitive interpretation of the strength model, fatigue leads to self-regulation failure not because of its direct effect on skills, but because of its effects on capacity to use specific skills or select efficient strategies (Wegner, 1994). Fatigue and emotional distress effect cognitive resources and deplete one's ability to effectively exit the feedback loop (Wegner, 1994). Therefore, the automatization of tasks contributes to the reliance of the self on the preprogrammed outcomes of the open loop system resulting in dysfunctional human behavior (Wegner, 1994; Carver & Scheier, 1998).

The fourth and final component is motivation. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) specify

that this references the motivation one has to meet the goal or standard. It has been determined even if all three of the other components are present, (e.g.: the standards are evident, monitoring is taking place, and the individual has full strength), the lack of motivation regulation could cause the failure of self-regulating (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Motivation is the force that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors (Skinner, 1957). It is what causes us to take action. The forces that lie beneath motivation can be biological, social, emotional, or cognitive in nature (Skinner, 1957). A vast number of theories have been postulated, each with its specific scope to explain motivation. While no single theory adequately explains all human motivation, looking at an individual theory can offer a greater understanding of the forces that produce action. The theoretical perspective of motivation examined for this study is B.F. Skinner's operant behavior. Skinner studied extensively the behavioral sequences and patterns of humans and animals as an extension of Thorndike's law of effect. Eventually rejecting portions of Thorndike's work, Skinner built his analysis on observable behavior and its equally observable consequences (Skinner, 1948).

Operant behavior is said to be "emitted;" that is, initially it is not elicited by any particular stimulus and it functions under conscious control eventually becoming part of the learning process (Skinner, 1957). Some behaviors may occur spontaneously and others purposely, but it is the consequences of these actions that influence whether or not the act will occur again. Thus, one may ask why "it" happens in the first place. The response is much like Darwin's response to the question of the origin of a "new" bodily structure, namely, variation and selection (Skinner, 1948). Similarly, the behavior of an individual varies from moment to moment, in such aspects as the specific motions involved, the

amount of force applied, or the timing of the response (Skinner, 1957). Variations that lead to reinforcement are strengthened, and if reinforcement is consistent, the behavior tends to remain stable. However, behavioral variability can itself be altered through the manipulation of certain variables (Skinner, 1957).

Reinforcement and punishment are the core tools through which operant behavior is modified. Reinforcement is any event that strengthens or increases the behavior it follows. There are two kinds of reinforcers:

1. Positive reinforcers are favorable events or outcomes that are presented after the behavior. In situations that reflect positive reinforcement, a response or behavior is strengthened by the addition of something, such as praise or a direct reward. This reinforcement strengthens a behavior by providing a consequence an individual finds rewarding.
2. Negative reinforcers involve the removal of an unfavorable events or outcomes after the display of a behavior. In these situations, a response is strengthened by the removal of something considered unpleasant. Negative reinforcement strengthens the behavior because it stops or removes an unpleasant experience (Skinner, 1957).

Punishment, on the other hand, is the presentation of an adverse event or outcome that causes a decrease in the behavior it follows. There are two kinds of punishment; however, it should be noted that it is not always easy to distinguish punishment from negative reinforcement.

1. Positive punishment sometimes referred to as punishment by application involves the presentation of an unfavorable event or outcome in order to weaken the response it follows.
2. Negative punishment, also known as punishment by removal, occurs when a favorable event or outcome is removed after a behavior occurs (Skinner, 1957).

Skinner (1948, 1957) recognized that punishment can produce problematic outcomes. For example, punished behavior is not forgotten, it is suppressed. The behavior may return when punishment is no longer present. Punishment can produce increased aggression reinforcing an undesired nature of coping with problems. It can also create fear that can generalize to undesirable behaviors. Punishment does not necessarily guide toward desired behavior: “reinforcement tells you what to do, punishment tells you what not to do” (Skinner, 1957, pg. 280).

As apparent, reinforcement and punishment contingencies distinguish effects on behavior. Understanding that any behavior occurs in a given situation (the antecedents) and is followed by consequences, if, over time, the behavior increases in frequency the consequences are operational reinforcers. Reinforcers are characterized by the contingency among antecedents, behavior, and consequences. If the behavior decreases in frequency due to contingencies, the consequences are punishers. Reinforcement and punishment are thus contingent relations (or dependencies) linking the frequency with which a behavior occurs, its antecedents, and its consequences. These three-term contingencies constitute the simplest units of analysis in behaviors. It is important to remember that this “unit encompasses not only the events preceding and following the behavior, but the dependent relations between them and resulting changes in the frequency of that behavior over time” (Woods & Kanter, 2007, pg. 23).

Self-Regulation Dysfunction. As duly noted, self-regulation is a complex, multifaceted process that can break down in several different ways producing dysfunctional results. In addition to the self-regulation failures in the component explicatives, there are several main patterns which can also produce self-regulation failure.

The basic distinction is between under-regulation and misregulation (Carver & Scheier, 1981). Under-regulation entails a failure to exert self-control. Often, the person does not bother or does not manage to control the self. In contrast, misregulation involves the exertion of control over oneself, but this control is done in a misguided or counterproductive fashion.

From a social cognitive perspective, dysfunctions in self-regulation are chiefly due to the ineffective forethought and performance control techniques (Bandura, 1991; Zimmerman, 2000). Reactive methods of self-regulation are generally ineffective because they fail to provide the necessary goal structure, strategic planning, and sense of personal agency. Instead, dysfunctional agents try to correct their behaviors using post hoc task outcomes, which are often delayed, difficult to interpret, and socially stigmatizing. Reactive self-regulators lack specific process goals and clearly defined standards. Most commonly, they must rely on social comparisons to evaluate their outcomes, which are self-dissatisfaction and defensive self-reactions. Because of these adverse outcomes, reactive self-regulators experience not only a loss of self-efficacy about subsequent performance efforts, but also a decline in intrinsic interest in the academic task (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1996).

Another incident of self-regulatory dysfunction is goals operating out of awareness (Carver & Scheier, 1998). People have goals they monitor outside their awareness. Research summarized by Bargh (1997) makes it clear that there are situations in which minimal awareness is realized of current actions or what stimuli are cueing the behavior. The idea that people have goals that influence their actions outside awareness means they can be actively engaged in actions without regulation (Bargh, 1997). This goal conformity

blends with the personalized sense of normalcy that becomes routine behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1998). In theory, therefore, difficulties are arising from responses to goals and goal-directed behavior that have slipped out of awareness (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Bargh, 1997).

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The sample strategy of this study is designed to investigate the phenomenon of EA through the eyes and minds of two different populations. The excessive acquirer is investigated through in-depth interviews as well as the person who is experiencing life with the excessive acquirer. The samples represent viewpoints of the *self* and the *other*. Acknowledging the sensitive nature of this schema, it was necessary for analysis in the form of introspection, intuition, and rumination. The researcher extended the examination of the literature on the philosophical explanations of the *self* to improve the understanding of the *self* and *other*. For the excessive acquirer, the mere exposure of the behavior could become problematic.

The writings of Levine in the *Theories of the Self* (1992) provided relevant insight. He states that the experience of ourselves is paradoxical, at the least. We experience ourselves as coherent and fragmented, as the same and as different, as ongoing and disparate, as known and as unknown, as mundane and as esoteric (Levine, 1992). An adequate theory must, therefore explain the continuity as well as discontinuity, both of which are intrinsic to our experience of self. The same must be true for other contrarities of the self-experience.

A number of famous “thinkers” shaped the thinking of the modern self and cogitated

an understanding of the self. This review of philosophical perspectives on the self began with Rene Descartes (1596-1650). He was a scientist, mathematician, and philosopher who arrived at his famous *cogito ergo sum* – “I think therefore I am”- through doubting his very own form of thought (Levine, 1992; Slater, 1997). Thinking, in this instance, is the mental activity of any sort, any cognition. This self is that which is knowing --- thinking (Slater, 1997).

David Hume (1711-1776) professes there are only two ways that we could know the self: as an impression or as a relation of ideas. The Humeian self is called *bundled self*. This self is a bundle of impressions, absent of binding, relegating that there is no self, only perceptions themselves and this is no self at all. (Levine, 1992). What are we to conclude from this? Hume is stating that we have no experience of a self.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) speaks of the self as the transcendental unity of the apperception, one’s self-consciousness (Levine, 1992). Kant goes on to say that in retrospection, “I am at times aware of myself and fashion myself after that of an object” under the form of time, not of space, and under the unity of pure apperception (Kant, 1781, 1990, pg. 119). As a result of this analysis, Kant now has two selves: the phenomenal (empirical) self and a noumenal self. The phenomenal self becomes knowable and is known (Levine, 1992). The knowable self is the temporal sequence that is *me*. The noumenal self is a self-in-itself, which is the *I am* that accompanies every thought. The noumenal self is unknowable; it is thinkable, but is not known.

The selves of Descartes, Hume, and Kant are perceived as schematic and abstract, but this is not the perspective of George W. F. Hegel (1770 – 1831). Hegel’s concept of the self is complex and dynamic and development proceeds only through conflict. The

Hegelian self depends on its externalization, on praxis or the action of the self on and in the world: thoughts, social and political institutions, religions, and philosophies of concrete universalities (Hegel, 1929; Levine, 1992). The self only becomes the self through action and is no longer the abstract thinker. This self unfolds, acts, creates, develops, struggles and finally identifies with the results of its actions, creations, developments, and struggles (Levine, 1992). Hegel's notable publication, "The Phenomenology of the Spirit" introduces the German term "geist" to the English language. The term means both mind and spirit (Hegel, 1929). Hegel refers to spirit as the absolute. At first there is nature, inert, existing only in itself without consciousness; later there is consciousness, self-consciousness or self-awareness (Levine, 1992). Selves and their manifestations including our own selves cannot be understood by a purely intellectual process, but only by empathy, by feeling with that which we are trying to understand be that of ourselves or another.

Hegel's most consequential disciple was Karl Marx. Marx was certainly not an uncritical disciple. On the contrary, he makes human productivity and human labor and its products the material basis of existence, the ultimate reality (Slater, 1997). For Marx, it is that material base that undergoes the dialectical transformation that constitutes human history. He sees the self as existing not in isolation, but only as a part of the family, a social class, and a society (Slater, 1997). Marx also sees the self producing concrete universals---goods, services, and cultural products---that are the objectification of that self (Levine, 1992).

The literature expands from Descartes' lone cogitator to Marx's self that has no existence apart from its social relations. Charles Cooley and George Herbert Mead continue with the social psychological or sociological tradition of the self. Under these two theorists,

this self becomes operationalized (Levine, 1992). The social psychological view of the self-progress is with Marx's thoughts of the self as the product of social interaction and as always reactive to the social surround. Cooley only believed that we primarily see ourselves through the eyes of others and form our concepts of ourselves from the reaction of others. He refers to this as the reflected self. It has three components: 1) how we imagine others see us, 2) how we imagine others judge us, and 3) our emotional reaction to those imagined judgments (Cooley, 1962). Human life, from this perspective, becomes the process by which we mutually mirror and are mirrored by other selves, and in this interactive reflective process build selves (Cooley, 1962).

Mead had much the same notion, but his description of the development of self is social and interactive through the process of language (1962). The self is not there from birth; rather it develops in a social matrix in which a language is acquired. At first, the self is a dialogue with others and only later does it develop into an internal dialogue --- a dialogue of the self with the self (Mead, 1962). Through these dialogs the self becomes object to itself. This too is how Mead distinguishes between the *I* and the *me*. The *I* is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others, and the *me* is the organized set of attitudes of others that become internalized. The derivatives of the attitudes of the others constitute the organized *me* and my reaction to others is the *I* (Mead, 1962).

The applied semiotics of the self show that the richness and complexity of the excessive acquisition behavior need not be lost in the dramaturgical consequences, but instead signifies the psychological and sociological consumptive behavioral process of the afflicted self. Within the defining of the semiotic self, there most always exists an *other*. It is this presence of the *other* that "underscores the importance of intelligibility of

representations, a requirement that is not necessary in self-to-self transactions” (Sundararajan and Kim, 2011, pg. 222). By changing the lens, once again, and exploring the *other* in the relationship of the *self*, the behavior of excessive acquisition expands yet to another dimension.

The *other* is a mechanism for the solution of certain problems in their inquiries (Perinbanayagam, 1975). These different solutions and the problems they solved, nevertheless had something in common insofar as they all tried to account for the emergence of sociality out of the “givenness” of the individuals (Mills, 1940). This relationship between self and “other” is dialectical and syntactical: the “other” forms the self as the self formulates the “other.” In all situations of social life, the “other” is manifest, concretely or abstractly (Perinbanayagam, 1975). As the “other” manifests itself, its character and content become causally significant to the emergence of the self and its nature and content (Sundararajan and Kim, 2011).

To return to the contributions of Mead, his concept of the generalized “other” was that it occurred in many places although it was essentially an integral element of his theory of the self. In this context, it appears as an instrument of the controlled self and as the abstract formulation of a social group (Mead, 1962). The “other,” as in Cooley’s thesis, is a powerful explanatory variable of a primary group that everyone recognizes as having importance and value. He proposes a concrete and living set of persons he identifies as the “other selves” who support and validate a self and give it the substances of life. Cooley specifically identifies these “other selves” as the family, play groups, and community of which define the “crucible of the self” (Cooley, 1962). Schutz, a foremost follower of Husserl, places the “other” as the “alter ego.” He describes it as “that stream of

consciousness whose activities I can seize in their present by my own simultaneous activities” (Schutz, 1967, p. 174). The *other* does not merely exist, according to Schutz, it communicates with immense significance to the lives of the people who accept it as their *other*.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

OVERVIEW

At this stage of the study, the existence of EA is substantiated, a theoretical perspective is presented, and a philosophical context is examined. The years of research on compulsive hoarding, now hoarding disorder (HD) originated the categorical term of EA, but without definition or understanding, only the agnomen. Little else is known about what EA is and what makes it happen. Clearly, the nature of the problem is not understood and the boundaries of the domain are ill defined, therefore, it can be rationally deemed that EA is an unexplored phenomenon. Based on this resolve, the investigation of EA behavior is warranted to be conducted within the traditions of qualitative methods.

As such, this chapter presents the research design by which the qualitative methods are implemented and includes discussions around the following areas: (a) rationale for research approach, (b) description of research sample, (c) methods of data collection, (d) analysis and synthesis of data, (e) ethical considerations. The chapter culminates with a brief concluding summary of the research design.

RATIONALE FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative methodology is “used when little is known about a topic, the research context is poorly understood, the phenomenon under investigation is not quantifiable, or the researcher suspects that the phenomenon needs to be re-examined” (Klopper, 2008, pg. 50). Qualitative research is also “grounded in an essentially constructivist philosophical

position,” in the sense that it is concerned with how the complexities of the socio-cultural world are experienced, interpreted, and understood in a particular context and at a particular point in time (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). The intent of qualitative research is to examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of the self and others and attempt to achieve a holistic understanding of the behavior (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012).

In contrast with those of quantitative research, where testing of hypotheses project the establishing of facts through standardized comparisons and distinguish significant relationships between variables (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012), it was this researcher’s contention that quantitative methods were unlikely to establish the trustworthiness among respondents to elicit the rich data necessary to address the proposed research objectives. The fundamental assumptions and key features that distinguish a qualitative stance of collection, analysis, and interpretation of data that are not easily reduced to numbers fit well with this study.

QUALITATIVE STRATEGIES

A chief strength of qualitative research is the depth of understanding it can provide through evoked methods of data collection that establish trustworthiness and credibility (Rubin, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 2007). However, there are threats to accomplishing these characteristics which include the distorting effects of (a) reactivity connected to the impact of the researcher’s presence in the field, (b) researcher biases in the way one asks questions and conducts as well as filters observations, and (c) respondent biases connected largely to social desirability issues (Rubin, 2000).

Established interpretivists suggest a number of strategies to thwart the above threats thus enhancing the rigor of qualitative studies and contributing to the supportive structure of the research method. One recommendation involves prolonged engagement. This involves conducting lengthy interviews, conducting follow-up interviews, and spending long periods of time in the field building trusting relationships with respondents. Prolonged engagement is thought to lessen the likelihood of reactivity and respondent bias due to the researcher's presence. Also, participants may be less inclined or less able to deceive the researcher during a prolonged period of developing a trusting relationship.

A second strategy involves triangulation, in which one attempts to corroborate observations from data collections via multiple observational strategies, multiple sources, multiple modes of analysis, and the use of data analysts from different disciplines and with different theoretical orientations (Rubin, 2000). Triangulation is often used to indicate that two (or more) methods are used in a study in order to check the results of one and the same object. The idea is that the researcher can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result (Rothbauer, 2008). Therefore, triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources and "gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation" (Altrichter et al. 2008, pg. 147). Although it can be used in both quantitative (validation) and qualitative (inquiry) studies, it is a method-appropriate strategy of founding the credibility of qualitative analyses, especially in the social sciences (Rothbauer, 2008).

A third strategy involves peer debriefing and support as a mechanism for guarding against researchers' biases. Lincoln and Guba refer to this strategy as part of the process "of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session

and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (1985, pg. 308). By looking at data from another viewpoint, a de-briefer can often uncover new perspectives and assumptions when the researcher has become stagnant or narrow in the analyzing and coding process.

A fourth strategy involves leaving an audit trail of raw data that others can access to see if findings are reproducible and verified (Rodgers and Cowles, 1993). This qualitative research audit trail, as conceptualized by Halpern (1983) and later described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is an essential component of any rigorous qualitative study and is comprised of field notes, memos, and transcripts. Whether the materials compiled for the audit trail are to be used primarily by the investigator as a means of tracking the evolving analysis and monitoring personal responses, or are to be presented in their entirety to a research auditor for more formal review and assessment of confirmability, dependability, and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993), they are as integral to the study as the data generated through observations of or interviews with the participants (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993).

The fifth and sixth strategies refer to the contributions of phenomenology and grounded theory. Phenomenology is a design of inquiry established from the disciplines of philosophy and psychology in which the researcher searches for the invariant structure (Creswell, 2014) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasizes the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning. The strong philosophical underpinnings emerge most typically from in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Grounded theory is a design of inquiry that emerged from the field of sociology and is used to generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon that relates to a particular situation (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). This situation is one in which “individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to the phenomenon” (Corbin & Strauss, 2007, pg. 56). The researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. This process uses multiple states of data collection and the refinement and interrelationships of categories of information (Creswell, Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The centerpiece of grounded theory research is the development of a theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied.

Based on the qualitative strategies outlined above, this study convincingly utilizes the approach of multiple qualitative research traditions to investigate and collect data on the nature of EA and the process by which the behavioral act is conducted. Two participant types are selected, the *self* and the *other* and each data collection method focuses on a particular level of knowledge from the two types of respondents that enables the incorporation of different types of data, examining a different level of analysis in the study. The investigation of the formulated research questions require an additional and different perspective. The second group of participants (the others) provide the insight (and triangulation) that would otherwise not be seen or may have been potentially overlooked. The combination of sample selection including selves and others enhanced the rigor of the research results. This research design method enabled the investigator to examine the whole event, the complete phenomenon from varying discriminant viewpoints.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

Qualitative researchers typically do not make external statistical generalizations because their goal is not to make inferences about the underlying population, instead, attempts are made to obtain insights into particular social and familial processes and practices that exist within a specific context (Connolly, 1998). Moreover, interpretivists study phenomena in natural settings and strive to make sense of, or interpret phenomena with respect to the meanings people express (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The choice of sample selection, sampling scheme, and sampling design, therefore, become important considerations in all qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

The challenge of the sample strategy for this investigation began when the Ethics Committee at the university in which this research was governed, determined the study of EA to be "sensitive." The definition of a "sensitive" research topic lies within three issues of sensitivity (Lee, 1993). The first of these issues is that subject matters are considered to be private, stressful, or sacred, such as sexuality or death (Lee, 1993). The second are those issues that when revealed might cause stigmatization or fear, such as studies that reveal illegal or inappropriate behavior (Lee, 1993). The final issues are related to the presence of a political threat where researchers may study areas subject to controversy or social conflict (Lee, 1993).

Sensitive topics take on many forms, but the process consistently results in the arousal of private emotional responses. These emotional responses can occur on the part of the participants both during and after the data collection activities (Cowles, 1988). Since each is seen as an intensely personal experience, these and other situations should be approached with some trepidation (Cowles, 1988). As Shaffir, Stebbins, and Turowitz

(1980) noted: “When focusing on the personal and social dimension...one discovers that various aspects of field research are regarded as stressful and anxiety laden” (p. 28). This anxiety creates both methodological and technical concerns for the researcher especially in defining and accessing the sample.

This study has the potential of generating content across all levels of sensitivity. With this understanding, that the initial inquiries of potential participants could produce emotional situations as the private behaviors of the *self* become exposed, the selection of participants was conducted in a sensitive manner. The delicate nature of the topic employed purposeful and theoretical sampling techniques as the selected methods of participant recruitment. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research and involves the “hands-on” selection of research participants who can provide a richness of information that is suitable for detailed research. The purposeful selection was further refined to a sub-category of criterion sampling in which individuals met the certain criterion of experiencing excessive acquiring behavior (Palys, 2008). Theoretical sampling is specific to grounded theory and the selection of research participants is based on the ability to inform the researcher of their potential manifestations of important theoretical constructs. The constructs of purposeful sampling served as the criteria in the selection process for the *other* participants whereas theoretical sampling constructs served as the most stringent criteria for the *self* participants. During the sample selection process, if an *other* was not available for inclusion, yet the *self* met study criteria, the *self* was accepted into the study. The same criteria applied to the *other* participants, if a *self* was not able and willing to participate in the study, the *other* was included in the study, hence the inequivalent quantity of *selves* to *others*. All participants were acquired from professional

and personal acquaintances of the researcher and were qualified by the researcher as self-identified excessive acquirers or informants of excessive acquirers.

Individuals with expressions of EA were qualified based on the listed criteria. The exclusion criteria are also described.

Inclusion Criteria of Participants:

1. Self-identified or informant-identified persons experiencing complications as a result of excessive acquisition (i.e., time expenditure, accumulated financial debt, family discord, and/or lifestyle adjustments)
2. Persons over the age of 18.

Exclusion Criteria of Participants:

1. Persons under the age of 18.
2. Adults with significant mental health disorders.
3. Adults seeking clinical results as a reason to participate.

SAMPLE SELECTION

The initiated inquiries during the pursuit of sample selection were frequent and informative conversations with family, friends, students, and colleagues in combination with presentations to public audiences by the researcher. These declarations resulted in a summation that those afflicted with excessive acquisition consumed a pervasive population. Everyone seemed to know an excessive acquirer: “You need to talk to my mother!” “You need to talk to my father!...My aunt!...My boyfriend!...My neighbor!” These engaging dialogs produced a substantial list of potential research participants; yet, interestingly, the researcher became distinctly aware that all of the conversations were elicited by witnesses or alleged assailants of excessive acquisition behavior, the *others*. It

was realized that the years of research and public colloquies by the researcher had yet to bear witness to an excessive acquirer admitting, “You need to talk to Me.” With this discovery, the investigator began to note characteristics of the behavior early in the study: 1) others perceive the behavior as problematic and 2) EA is a social issue afflicting the self and others.

The population of excessive acquirers may be pervasive, but the sensitive nature of the topic morphed the sample selection of the self-participants for this study into an arduous task. As Mead (1934) warned, exposure to others and “seeing yourself as others see you” can be a painful experience. To minimize the “unveiling” of the behavior from self to other, the acceptance of the afflicted *self* into the study was managed through the informants, the *others*. Instructions were recited by the investigator to each of the *others* proposing a method of approach specific to their described personal situation. If the groundbreaking conversation between the *other* and the *self* was positive, permission was granted to the investigator to communicate with the *self*. In some instances, when the *other* realized the scope of the study and the potential conflict that could arise upon exposing the *self's* behavior, the *other* opted to not disclose the *self* for the study. However, in most instances, the strategy was successful and introductions to selves were permitted. As it may be presented, this sample strategy did not mean that the initial discussion between the *self* and *other* was not tumultuous. Married couple Don (other) and Peggy (self), for example, experienced high-emotions as the “intervention” was executed. Don explained the encounter to the investigator:

Melanie, I don't know if Peggy has contacted you yet, but she and I talked last night and she has agreed to be in your study. I just went home after work yesterday and told her that I had talked to you. I

explained your research to her and she said she would be willing to help you with your research. Once we started talking, once I addressed the elephant in the room, I asked her about our finances. I asked her about our credit card debt. Melanie, I'm not going to tell you how much debt she has on our credit cards now. I am going to let her tell you if she wants to, but...I mean...I am a very patient man, but, I had to push away from the table. I walked out of the house to smoke a cigarette. Before I knew it, I was a good two miles down the road in my sock feet and had smoked almost a pack of cigarettes. I could not believe what she had told me. After you and I are finished talking today, I'm not going to ask Peggy about your meetings, I am not going to call you and ask about your meetings, if you need me, you can call me, but I'm not going to call you. Melanie, this is between you and her now.

The willingness to acknowledge the behavior among the *selves* and the *others* in addition to the “interrogation” by an “investigator” was more than some participants could realize. The 60+ list became an actual list of 27 willing participants, 15 *selves* and 12 *others*.

The purposeful and theoretical sample selection became based on variations across certain distinguishing characteristics while allowing commonality among participants to be the predominate criterion of experiences in excessive acquisition. A parameter determined by the researcher was a proportionate distribution of male and female within the sample to limit bias of gender discrimination, yet maintain an acceptable number of participants for qualitative study. Table 1 lists the *self* participants and Table 2 lists the *other* participants. The labeling system from table to table corresponds to the *self* participant associated with the *other* participant (i.e., SP5 Jake Y. is the excessive acquirer and OP5 Chad Y. is Jake's son and the *other* participant in the study).

SELF-PARTICIPANTS (SP)

The description of the excessive acquirers, self-participants (SPs), begins with the reporting of demographic information. Although this type of information is not intended to elucidate the behavior of EA to a population-level with a sample of 15, the demographic data collected from self-respondents during in-depth interviews contributes to the emerging themes and reinforces a domain of commonality toward a deeper understanding of the complex phenomenon.

Table 1. Self-Participant Demographics.

Self	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Class	Residence	Ethnicity	Length of EA Behavior	Employment Status
SP1	Peggy M.	F	57	Middle	TN	Caucasian	≈47 yrs	FT
SP2	Sally R.	F	53	Middle	TN	Caucasian	≈23 yrs	FT
SP3	Joan G.	F	42	Middle	TN	Caucasian	≈22 yrs	FT
SP4	Laura D.	F	50	Middle	TN	Caucasian	≈20 yrs	FT
SP5	Jake Y.	M	79	Lower	NC	Caucasian	≈25 yrs	Retired
SP6	June S.	F	62	Upper	TN	Caucasian	≈38 yrs	Retired
SP7	Betty L.	F	79	Upper	TN	Caucasian	≈39 yrs	Housewife
SP8	Pepper	F	57	Lower	VA	Caucasian	≈27 yrs	FT
SP9	Sally D.	F	64	Lower	TN	Caucasian	≈34 yrs	On Disability
SP10	Roger D.	M	82	Upper	TN	Caucasian	≈42 yrs	Retired
SP11	Pete D.	M	60	Upper	TN	Caucasian	≈45 yrs	FT
SP12	Brad M.	M	52	Upper	TX	Caucasian	≈37 yrs	FT
SP13	Saul G.	M	76	Upper	TN	Caucasian	≈46 yrs	FT
SP14	Patty R.	F	57	Middle	NM	Caucasian	≈27 yrs	FT
SP15	Mark T.	M	51	Middle	WI	Caucasian	≈18 yrs	FT

The population of SPs in the study consisted of 60% females (N=9) and 40% males (N=6) whose ages ranged from 42 – 82 years (Mean = 62). Their ethnicities were Caucasian and all were born in the United States. The socioeconomic status was distributed across Upper Class (N=6), Middle Class (N=6), and Lower Class (N=3). SPs

resided in 6 different States which are listed as New Mexico, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wisconsin. All were gainfully employed most of their adult life with the exception of SP7, Betty L. who maintains status as a housewife. The length of EA behavior reported by the SPs ranges from 20 – 47 years with the average age of onset at 26.6 years. The youngest reported age of onset was 10. The following narratives provide descriptions of each SP included in the research sample.

Self-Participant One (SP1). Peggy is a 59 year-old Caucasian female, college educated, the music director at her church, and has been married for the second time for 16 years. Two children were born with the husband of her first marriage, a son and a daughter. The son was tragically killed in a car accident a number of years ago at age 19. Her daughter is age 30, divorced, and has two children, a son and daughter. Her husband is Don and Peggy is his second wife. From his first marriage, he has three children, all of whom are grown, but occasionally return home to live while attending school, in between jobs, or in between relationships. Peggy's mother passed away just last year. Her father is in his 80s and lives in South Carolina. Her brother also lives in South Carolina. Peggy's family members were not and are not excessive acquirers; maybe her father, "but it seems to be okay for a man to buy a lot of tools or hunting gear or things. People look at men differently than women who buy a lot of things. I buy a lot of things my daughter needs for her children. You know, she called just the other night and asked if I had some cough syrup for my granddaughter. You know, I had three bottles, so I gave her one. Good thing I had some. You know, I also have a lot of projects going on. I want to re-decorate our bedroom, so I bought three or four bedspreads to try. I just can't seem to decide which one I want to use. They were pretty expensive, but I will take back the ones I don't use." Peggy has

accumulated over \$30,000 in credit card debt in the last few years. This is the second time during her 16-year marriage to Don that she has created this type of financial debt. Peggy is not only an excessive acquirer, but her husband thinks she is a hoarder. Don is the other-participant (SP1) for Peggy in the study.

Self-Participant Two (SP2). Donna is 54 years of age, divorced, and single parent to two adult daughters both of whom were adopted as infants. She is college educated with a Master's Degree and teaches at a Community College. Donna is a unique participant in that three years ago when this research began, she was a SP. She and the investigator had numerous conversations about her excessive acquisition. The items she excessively acquired were furniture and home accessories from estate sales, "my garage is full of thing I have found at estate sales. You should see it! You would NOT believe it! My daughters complain constantly, but I plan on selling it soon. I might get a booth at an antiques market..." This behavior had been going on for years, so when she was asked to participate in the formal study, she was pleased to do so. The time arrived for the in-depth interview to be conducted and she began to discuss the EA behavior of her sister, Patty. The investigator rolled with the adjustment which allowed for siblings to be included in the study.

Self-Participant Three (SP3). Joan is 42 years of age, married for the second time for 20 years, is college educated, has one son age 19 and twin 16 year-old daughters. She has an older brother, and her father is living, but her mother passed away 11 years ago. In addition to Joan's daily job as business manager for a local electronics manufacturer, she also worked at Target in the evenings, on weekends, and during holidays. She worked the retail business until her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. 'At home, the dining room, living

room, and entry hall of the house are lined with my Christmas decorations. I just love the feeling of Christmas. You know, when I shop, especially for decorations and things for the house, I just feel great solace, great peace... I can forget about my disease, the stress of my job... I didn't think I made that much money at Target, but now that I don't work there anymore we can feel the difference in our finances. Cameron has to work now to help pay for his college. College is so expensive.' Joan is not only an excessive acquirer, she is a clutterer. Mark (OP3), her husband, is the *Other* in the study.

Self-Participant Four (SP4). Laura is a 48 year old mother and dedicated wife. She works full-time as an administrative assistant in human resources of a healthcare system. Her life is middle-class American, hectic schedules with two daughters, a professional career, divorced parents, an elderly mother-in-law, and an Italian husband. She supports her daughters in their life-adventures, but the family finances are compromised. The family image is important to her regardless of expenditures and accumulated debt. The family house was sold a number of years ago with a new house purchased in an impressive middle-class neighborhood. The family lived in the house for five years before realizing that it was more than they could afford. They sold the new purchase and “downsized” to a more “affordable” home. The “more affordable home” has processed them into the same debt situation as before, the family simply spends beyond their means, maybe to “keep up with the Joneses.” Laura wants to please her children at an expense to the family's finances. When she buys for the children, she buys for herself in duplicate with notions that her daughters may “need these things someday soon.” Her acquisitions are overwhelming the financial condition of the family.

Self-Participant Five (SP5). Jake was a vocational teacher in a North Carolina High School and a television repairman during the years of 1966 – 1993. He lived a

conservative, and by most standards, happy life. Jake married his high school sweetheart, served the military during World War II, and was the father to three children. Tragedy began to ensue as his wife was diagnosed at age 54 with severe rheumatoid arthritis. His youngest son was killed at age 25 in a car accident. His wife passed away at age 66 after 45 years of marriage. Jake's life changed drastically, he felt alone and heartbroken. He made many efforts to be strong for his remaining two children and three grandchildren. The medical bills for the care of his wife were financially devastating, but his accumulation of debt extended beyond the medical bills. It was not until he suffered a disabling heart attack and stroke did the family become aware of the excessive acquiring behavior. His credit card debt had mounted to over six figures and the accumulation of objects had spilled over to two rented storage units. Jake has passed away since the writing of this paper at age 84. His objects of excessive acquisition were predominately televisions, jewelry, tools, and used food packages (i.e., pizza boxes, Chinese food boxes, and Styrofoam coffee cups). An interesting discovery that remains unexplained is the numerous boxes of used matches. Jake was not only an excessive acquirer, he was a hoarder. His surviving son serves as the *Other* in this study.

Self-Participant Six (SP6). June is 62 years old and a retired professor of psychology. She has been married to a psychology and marketing professor for 37 years. They have two sons who are married and pursuing successful careers and family lives of their own. Uncertain when her excessive acquisition began, she supposes it started 35 years ago after the birth of their second son. The sons are 13 months apart in age; therefore, she purchased things for the boys two-at-a-time. This particular consumer behavior has extended into her empty nest years. She currently purchases material objects

in twos, same color, same size, same same. June refers to this consumer behavior as 'pairism.' Not only can this be costly, June is frustrated and embarrassed by her behavior, but cannot seem to resist the acquiring temptations. She has made numerous attempts to thwart the behavior by acquiring only one of something only to go back to the providing entity the next day to purchase a second one. Her comment was that she "feels very anxious" if she "doesn't have the pair."

Self-Participant Seven (SP7). Betty is 79 years old and has been married to a medical doctor for 58 years. They have 5 grown children and 8 grandchildren. Since they are both in their retirement years, the couple is in the process of downsizing from their established estate to a condominium complex designed for the elderly. Betty's husband is suffering from Parkinson's disease at the age of 84. During this downsizing exercise, she realized for the majority of her adult life she has been an excessive acquirer. Betty's hobby and favorite past-time is quilting, she is quite the artist; therefore, the house serves as her quilting studio with fabrics, frames, patterns, threads, and backing stored in most every room. When asked by her daughter if she would be willing to participate in the study, Betty's reply was, 'I'm not concerned about the questions, I'm concerned about my answers.' Betty was not formally interviewed in this study; her daughter, Jan, and her son-in-law, Bill told the story and served as the other participants.

Self-Participant Eight (SP8). Pepper is 56 years of age, divorced after 23 years of marriage to her dentist husband who left her for the dental assistant in his office. Pepper and her ex-husband have two daughters together, but they are adults pursuing successful careers and essentially estranged from their mother. Pepper is a "new" name for Patricia that she took after she moved from East Tennessee to Virginia. She wanted to establish a

new identity and leave Patricia behind. Patricia remained bitter toward her husband even 15 years after the divorce, “She (the new wife) got the house that I was supposed to have. I designed that house. It was supposed to be mine.” Her excessive acquiring behavior has been apparent most of her adult life and in combination with poor financial decisions; she has accumulated \$30,000+ worth of credit card debt two times in 15 years. Pepper moved to Virginia to live with and care for her aging father. Pepper is employed as an accountant at a large plumbing supply business in Richmond.

Self-Participant Nine (SP9). Sally is 64 years of age, divorced after 33 years of marriage to her second husband, estranged from her two daughters and grandchild following the divorce, and has no formal education. She has been emotionally unstable the majority of her life suffering from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, for which she is prescribed medications. She worked her way into the healthcare industry where she was a successful tech assistant for 30+ years, but was recently granted disability after her own health began to fail. After being awarded disability, her use of medications was prevalent but justified, “See, I’m disabled, I’m not an addict, I need all of this medication.” In addition to abusing prescription medications, Suzie was able to convince physicians of numerous unneeded surgeries. In addition to excessively acquiring healthcare, she also acquires tangible objects. Her destructive venues are Walmart and Jewelry TV, the latter being the most extreme. She collects alimony and disability for a gross monthly income of \$2,700, but has reached an unmanageable credit card debt due to her late-night purchases from Jewelry TV.

Self-Participant Ten (SP10). Roger is the oldest of the SPs at the age of 82. He is a retired professor, retired residential contractor, husband, and father of three. His life has

been fulfilled with many things: a solid upbringing in a traditional family, a college education, sports recognition in college baseball and minor leagues, military service in Korea, marriage to his college sweetheart for 60 years, three accomplished children and three accomplished grandchildren. His EA behavior is focused on objects from his experiences as a residential building contractor. He and his wife built a fine, large home while in their 50s, but similar to the cobbler's story, the same exists with this couple. After 53 years, the house remains unfinished. The basement is an exhibit of Lowe's or Home Depot. The accumulation of tools, building supplies, electrical and plumbing supplies represent a contractor's dream. Unfortunately, the tools are not organized which requires Roger and his wife to become frustrated. He becomes frustrated because he cannot find anything; she becomes frustrated because the house is always a mess. When he cannot find something, he goes to buy another. The years of EA have overwhelmed the house and other similar projects.

Self-Participant Eleven (SP11). Pete is the sole proprietor of a small and successful IT business. He fancies the latest technological gadgets, but his gift is music. He can play any instrument with strings and has been doing such since he was a small child. Pete is a successful musician and has recorded a number of albums with renowned country and bluegrass performers in the Nashville area. He also has learned how to repair damaged instruments and "hair" violin bows. To purchase the promise ring for his soul mate who was also his business partner, he saved the money he had earned from re-hairing violin bows. Although there was a promise to marry, Lindsey's family was too complicated for Pete to commit, so the two were companions for 19 years. The relationship and business partnership ended abruptly when Lindsey passed away suddenly at age 52. After months

of grieving, his business and music carries on and he has found new companionship. His EA behavior, apparent since his teens, is most prevalent in the acquisition of stringed instruments and their supporting accessories. His EA behavior extends to the acquiring of antique automobiles and the purchasing of casual clothing all of which manufacturer, model, and brand are important. Pete is a single male, has never been married, is 60 years of age and his income is low to mid-range six figures.

Self-Participant Twelve (SP12). Brad is a 53 year old male, college graduate, husband to Mary for 25 years, and father to two sons and one daughter. The family resides in a suburb of Dallas, Texas and Mary is a VP of Human Resources at a large healthcare system. Until the move to Texas for Mary's promotion, Brad was an entrepreneur and owned a small business that sold interior finish products for residential and commercial construction projects. He currently manages his father's investments and properties as well as his own family's finances. He has long appreciated the arts, the craftsmanship of objects which is his fancy of EA. Brad admits that his admiration of a well-made watch, a camera that captures the life of his children, a stylish pair of jeans and loafers paired with his eyeglasses are his objects of excessive acquisition. His family's income is mid-range six figures.

Self-Participant Thirteen (SP13). Saul is 76 years of age, male, a twin, and continues to remain dedicated to his private legal practice of 50 years. He is a retired pilot and owned his own plane which allowed for convenient travel for many years. At age 68 and 35 years of marriage to his second wife, he decided he wanted to be single. Soon after the divorce, Saul was diagnosed with prostate cancer and then with heart disease which required triple by-pass surgery. He is now healthy, in his 70s, and enjoys the company of

his 2 sons and 3 grandchildren during regular visits. Saul's EA behavior has been prominent since his 30s and is focused on clothing, fine clothing. He has multiple closets at his home where he lives the single life that are filled with custom suits, custom shirts, and luxury brand ties. It is not certain the quantity of ties he owns, but a quick visual estimate of one closet suggests in excess of 350. Saul was once a millionaire, but his lifestyle and divorce have strained his finances. Although he continues to work and earn a high six-figure income, his debt-to-income ratio is higher than expected after years of a successful legal practice.

Self-Participant Fourteen (SP14). Patty is a 57 year-old widow, with a 32 year-old son to whom she often financially contributes. Although she is a widow, she and her husband were divorcing at the time he became ill and died of Sclerosis caused by alcoholism. She was married from 1983 – 1990. They separated in 1989 due to his alcoholism and gambling issues. He was 22 years her senior. At the beginning of this study, she was an excessive acquirer of books. Her house was a library, not a well-organized library, but it contained bookcases, shelves, and plastic tubs of books: fiction and non-fiction, classics and modern writings, children's stories and adult novels, Edgar Allen Poe and Stephen King. However, Patty recently purchased a Kindle. The adjustment to a tablet may have suggested a significant change in her acquiring behavior; instead, she replaced the acquisition of physical books with the purchasing of Crocs footwear. She has begun to acquire all styles and colors of Croc shoes with a package delivered to her doorstep most every day. Patty is a college graduate and employed as an accountant with a [beverage distributor] in Santa Fe, New Mexico and has an income of \$95,000.

Self-Participant Fifteen (SP15). Mark is a 51 year-old male, a Naval Academy graduate, an executive in a manufacturing company, married for the second time to Megan for 10 years. He has 3 grown children from his first marriage of 10 years and 1 step-son from Megan's first marriage. Having been in manufacturing for most of his professional career, Mark recently moved from Tennessee to Wisconsin to advance his career with a start-up manufacturing company. Megan plans to move to Wisconsin following the graduation of her son from high school next year. Mark admits that he has a problem with acquiring too many clothes, mostly golf apparel. He makes most of his acquisitions online, but enjoys shopping at brick-and-mortar stores. Before he moved to WI, Megan noted that there was a package at their doorstep every day. Now that he lives in WI and has available time, it was assumed that his acquiring habits would increase; however, much to his own surprise, he commented that he believed his acquisitions had decreased since being in WI.

OTHER-PARTICIPANTS (OP)

The OPs function as major contributors to the sample selection process in that they were the key informants to the identification of selves afflicted with problematic acquisition behavior. It is through the other that the investigator was able to identify the selves. Also, the OPs contributed to the triangulation of the research and the thematic development recognized in their data content. Although complete descriptions of the OPs are not presented in this study, the complimentary data are disseminated throughout the presentation of findings within Chapter 4. Table 2 lists OPs and their relationship to the SPs.

Table 2. List of Other Participants.

Other	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Residence	Relation to SP	Length of Relation w/SP	Informant
OP1	Don M.	M	mid 50s	TN	Spouse	21 years	Yes
OP2	None						
OP3	Mark G.	M	late 40s	TN	Spouse	20 years	No
OP4	Danny D.	M	mid 50s	TN	Spouse	22 years	Yes
OP5	Chad Y.	M	early 60s	TN	Offspring	55 years	Yes
OP6	David S.	M	late 60s	TN	Spouse	35 years	Yes
OP7	Jan W.	F	early 50s	TN	Offspring	53 years	Yes
OP8	None						
OP9	None						
OP10	Lucille D.	F	early 80s	TN	Spouse	60 years	No
OP11	Megan T.	F	mid 40s	TN	Spouse	15 years	Yes
OP12	Mary M.	F	early 50s	TX	Spouse	22 years	No
OP13	Betty G.	F	mid 70s	TN	Ex-spouse	35 years	No
OP14	Donna R.	F	mid 50s	TN	Sibling	54 years	Yes
OP15	Lindsey C.	F	early 50s	TN	Life Partner	21 years	Yes

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data collection process was initiated by the investigator with intense trepidation who was feeling, as well, a level of pre-cursory anxiety. The researcher is not a therapist, a psychiatrist, nor a psychologist and it was highly possible that once engaged in the phenomenological inquiries, her discipline limits would be exceeded and participants would need to be referred to professional counseling. The IRB recognized the potential problematic conditions of the study framework and required the researcher to make available a reference to a professional counselor for participants. A Counselor and a Mindfulness instructor were accessible to participants and are listed in Appendix E. The IRB also required a statement within the Letter of Consent (Appendices A and B) that sessions could be terminated at any time should participants choose to do so or should the

investigator witness compromised behaviors.

Due to the sensitivity and complexity of the phenomenon, the researcher followed the methodological framework of The Department of Counseling. The guidelines outline an approach for qualitative investigation of sensitive phenomena. The organization for the EA research followed the department's prescribed data collection methods for phenomenology and grounded theory as outlined below (Charmaz, 2006).

- *Primary* sources of data are generated from actual participants.
 - In-depth interviews, audio-taped and transcribed.
 - In-depth interviews, field notes
 - Observation, field notes
- *Secondary* sources of data are collected from others.
 - In-depth interviews, audio-taped and transcribed.
 - In-depth interviews, field notes
- *Tertiary* sources of data are collected by the researcher.
 - Field notes from researcher's observations of participants
 - Researcher's notes to self about themes noticed while collecting data, important points in the data, ideas to re-address, etc.

There are two descriptive levels of the empirical phenomenological model that arise from the data collected:

Level 1: The original data are comprised of naïve descriptions obtained from participants through open-ended questions and dialogue. Interviews typically are open (meaning, no forced answers)

Level 2: The researcher describes the structures of the experiences based on reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participant's account or story.

Because the objective is to collect data that are profoundly descriptive (rich in detail) and introspective, these interviews often can be lengthy, sometimes lasting in excess of an hour.

Allowing the interviews to extend per the discretion of the participant, the story itself is illuminated and creates a rich and textured background description of the contexts and settings in which the participant experienced the phenomenon.

The dominant methods of data collection in grounded theory research are similar to those of phenomenology with the exception of iterations. The participants in a grounded theory study often will be interviewed more than once and asked to reflect on and refine the preliminary conclusions drawn by the researcher. Grounded theorists will often test their theories by re-interviewing participants, asking for their feedback, or interviewing a new round of participants about how well the hypothesized elements of the new theory actually explain their experiences. It is the aim of grounded theorists to allow the data to teach them and guide their analyses into rich explanations.

Through the incorporation of the methods outlined by the phenomenological and grounded theory traditions, numerous methods of data collection were implemented in the study of EA:

1. Pilot interviews were conducted with two participants, 1 *self* and 1 *other* and data was collected through audiotaped and transcribed in-depth interviews as well as field notes.
2. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 7 *self* participants and 6 *other* participants with combined methods of documentation being audiotaped and transcribed interviews as well as participant observations with field notes.
3. Conversations were conducted with 5 *self* participants and 5 *other* participants. Two *self* participants chose not to participate in the data collection process due to the sensitive nature of the topic. In these instances, the corresponding *others* were the conversational “messengers” of the *self*.
4. Field notes were generated by the investigator through the duration of the study. A notebook was maintained that documented interviews, observations, conversations, and impromptu encounters.

5. Text-Based technology was implemented as a form of follow-up communication with participants. The documentation included text messages and email messages of the participants in discussions with the investigator.

Pilot Interviews. Similar to pretests in quantitative research, pilot interviews can be used in qualitative research to evaluate how a small sample from the purposeful population responds to the open-ended questions addressing the research topic. It is known that to ask questions, knowledge must be acquired. The pilot interviews provided this knowledge to evaluate the fully implemented procedures. These interviews were conducted well in advance of the other data collection methods in order for substantial adjustments to be made before launching the comprehensive study.

The pilot interviews of the EA study were conducted with the approval of the IRB and involved one *self* (SP1), Peggy and one *other* (OP1), Don. The researcher refers to these interviews as “The Virgin Inquiries” since all parties were experiencing the qualitative interview process for the first time. The participants exposed their vulnerabilities of the EA experiences for the first time and the investigator was conducting in-depth interviews for the first time. For example, the investigator called Peggy and established the date, time, and location of the first in-depth interview. The meeting was intentionally planned for a small, local café as to focus predominately on the *self* in a neutral environment that provided a comfortable level of privacy. However, the first in-depth interview undeniably displayed the investigators “virgin” interviewing skills.

Interviewer: As the date soon arrived, I realized that I had failed to ascertain a description of Peggy and I had failed to provide a description of myself to Peggy. Initially, this should have not been a major concern, I was certain there would be some distinguishable characteristic exuded by an excessive acquirer

such that I would immediately recognize my first participant. But then again, what would that be? Uncertain of her description, I seated myself as to allow time to think about how to handle this debacle. It was not long before I was approached by a short, well-dressed, silver-haired, middle-aged, woman who asked, "Are you Melanie?" "Yes, I am." "I'm Peggy." One proposition clarified: there are no distinguishing outward physical characteristics of an excessive acquirer.

Interviews with Peggy (SP1) accumulated 15 hours of data over 6 meetings. Most of the hours were documented in the form of field notes as the presence of a recording device stifled the interviewee's replies. The content of the interview was less forced when simple notes were documented on table napkins. The napkin notes formed the outline from which the investigator elaborated in deeper context in a notebook soon after adjournment of the interviews. This notebook remained in the investigator's possession throughout the data collection process.

Don's (OP1) interviews and conversations accumulated 7 hours of data from the viewpoint of the *other*. This data was collected in two formats: transcribed audio recordings and discussion notes. One 3-hour in-depth interview was conducted and the audio recorded at the home of Don and Peggy. Numerous telephone conversations, a total of 4 one-hour conversations, also occurred over a three month time period.

The two pilot interviews established substantial background development on the behavior of excessive acquisition and produced an awareness of the sensitivity of the topic which sensitized the sampling criteria and data collection procedures for the comprehensive research. The investigator observed the powerful emotional responses from the *self* and the *other* as they privately discussed the lived experiences of this behavior. Even though the researcher provided both participants with the commonly

prescribed ethical procedures indicating that they may experience emotional responses to the research activities, it was important for the researcher to recognize when and how to manage emotional responses as they occurred. In this instance, follow-up telephone calls were conducted to evaluate the condition of each participant after interviews and conversations had been conducted. The pilot study also invoked a subsequent review of literature on the philosophies of the self and how others influence behaviors of the self. Another contribution was the experience gained from the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewees. As the data collection process ensued, the anxieties calmed, trustworthiness was established and the quality of data enriched.

In-Depth Interviews. The in-depth interviews were scheduled with participants and consisted of open-ended questions to assist in identifying consistent qualitative issues (a sample of interview questions is provided in Appendices C and D). At the conclusion of the interviews, each participant was encouraged to forward information to the researcher in the form of emails, text messages, and telephone calls as thoughts developed regarding triggers, actions, and consequences. At the conclusion of the self's participation in the study, an *other* was recruited through recommendation and permission of the *self* participant. *Others* were interviewed on an individual basis, without the presence of the *self* (with the exception of one *self* interview) using the semi-structured interview technique (a sample of *other* interview questions is provided in Appendix D).

Each in-depth interview of the self and of the other presented interesting and informative encounters with insightful perspectives of the phenomenon. The purpose for this data collection approach became two-fold as the interviews and conversations unfolded. Phenomenology is considered a method consistent with identification of the

general nature of a behavior, and the procedure involves studying a number of participants through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop understandings of patterns and relationships of meaning. To gain insight into the true lived experiences of the afflicted, it is important to allow one to spontaneously describe the event as it is being experienced rather than relying completely on one's ability to accurately recall feelings, thoughts, and responses throughout the process as can become evident in interviews. Thus, the data collection process remained fluid with the investigator allowing the interviews, conversations, and observations to be spontaneous with responses, emotions, and descriptions. The spontaneity within the in-depth interviews provided the richness to the understanding of the phenomenon.

Follow-up interviews were conducted if the participant was willing and provided the opportunity for the interviewer to inquire about the phenomenological and grounded theory experience of both parties upon completion of the participant involvement. By proposing this investigative procedure, the role of the researcher morphed into a facilitator, thereby minimizing the potential to interject assumptions and biases tainting or influencing participants' responses.

Conversations. Conversations contributed to the meta data collection framework of this study in a manner similar to the in-depth interview process with the exception of the participants' willingness to engage in the formality of the study. Instead, they were willing to "simply talk" about their experiences with EA behavior in a casual conversation, in a casual environment (usually a sport venue) without a recording device. Under these conditions, the participant entrusted the investigator to maintain confidentiality. These conversations were filled with emotion and intensely descriptive explanations of their

experiences, most of which were captured and expressed in the form of notes in the investigator's notebook. The spontaneity of the conversations contributed to the unforced comments and eliminated the sense of feeling "interrogated."

Field Notes. Field notes are valuable tools in any research methodology as they represent the context of a phenomenon as it is being experienced. Qualitative researchers record in-depth descriptive details of people (including themselves), places, things, and events, as well as reflections on data, patterns, and the process of research. These details form the context and quality control that shape multiple qualitative data points into articulated, meaningful, and integrated research findings.

The field notes for the study of EA were a form of data collection in the study of EA for three different purposes. The first purpose was recognized during the "Virgin Inquiries" when the self-participant was noticeably uncomfortable and distracted with the presence of a recording device. It became necessary for the researcher to generate notes on table napkins and later transfer the notes and commensurate on the interviews in a journal-style notebook. The second purpose was the documentation of observed participants. These field events were usually brief in duration but occurred bi-weekly over a 3 to 6 month time period. Notes generated from this form of data collection were comprised of chronological changes experienced by the participant and observed by the investigator. The third purpose for field notes as the form of data documentation became imperative when discussions on the topic of EA were spontaneous and unscheduled. For example, social conversations between the researcher and familiar acquaintances were often directed to the behavior of their mother, their wife, or their father being an excessive acquirer. These conversations occurred frequently on the telephone, some in classrooms,

but mostly in the bleachers at high school sporting events.

Notes were written in “the notebook” as soon as feasible after each field activity and in as much rich detail as possible. These notes were generated prior to discussing the experience with anyone else, for such discussion may have diluted the researcher’s memory. In addition to notations from the interview and observed content, the field notes comprise the descriptive elements that recordings cannot capture—such as dress, demeanor, gestures, facial expressions, off-mic comments, setting characteristics, weather, smells, back story, and researcher impressions, assumptions, and feelings during time in the field. They also capture impressions and the researcher’s ongoing analytic process. Reflections often change iteratively over the study course, as is true of most qualitative work, and the notes serve as a record of progress as well as a place to work out problems. Finally, all field notes were organized so that memoing, coding, and other analytic techniques could be utilized to draw meaning from this rich qualitative tool. The notebook became the researcher’s journal as numerous interviews, observations, and epiphanies were described in rich detail within the lined pages.

Text-Based Technology. Text-based technology was used in the data collection process of this study as a form of follow-up communication with participants. Texting on mobile devices and email messages were incorporated into information gathering techniques. Respondents were encouraged at the conclusion of the first in-depth interview (or conversation) to communicate with the researcher at any time their actions, feelings, and sensations associated with excessive acquiring behavior. The asynchronous communication allowed participants to spontaneously describe their experiences as they were occurring rather than all data being from recalled experiences of EA events. Also,

asynchronicity allowed for more time of reflection which may have produced a richer quality of data (Egan, 2008). Prolonged engagement was achieved and revisiting with the participant as desired in grounded theory was accomplished.

DATA COLLECTION SUMMARY

Mead (1934) argued that a perspective is a specific point in space and time. It is where people locate themselves in relation to their social world within the networks of difference and similarity that connect them and distance them from others. In the course of inquiry, people may speak from different perspectives, at times from one and at times from another. People are well able to argue the same point from different and sometimes contradictory perspectives (Billig, 1987; Howarth, 1999). What is significant for this study is not that people may be inconsistent (Festinger, 1962; Howarth, 1999), nor that they may be swayed by the dynamics of others around them (Tanford and Penrod, 1984; Howarth, 1999), but that their perspectives are claimed and defended to assert fluctuating identities. It is through the in-depth interviews that the investigator's objective is accomplished: to seek and evaluate these identities to interpret the behavior of EA.

The data extracted from the pilot interviews were instrumental to the preemptive research on EA as well as the data collection process. Subsequent interviews with *self* participants followed an improved arrangement from lessons learned through Peggy's (SP1) and Don's (OP1) inquiries. Within due time, the in-depth interviews were amiable for all parties and the richness of information was collected more efficiently. In-depth interviews with others were less intimidating as the relationship between interviewer and participant had been established and nurtured from the beginning of the study.

Upon completion of in-depth interviews with persons afflicted *with* excessive acquisition behavior and with persons afflicted *by* excessive acquisition, the collected data produced hundreds of pages and thousands of lines of transcripts. For the non-recorded conversations, notes were scribed on restaurant napkins, church bulletins, and sports event programs then promptly transferred to a journal-type notebook for interpretation and analysis of intentionality and meaning. Although discussions would frequently extend beyond hours in duration and a voice recording would have conveniently captured each word with participant's audible demeanor, rapport with some participants would have been compromised had they known that complete conversations were being recorded and formally documented. Audio recording devices were utilized during 7 self-participant interviews and 4 other-participant interviews. Field notes were the method of recording information from 8 self-participant interviews and 8 other-participant interviews.

Tables 3 and 4 summarize the participant list and the data collection method in accordance with the method of documentation. A total of 67.8 hours of time with *self* participants and 43 hours with *other* participants for a total of 110.8 hours expended by the investigator collecting data from participants.

DATA ANALYSIS

Before coding, data were prepared for an inductive content analysis. A third-party transcriptionist transcribed the audio-taped interviews of the SPs and OPs. The investigator assembled field notes, emails, and text messages produced throughout the data collection process. After the data preparation, the coder (investigator) examined all data for specific connections and descriptions to EA and EA behavior that arose from SPs

Table 3. Data Collection Method of Self Participant.

Self	Self Pseudonym	Data Collection Method	Documentation
SP1	Peggy M. (Pilot)	6 Self Interviews (15 hrs)	Field Notes / 1 Audio
SP2	Donna R.	2 Self Interviews (4 hrs)	Field Notes / 1 Audio Transcript
SP3	Joan G.	2 Self Interviews, emails, text messages (8 hrs)	25 Audio Transcripts
SP4	Laura D.	2 Conversations (1.50 hrs)	Field Notes
SP5	Jake Y.	Conversations (8 hrs)	Field Notes
SP6	June S.	2 Self Interviews (2.15 hrs)	1 Audio Transcript
SP7	Betty	Denied Participation	Field Notes
SP8	Patricia / Pepper	3 Interviews (3 hrs)	Field Notes
SP9	Sally D.	4 Interviews (8 hrs)	Field Notes
SP10	Roger D.	Conversations (4 hrs)	Field Notes
SP11	Mark T.	1 Self Interview (1.15 hrs)	1 Audio Transcript
SP12	Brad M.	1 Self Interview, text messages (4 hrs)	1 Audio Transcript
SP13	Saul G.	Conversations (6 hrs)	Field Notes
SP14	Patty R.	Denied Participation	Field Notes
SP15	Pete D.	Conversation (3 hrs)	Field Notes

Table 4. Data Collection Method of Other Participant.

Other	Other Pseudonym	Data Collection Method	Documentation
OP1	Don M. (Pilot)	1 In-Depth Interview / 6 Conversations (12 hrs)	Field Notes / 1 Audio Transcript
OP2	None		
OP3	Paul G.	1 Conversation (1 hr)	Field Notes
OP4	Danny D.	3 Conversations (3 hrs)	Field Notes
OP5	Chad Y.	4 In-Depth Interviews (8 hrs)	Field Notes
OP6	David S.	1 In-Depth Interview (1 hr)	1 Audio Transcript
OP7	Jan W.	2 conversations, email messages (6 hrs)	Field Notes
OP8	None		
OP9	None		
OP10	Lucille D.	4 Conversations (4 hrs)	Field Notes
OP11	Megan T.	1 In-Depth Interview, 4 conversations (4 hrs)	1 Audio Transcript
OP12	Mary M.	1 Conversation (.75 hrs)	Field Notes
OP13	Betty G.	1 Conversation (.75 hrs)	Field Notes
OP14	Donna R.	1 In-Depth Interview (1 hr)	1 Audio Transcript
OP15	Lindsey C.	1 Conversation (1.5 hrs)	Field Notes

and OPs. Next, initial categories of information were segmented to discover properties or subcategories through identification of significant statements and phrases pertaining to the phenomenon being studied. Meanings were then formulated from the dimensional statements and analyzed, then were organized into themes, clusters, and categories. A color coded organizational system was used to emphasize specific categories to perform a preliminary analysis and reduce the extrapolations to specific statements.

Data analysis specific to the traditions of grounded theory were extrapolated from the texts as presented by the Self. The concept of the emails and text messages was a method of data collection that allowed a continuum of communication between the investigator and the participants as a means to implement the constant comparative analysis consistent with grounded theory methods. This form of communication reinforced the multiple iterations, the “in and out” movements of the researcher, needed to identify the variables and categories from the field-based communication. These iterations reinforced repetition in themes as observed and articulated from participants. Open, axial, and selective coding segmented the data into similar groupings, groupings formed themes and a coherent understanding of the theoretical postulations in the findings.

To help ensure the reliability of the researcher’s process and findings, debriefing with 5 peer members was conducted. These persons were frequently engaged during the data analysis process to discuss with the investigator the interview content, coded sessions, and thematic findings. The purpose of this step was to make certain that the findings of the researcher were unbiased and confirmable which suggested that the research process was consistent in its implementation, and that data, the analysis, the interpretations, and the recommendations were internally coherent (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

The abstraction process consisted of the researcher oscillating between category codes, grouping them into subcategories (more specific), intermediate categories (general), and parent categories (most general), all of which tied back to the research questions. The researcher frequently engaged in consultation with the peers on the organization of this hierarchy to discuss its confirmability.

The next step was the writing of rich and exhaustive descriptions of the lived experiences of the *self* and *other*. From this text, the essential structure of the phenomenon was formulated.

DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGIES FOR VALIDATION OF FINDINGS

Qualitative validity was determined through the use of strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Prolonged engagement was apparent with the logged hours among self and other participants which established credibility and trustworthiness between the respondents and the investigator. Triangulation from different data sources was used to build a coherent justification for the themes. These data sources included literature as identified in the literary perspective as well as other sources that developed from interviews and other data collection methods from the varied participants. Peer debriefing was used to determine the accuracy of the findings by submitting the preliminary report with specific descriptions and themes to determine accuracy. Validity will also be captured through trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell and Miller, 2000) through member checking. The sensitivity and the sharing of confidential information of the research prevented checking by participants. An audit trail of interview

transcriptions, field notes, emails, and text messages were included in the data collection methods for analyses by others for validation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher anticipated ethical issues that may arise during the qualitative research process and protected research participants by developing trust, promoting the integrity of the research, guarding against misconduct and any impropriety that might reflect one's ability to cope. First and foremost, the researcher had an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. Since the study topic exhibited the potential for emotional duress on the self and other, participants' behaviors were monitored for identification of conditions producing a need to terminate study participation. This monitoring occurred in discussions through email and telephone conversations between the participants and the researcher. The following safeguards were implemented to protect the participants' rights:

- 1) Participants were advised in writing of the voluntary nature of their participation allowing them to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. They were also advised that at any time during the process they could decline to answer any question.
- 2) The research objectives were clearly delineated in writing and articulated to the participants.
- 3) A written consent form was obtained from each participant as indicated in IRB form in Appendices C and D.
- 4) The participants were informed in writing of all data collection methods and activities.
- 5) Provisions were made for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the participants.

6) The participant's rights, interests and wishes were considered first when choices were made regarding reporting the data and, the final decision regarding participants privacy will rest with the participant.

7) The risk to the participants was considered minimal as indicated in the IRB form in Appendices C and D.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The following list summarizes the intended approach to the research design per the prescribed methodology of phenomenology and grounded theory traditions. The literature review supports Excessive Acquisition as an undeveloped and undefined phenomenon from which this research will contribute to the annals of consumer behavior research.

1) Preceding the actual collection of data, a selected review of the literature was conducted to study the contributions of other researchers and writers in the areas of excessive acquisition and consumer behavior disorders.

2) Identifying a significant gap in the research, the researcher acquired IRB approval to conduct pilot interviews with one self and one other to explore and investigate excessive acquisition behaviors.

3) Data collected from the pilot interviews produced the research proposal outline. Following the proposal defense, the researcher acquired approval from the IRB to proceed with the formal study.

4) Potential participants were identified and contacted by the researcher as being self-declared or declared by an informant. Upon contact, the appropriate method of data collection was determined based on participant preferences.

5) Semi-structured interviews, field observations, and informal conversations were the forms of data collection.

6) Asynchronous communication was encouraged with respondents following interviews and conversations.

7) Audio recordings were transcribed, notes from field observations and informational notes from conversations were organized and assembled from the data collection process.

8) Data was analyzed and cross-checked with five colleagues to identify and verify findings.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

Establishing a relationship between theory, method, and analysis is a complex process. Theories inform one's choice of methods and process of data analysis (Hammersley, 1993). Methods reflect theoretical assumptions and influence the type of analysis undertaken. Analysis "tests" and develops theoretical and methodological assumptions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It is in the analysis of data that the researcher has the potential, at least, of making a contribution to the field of study (Bryman, 1988). Henceforth, this chapter presents the results of this study's conventional qualitative content analysis of transcribed interviews and field note documentation to understand what themes were expressed by those experiencing EA. The theories of consumer behavior disorders, self-regulation, and the philosophies of the *self* discussed in the previous chapters have directed how the collected material has been coded and assessed. The presentation of the coding frame establishes the defining viewpoint of the *self* and the vantage point of the *other* to advance this study in the discipline of consumer behavior.

To intensely evaluate the hundreds of pages of collected data, this study used an open coding approach investigating the themes related to the behavior of excessive acquisition that 27 adult participants reported in their in-depth interviews. This chapter presents the results of this study's conventional qualitative content analysis of transcribed interviews and field-note documentation to describe the findings within themes of expression by those experiencing EA.

All forms of interview content were read and analyzed by the coder with repeated points of emphasis highlighted and reviewed. The content of many experiences was evaluated as phenomenological reconstructions. These points were sorted into subcategories of contextual similarity. Within the list of subcategories, groupings of relatable content were classified into intermediate categories. The subcategories and intermediate categories formulated the Parent Themes from which detailed findings are presented. This method of data analysis produced 72 subcategories, 10 intermediate categories, and four Parent Themes. Following the completion of the Parent Theme analysis, the coder identified an all-encompassing Grand Theme that surmises the EA behavior and explains the process by which the act repeatedly occurs. Descriptions of categories and themes identifying compelling data content from the interview documentation are sampled in Tables within each thematic section of discussion illustrating rational and thematic groupings. The invoked data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 2.

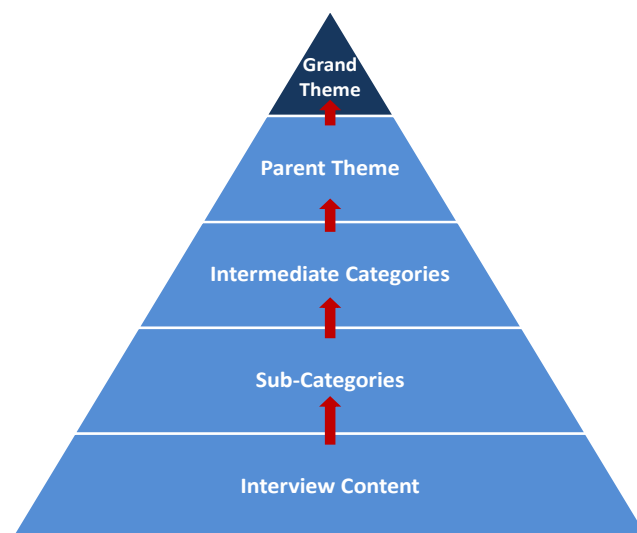


Figure 2. Data Analysis Process

EMERGENT THEMES

The conventional inductive content analysis of semi-structured interviews, conversations, field notes, and text-based technology yielded four context-based Parent Themes that addressed data recorded across the 27 participants. These themes were: 1) Emotion, 2) Space, 3) Economics, and 4) Time. The sociological and psychological themes are ordered as they were revealed during the oscillating data collection process and through intense comparability analyses of data content.

PARENT THEME 1: EMOTION

The Emotion Parent Theme was the first overwhelmingly emergent content identified by SPs' and OPs' responses relating to expressions of their natural instinctive states of mind describing their personal experiences of EA behavior. The contextual content of this Parent Theme, which was exhibited in all 27 participants, was listed and sorted into 37 subcategories and 3 Intermediate Categories based on the general domain of the EA concern and the three types of emotions identified by Buck (1985, 1988, and 1999): (a) Emotion I, (b) Emotion II, and (c) Emotion III. To reiterate Buck's theory discussed in Chapter 2, Emotion I is known as physiological responses; Emotion II is the expressive behavior; and Emotion III is the *affect* emotion.

Intermediate Category One: Emotion I. The subcategories of Emotion I were appraised from the cognitive data content of investigator observations and the participants' self-reported comments from in-depth inquiries. Three subcategories of Emotion I were recognized as 1) increased heart rate associated with anxiety, fear, or anger, 2) fatigue associated with depression, 3) increased blood pressure associated with

anger or anxiety. This emotion is exemplified in June's (SP6), Megan's (OP15), and Joan's (SP3) content. June felt an inner state of turmoil, an "urge," an "increased heart rate" if she did not acquire two of the same objects during engagement of the behavioral act. Even though she occasionally tried to self-regulate her behavior by purchasing one of something, the effects of anxiety and fear physiologically overwhelmed her and she felt forced to acquire two commodities.

An OP experiences a similar anxiety but in a different context. Megan (OP15) abruptly excused herself from the co-interview as to refrain from expression of her anger toward her husband. She contacted the investigator by text message minutes after the adjournment of all parties from the interview session to explain her sudden departure, "I just got so mad. I could feel my BP going up. I was afraid I was going to say something I would regret. I had to leave, sorry ☹️."

Joan (SP3) expressed emotions of depression in her in-depth interviews when she talked about her mother and the relationship she has with her own children. Joan enjoyed various activities with her mother, especially in her teenage years when she and her mother would spend the day on Saturday shopping, eating lunch together, and enjoying time as mother and daughter. Now that Joan's two daughters, teenage twins, she desperately wants the same experiences with and for her children. However, the following excerpt describes the current conditions that generate anxiety in Joan during the interview followed by an onset of depression when she describes that the relationship with her daughters is not as she had hoped as a mother.

We have, and I don't know if it is like, just the teenage years (gah, yea), yep, o.k. I would say, "We could watch a movie together, that would be something we could do (uh huh)." Then Bella says, "I'm not watching that, why would you

even wanna watch that?" "Well then I'll watch whatever you wanna watch." Then Mary says, "Why do you, why do you look at a magazine?" "I'm sitting here with you, I'm watching it with you. But I don't like high school musical." That kinda thing is (uh huh), I feel agitated, I don't feel, you know. "I'm sitting here with you, I'm not, you know, to watch the movie (uh huh)" or they wanta watch it at 11:00 at night (snickering), I'm tired. Or like, "let's watch a series." "Oh we don't like that anymore." I need to finish (yeah, yeah). It's like trying to hit a moving target (yeah yeah). "So let's go to eat lunch," that's something I enjoyed doing with my mom, "where ya wanna go eat?" "Oh I dunna know." Or "let's go to Tomato Head." "You always wanna go ta Tomato Head, I don't like Tomato Head." And I mean and we've actually been going some place and they're fussing and I'll go I'm not spending that kinda of money for one meal you won't enjoy, you're gonna be hungry in 2 seconds cause you're not gonna eat," I, huh, we've lost that (yea) and it's like you know, and having two girls who want to do, you know, other things like, "well let's go to Starbucks." You know, "let's do that, let's go," you know (um hum) and then it becomes "I want this, this, and this," well, I'm not spending 25 dollars at Starbucks (right, right), and then it becomes, you know, "well if you're not gonna let me buy what I want, well then, we just won't go."

Intermediate Category Two: Emotion II. This second category of emotion was noted and recorded by the investigator during in-depth interviews as participants' behavior visually apparent through physical, facial, and vocal expressive tendencies (Kassam and Mendes, 2013). Ten subcategories were scribed and listed for Emotion II and are 1) flailing of arms, 2) wringing of hands, 3) raised voice, 4) running of fingers through hair, 5) head in hands, 6) rolled eyes, 7) widened eyes, 8) smiling, 9) crying, 10) shrugging of shoulders. The OPs were conspicuously demonstrative as noted by the investigator in Don's (OP1), Bill's (OP7), and Megan's (OP15) interview. Don began espousing and flailing his arms as he prematurely initiated the interview from his front porch upon approach of the interviewer. Bill's voice elevated and his eyes rolled in disbelief when he described the excessive acquiring behavior of his mother-in-law. Megan could not contain her emotions

when she intervened in her husband's (SP15) interview. Her voice elevated and her arms often extended in the air with frustration as she reminded him of how many golf shirts were in closets throughout the house, how many golf shoes were in boxes in the garage, and how many golf clubs were in boxes and bags in the garage.

Emotion II was apparent in all SPs during the inquiries, as well, but in less demonstrative expressions than OPs. The investigator noted facial expressions and gestures as SPs described their acquiring events or admitted the consequences of their behavior. Joan's (SP3) eyes glistened and a smile parted her lips as she talked about her "special finds" at the Vera Bradley store. Brad (SP12) gestured with his hands as though he was coddling the fine "piece of art" he had recently acquired. Patty (SP14) eloquently gesticulated how she navigated through a used book store for hours, gently tilting outward the upper corners of the books from the alignment of others on the shelf so she could easily identify her books of interest. Peggy's (SP1) eyes filled with tears during one of her in-depth interview as she realized her shame.

Intermediate Category Three: Emotion III. Affect is an instinctual reaction to stimulation and is a key part of human interaction, especially when prompted. As such, identifying these psycho-physiological constructs of affective states can contribute to the deeper meaning of a phenomenon when realized during qualitative inquiries. The investigator's relationship with the participants in this study, established through the prolonged engagement of the data collection process, created the trust by which the investigator could serve as the stimulus to effectively prompt the valence, arousal, and motivational intensity of the EA experiences thereby exposing real emotional affective states. The affect emotion recorded an extensive list of descriptive content within the

Intermediate Category of Emotion III with a total of 25 feelings being identified within data content, at least in one form, among all 27 participants. Table 5 lists the subcategories of Emotion III as “feelings of” with groupings according to OP responses, SP responses, and shared responses.

Table 5. Subcategories of Emotion III.

	OP Responses		OP / SP Responses		SP Responses
1	Despair	6	Love	15	Guilt
2	Tolerance	7	Fear	16	Humiliation
3	Complacency	8	Helplessness	17	Embarrassment
4	Hopelessness	9	Anxiety	18	Abnormality
5	Frustration	10	Worry	19	Loneliness
		11	Stress	20	Abandonment
		12	Sorrow	21	Non-Remorse
		13	Sadness	22	Happiness
		14	Anger	23	Shame
				24	Joy
				25	Solace

The affective state of the SPs conformed to conditions of emotional valence referring to the behavioral consequences, emotion-eliciting circumstances, and subjective feelings and attitudes. The emotions elicited when the SPs described their acquiring act were responses of happiness, joy, and solace. As the interviews progressed and the SPs were questioned about their beliefs toward the effects of their behavior on others, the behavioral consequences were described as guilt, humiliation, embarrassment, and shame or non-remorseful.

SP1 “I am ashamed.”

SP3 “I just feel great solace when I shop, it just makes me happy and I forget all my troubles...It also reminds me of the good times with my mother

- SP6 “This is not normal, I’m just not normal.”
- SP12 “...possessing that type of thing? I imagine, it makes me feel good, but it’s not necessarily that I publish ... Seldom [do I feel bad], I mean, what would I feel bad about?”
- SP15 “I guess I do have a problem with buying too much stuff...Control is affirmation...yea, yea, when [I buy something] it’s that emotional high.”

The affective state of the OPs was closely related to an arousal construct of motivational intensity. The others’ responses to how they felt about the behavior of the self prompted expressive emotions not only of despair, helplessness, tolerance, but also of love. This cognitive, yet highly emotional scope of the EA behavior creates positive and negative affective states among the selves. The predominately negative affective state was recorded as the significant experience of EA within others.

- OP1 “I love my wife and there’s no one else to take care of her. There’s just not.”
- OP3 “I’m tired of all this stuff in the house. I have lived with it all so long, I’m just tired.”
- OP6 “We go through this together...I trust her.”
- OP5 “It upsets me that my mom struggled with this. I just didn’t know that dad was this way. Now, I have to deal with all of the problems, the stuff, the expenses...just like mom did, apparently.”
- OP10 “After you have lived with it for so long, you know, everything just a mess and nothing finished, you just have to figure out how to cope. I’ve tried many times to do something about it, but there’s nothing I can do.”

Summary of Parent Theme 1: Emotion

The Parent Theme of Emotion is an enduring theme throughout the study and continues to define the participants and their emotional investments in the behavior of EA.

The investigator became invested in the study, as well, when participants cried as they discovered their feeling of shame, as they shouted from frustration when they learned of the impending financial crisis, or became docile when they described the love for their family. The psychological, physiological, and sociological investments in the EA behavior are volatile at best.

The *self* engages in a behavioral act that produces the desired sensation of pleasure from which the physiological desire to acquire can only be sequestered by complete engagement. During this act, the self is rewarded with the sensibilities of satisfaction, peace, and solace. A temporary state of emotional equilibrium is achieved and a positive affective state accomplished. The sociological result, however, is a negative affective state. The EA behavior, when evaluated by others who are invested in the relationship and experience, produces arousal and motivational intensities of conflict and provokes shame in the self. EA, therefore, is a social product that affects not only the self, but also a significant population of others which generates a strong emotional construct within the behavior itself.

PARENT THEME 2: SPACE

The coding of interview content revealed a second theme of Space from all participants in the study. This Parent Theme was defined by 12 Subcategories and 3 Intermediate Categories. Firstly, 11 of the 12 subcategories were identified within data content as discussions of physical spaces listed as 1) Living Room / Main Office Space, 2) Bedroom, 3) Bathroom / Restroom, 4) Basement, 5) Kitchen, 6) Work / Hobby Room, 7) Closets, 8) Garage, 9) Out Buildings, 10) Automotive Vehicles, and 11) Rented Storage

Units. The 11 physical spaces were subcategorized into 2 Intermediate Categories of Inhabited Spaces and Ancillary Spaces. Secondly, a 12th subcategory was determined from a combination of investigator field notes and in-depth interviews documenting and describing degrees of clutter within inhabited and ancillary spaces. This 12th subcategory formed the third Intermediate Category of Degree of Clutter.

The domestic arena of the home was the inhabited physical environment discussed of 23 participants and the business office was the inhabited space discussed of 2 participants (SP11 and OP11). The non-inhabited, ancillary spaces of out-buildings, automotive vehicles, and rented storage units were discussed by all participants but specifically addressed by 2 participants (SP5 and OP5) as problematic as a result of excessive acquisitions. These “normed” spaces were the affected environments of EA behavior and were the assigned spaces of observation and evaluation receiving a “degree of clutter” rating as formulated by the investigator/coder. Table 6 lists the affected spaces per SP as confirmed in data content including field notes from the investigator’s observations.

Intermediate Category One: Inhabited Spaces. The *self* and *other* most commonly presented and described to the investigator the inhabited spaces of the home or office. When prompted by inquiry, the *self* viewed the living environment as orderly and comfortable. It was a place that the family would gather for special events such as Birthday celebrations, Halloween parties, Thanksgiving meals, and Christmas festivities. The self perceived the inhabited spaces differently than others. In Joan’s (SP3) house, the “permanent” display of 50+ Christmas trees in the entry hall, dining room, and on the fireplace mantle were “beautiful decorations” to enjoy year round.

Table 6. Affected Spaces of the EA Experience.

Participant No.	Self (Pseudonym)	Affected Space(s)
SP1 / OP1	Peggy	Entire house, personal vehicle, step-daughter's car, neighbor's basement
SP2	Donna	Garage, vehicle, spare bedroom
SP3 / OP3	Joan	Entire house, garage, vehicle
SP4 / OP4	Laura D.	Entire house, garage
SP5 / OP5	Jake	Work Van, Out-Buildings, Rented Storage Units, Vacant rental house
SP6 / OP6	June	Kitchen, Closets, Garage
SP7 / OP7	Betty	Spare Bedrooms, Basement, Closets, vehicle
SP8	Pepper	Entire house (no garage at dwelling)
SP9	Sally	Entire house, garage, vehicle
SP10/OP10	Roger	Basement, work shop, vehicle
SP11	Pete	Entire Office (Residence was not made available), vehicle
SP12/OP12	Brad	Closets, Shelving
SP13/OP13	Saul	Closets, Bathrooms, Spare Bedrooms
SP14	Patty	Entire house with exception of one dedicated bedroom for her sister, vehicle
SP15/OP15	Mark T.	Closets, Spare bedrooms, Garage

She also prepares an elaborate meal for her children and their friends on Halloween night for a healthier alternative to the indulgence of sweet treats. Another participant, Roger (SP10), lives in a large house and the extended family would frequently gather in the vast living spaces for special occasions year-round. He also refers to his basement as a mini-Home Depot implying well-organized shelves that include tools and equipment for any type construction or automotive project. Patty (SP14) lives alone, but family frequently visits her home since her Residence is in New Mexico. She boasts to her guests about her vast collection of books. Her special room, as she describes it to the investigator, looks “much like a library.” The following is a narrative prepared by the investigator describing Peggy’s (SP1) house per the participant’s specifications as drawn from the 15 hours of interview content collected in local cafes.

The hallways of Peggy's house are lined with cardboard boxes, neatly stacked and labeled with their contents. The basement is much the same with plastic storage tubs stacked above eye-level with their contents visibly organized. Her music room has sorted piles of sheet music stacked on the floor, about knee-high, around the perimeter of the room and music books overflow the custom-built shelves. Her husband, Don who is a master cabinetmaker, has made accommodating storage units for her possessions, especially in her craft room. The hundreds of photographs she has taken and developed over the years are neatly categorized and labeled in photo boxes which are designed to preserve photo materials. She has numerous picture frames neatly stacked and sorted in a converted closet with shelves for easy access. Yes, Peggy has acquired a lot of things for home projects, hobbies, and music, but she keeps her possessions clean and orderly so she can find what she needs when the occasion arises.

It is within the comparability of data content between the SPs and OPs that the coder yielded a significant difference in the qualitative descriptions of habitable spaces. The data content of the selves consistently described space as non-problematic. The *other*, however, often presented the habitable spaces of the home or office to the investigator as problematic conditions. The OPs description of the physical environment was that of chaos, clutter, unpleasantness, and disgracefulness. Also, if the inhabited spaces were problematic, the others interjected that a limited and select population of family and friends were allowed to visit the home or office. Those persons permitted to enter the home or office were "pre-approved" by the self and deemed trustworthy individuals who would not judge or gossip about the physical conditions of the habitable environment. This language contradicts descriptions of SPs and is evident in the lengthy espousal of Don's (OP1) description of the living environment as he experiences EA in his home with Peggy (OP1).

Don: ...this is a box full of marbles and THIS is a box full of marbles, smooshed marbles, and more fabric. I haven't looked in any of this; I just come down here every now and then and wash my clothes...We have zillions of spools of ribbon.

Everything is just in massive amounts. We have multiples. We have jars, more jars. Stuff. OK let's go into another room. You remember me telling you how she decided she wanted to become a photographer? Floor to ceiling, wall to wall, picture frames. Crafty stuff, picture frame, picture frame, ribbons, ribbons, more ribbons, wrapping paper. I don't know what this is but this is quite heavy. This looks like paper of some type. Scrapbooking paper, I believe. She was going to do that too. So I guess these are all like yellow, green, blue, and these are all full. These are full of different colors of paper. And here is a shadow box picture frame. There's another shadow box picture frame. Melanie, I am not sure, but that might be another boat load a picture frames down there. I don't know what that is I can't even get it out. There are just a million more picture frames, more picture frames. Yeah. I mean it really is unbelievable. You know with all this crafty stuff here, about two years ago I needed a hot glue gun. There are more picture frames. There is a bag of fleece fabric. Whatever this stuff is, maybe thread. This is full of something looks like dishes, but I think they are something for candles. And these boxes are all full of the same thing, votives. But you know I needed one of those crafty hot melt glue guns and I go to Peggy and I say, 'Peggy I need one of those hot glue guns, do you have one?' She said, 'No, I don't have one', she said with a smirk on her face, 'I think I have four or five of them.' And I said, 'Tell me where one is, I need it.' She said, 'Wait a few minutes, if there's one down in the craft room, I will go get it.' So after a while I heard stuff shuffling around knocking, tripping, falling and she came back upstairs and she said, 'I just don't have time to look and try to find one right now.' So I had to go buy a hot glue gun.

Intermediate Category Two: Ancillary Spaces. The Intermediate Category of ancillary spaces described within the data content encompassed non-habitable spaces such as closets, out-buildings, rented storage units, automotive vehicles, and vacant residential rental property. Interestingly, in 9 of 15 cases, the personal vehicles of the selves were cluttered with paraphernalia associated with their categorical tangible acquisitions. For example, Donna's (SP2) mini-SUV was consistently cluttered with furniture parts or an actual piece of furniture limiting the number of passengers she could accommodate. Joan's daily driver contained numerous shopping bags with recent acquisitions she was

evaluating “to keep” or “to return.” Peggy’s step-daughter, when on an extended stay with Peggy and Don, had to keep her personal belongings in her own vehicle since the closets within the house were occupied with Peggy’s excessive acquisitions. The contents of Peggy’s personal vehicle also oscillated with daily acquisitions. Often, her purchases remained in the trunk of her vehicle for an extended period of time with intentions of returning some items “one day soon” or “finding a use” for them in the house. To continue the descriptive content of this emotionally active couple, Don explains how the ancillary spaces are used in his house:

There is a mailbox. There are all kinds of pillows, there are blankets. She has an enormous amount of fabric stuff, bed spreads, craft stuff. This is the first time I have looked in this closet. I don't even know... this is catching my eye. Who owns shit like this? I've never even seen them before. I don't have any idea what that is or even where came from. There are orange juice bottles, water jugs. There's just all kinds of stuff. More pillows... (Describing closets in the hallways) Oh, that's some of our bills, some of our paperwork. Music composition, this is music stuff. Damn, there's just more stuff. Oh, that's church stuff, that's music and churchy stuff. These two closets are absolutely full of Peggy's clothes. You see those Tupperware bins? She loves those. Those are the cat's meow, man.

During the coding process, the ancillary spaces became identified as “semi-private” or “private.” When space was problematic as a result of EA, it was noted by the coder that the *self* used these spaces to store and conceal their acquisitions from others. The *self* was the predominate user and accessor of these spaces and in one case, the only one with knowledge that the space was in use. Chad’s (OP5) discovery of his father’s two rented storage units was a complete and overwhelming surprise to him and his sister.

It was about summer time, almost a year after my dad had a heart attack followed by a heart cath then a stroke during the heart cath, that my sister and

I discovered he had two storage units needing to be paid for or the contents auctioned. Both of us were bewildered as to what could be in these storage units since there were four storage buildings plus two other homes full of stuff we had to inventory to keep or discard. Opening up the doors of two 10' x 20' units, we uncovered mostly work related items from his TV service company, plus 20 or more old TVs and countless tools still in their unopened packages. Probably 90% of these items were worthless. There were hundreds of TV antenna parts and miles of cable. Also, a set of car keys that we had looked for months to be able to start and sell an old Dodge car sitting at his house. There were close to 10 five gallon buckets of blue asphalt paint and 10 wheelchair templates of which he used one bucket and one template to paint the designated parking spots at the church in town. There were stacks and stacks of used Styrofoam coffee cups, I guess from church. There were used pizza boxes stacked everywhere, again, from church events, I guess. But this one has me perplexed, you won't believe it, there were boxes of used matches. Yes, boxes of used matches. Now, you figure it out 'cause I have no idea why someone would keep used matches.

Intermediate Category Three: Degree of Clutter. The background development on the topic of EA identified the behavior in the DSM-V (2013) as a specifier to Hoarding Disorder (HD). This association logically asserts the construct of Space in the phenomenological and grounded theory research of EA and as such, the data collection process included the visual evaluation of the described environments of 12 selves by the investigator. Of the 3 selves in which the environments were not visually evaluated by the investigator, 1 SP did not allow access by the investigator to the affected space(s) and the affected space(s) of 2 SPs' were described by the OPs due to the SPs unwillingness to expose an "outsider" to the physical conditions of the living environments.

The results of the visual evaluation or physical description of the spaces affected by EA were categorized by the investigator and coder in degrees of clutter. "No Clutter" was defined as spaces being orderly with no obstructions created by tangible objects and clear

accessibility to functioning components within the space. “Mild Clutter” was described as orderly spaces with minimal obstructions by tangible objects and minimal obstructions to functioning components within the space. “Serious Clutter” was observed to be a lack of order, excessive obstructions by tangible objects, and limited use of functioning components. Table 7 reports findings that 50% of the excessive acquirers produced seriously cluttered spaces, 36% produced mildly cluttered spaces, and 14% did not produce clutter as a result of their behavior.

Table 7. Self-Participants’ Degree of Clutter

Participant No.	Self (Pseudonym)	Degree of Clutter
SP1	Peggy	Serious Clutter
SP2	Donna	No Data
SP3	Joan	Serious Clutter
SP4	Laura D.	Mild Clutter
SP5	Jake	Serious Clutter
SP6	June	No Clutter
SP7	Betty	Serious Clutter
SP8	Pepper	Mild Clutter
SP9	Sally	Serious Clutter
SP10	Roger	Mild Clutter
SP11	Pete	Serious Clutter
SP12	Brad	No Clutter
SP13	Saul	Mild Clutter
SP14	Patty	Serious Clutter
SP15	Mark T.	Mild Clutter

Summary of Parent Theme 2: Space

The Parent Theme of Space presents interesting findings contributing to the expanded understanding of EA behavior and the direct correlation with HD. The findings

report that 86% of SPs generate mild to serious clutter within inhabited and ancillary environments and allow their acquired tangible objects to accumulate. This claim supports EA as a specifier to HD. Additionally, the contrasting descriptions of space by the selves in comparison to descriptions of space by the selves in comparison to descriptions by others and the observed realities by the investigator are indicators that the self, at minimum, is idealistic, sensitive, and protective of the physical spaces affected by their tangible commodities regardless of effects on others.

PARENT THEME 3: ECONOMICS

A theme of Economics was expressed in the data content of the total 27 participants and resulted in the identification of 21 subcategories and 2 intermediate categories. The intermediate categories are prescribed as Financial Economics and Behavioral Economics. The first intermediate category is defined by 12 subcategories and encompasses monetary activities, financial conditions, costs of commodities. The second, Behavioral Economics, aligns with consumer behavior practices and the utility of the acquired objects. A total of 9 subcategories subsumed this intermediate category.

Intermediate Category One: Financial Economics. This intermediate category was consummated when the culmination of analyzed data content reported repeated contextual descriptions of allocation and deployment of economic resources. The conventional inductive content analysis yielded three subcategories that addressed content within in-depth interview transcripts and investigator field notes. These sub-themes were 1) cost of acquisitions, 2) problematic financial conditions, and 3) non-problematic financial conditions.

The first subcategory, cost of acquisitions, was a frequently occurring explanation of the selves' price-conscious shopping skills. The next subcategory describes problematic conditions imposed by the EA behavior of the self as it was identified by 10 data points. These data points emphasized the financial dynamics within the household and were listed as: 1) continuous accumulation of debt, 2) repeated accumulation of debt, 3) excessive use of credit cards, 4) inability to pay off credit card debt, 5) spending more money than they make, 6) working two jobs to make ends meet, 7) collecting / not collecting alimony, 8) collecting disability / retirement, 9) supporting offspring, 10) offspring working to assist in paying personal expenses. The third subcategory declares a population of participants not financially affected by expenditures directly associated with EA behavior.

The first sub-category can be defined as the cost of tangibles which relate to the SPs excessive acquiring behavior in which the selves expressed abilities to monitor and modulate their thoughts during the evaluation of commodity prices. The SPs employed an evaluation process of cost analysis when contemplating the acquisition of desired objects. Low-involvement items were "shopped," price comparisons were conducted, sales were considered, a discount coupon was available, or a time-sensitive promotion with applied savings was considered. These types of commodities were subsumed most frequently and consisted of apparel, accessories, household goods, groceries, and other personal items. High-involvement merchandise was a category of acquisitions that was also "shopped" "price compared," and often negotiated. This category of product was acquired in comparatively fewer quantities than low-involvement and consisted of items associated with leisurely activities or professionally-related hobbies. This cost-conscious consumer behavior was consistent among an overwhelming majority of SPs (93%).

Although the selves consider themselves to be parsimonious consumers, the sales, coupons, and time-sensitive promotions provoke the desire to acquire in quantities.

Statements of selves relating to their avaricious behavior are as follow:

June (SP6): I don't tend to buy really, I mean I don't buy expensive things, I don't buy, like these were thirteen ninety-five (um hum), so I'm still justifying, it's not like I was buying hundred dollar bowls (um hum), you know what I'm sayin (um hum)? So it's still kinda in the realm of reason (um hum).

Joan (SP3): ...some jeans they're on sale, get it, or you know, get a grey shirt, they have another, you know, t-shirt or you know, ok we're here, sour cream, sour cream's on sale, then I'll get home and be like you bought 7 pairs of jeans the exact same pair of jeans! Lady snap out of it and go back and you know and then they're some that, no, that's really, I'd only have one of those and something like that will trigger, and, goes on that list of, oh that's right, you really liked those ones, 35 dollars so keep looking at them 'til they're on sale, you have a coupon or you know, so it's like the perpetual cycle....

Mark (SP15): So, but I'll, I'll be the first to admit, there is no doubt that I excessively acquire, mostly golf clothes, like this pull-over. This pull-over is probably the first, when it came out two years ago, it was probably 90 dollars, and I think I got these for twenty. So you just, you find the right moment or you find them on sale and, but you know, I just didn't buy one, I got a dark blue and I, oh I got a gray one (said with laughter).

The next subcategory in the parent theme of financial economics evaluated data from both population types of participants and formed the interpretation of the selves' financial status at the time the study was conducted. The results of the self-reported data were sorted according to three types of debt which included non-debtors, mild debtors, and serious debtors. Non-debtors or SPs who accumulated no credit card debt and acquired commodities with cash or credit cards in which balances are paid off monthly were reported at 52%. The mild-debtors were comprised of 18% of SPs and identified as consumers acquiring with cash and maintained minimal credit card debt for no longer than

12 - 24 months. The third grouping consisted of 30% SPs who were serious debtors and acquired with credit cards, accumulating high credit card balances on numerous credit cards, and were unable to pay debt without accumulating additional debt.

The transfer of ownership of material goods to the excessive acquirer was conducted in five forms of trade: monetary exchange, credit card payment, bartering, free of charge, and stealing. All SPs conducted monetary or credit card exchanges as the regular form of payment, however, bartering was an occasional transaction method among 3 SPs. All parties agreed that some commodities were received free-of-charge from acquaintances and one SP admitted to stealing from her father. Joan (SP3) explains:

Well, I took a teacup from the china set (yeah?), I took that and so in recreating my memories, I found a similar set of china at a thrift store and for ah (ohhh oh), I bought my own china and it matches, it coordinates with the teacup, you know that was my fulfilling of acquiring now I have...and then I have my uncle's, he made these ostrich eggs that you blow out (oh yeah), you cut designs in that and so he had, she had two of those and so he had them in the curio cabinet and so I snuck those out one day (who-oo) cause I have, I have a key to the house so sometimes I would just pop in and you know start wriggling. I know my brother's actually stolen stuff, but yeah it's just, I'll get something in my head and it's like o.k. that's satisfied

Additional financial information was presented in Table 1 of Chapter Three, which reported demographics, 93% of the SPs (14 out of 15) generated a personal income from employment, family investments, retirement, alimony, or disability. This personal income, depending upon their relationship status, was the total household income or a contributing portion of the total household income. If expenditures by the excessive acquirers extended beyond their means and if the self was in a relationship, the income of the other was used to facilitate the habit.

The continued coding of data content of in-depth interviews and field notes reported that the SPs were cognizant of their expenditures and the effects / non-effects on the personal or family financial state. Of the OPs, 3 were consistently aware of financial activity of the *self* prior to participation in the study. Thus, 9 OPs first learned of the financial activity of the *self* during the recruiting or data collection process of this study. This discovery created a level of relational tension between the self and other if the SP was a serious debtor. Don's (OP1) learning of Peggy's (SP1) repeated accumulation of credit card debt and misuse of appropriated family funds was presented in the Methods chapter of this study and exemplified the anxiety that financial problems can produce within family units. Chad's similar revelation is quoted in the following as well as Pepper's declaration of repeated accumulating debt.

Chad (OP5): You know, it was not until Dad had his heart attack and stroke and became disabled that Ginger (Chad's sister) and I had to manage his bills. Well, we then figured out how much debt he was really in. Ginger started getting his mail and in one month's time, there were statements from 23, 23 credit card companies! All 23 cards had the maximum balance. Now, mind you, there were a couple that were just 400 or 500 dollars, but still. I don't really know how he could get so many credit cards, how does that happen?!...but the balances totaled close to \$70,000. Along with the medical bills from mom's lengthy illness, he was in debt far beyond anything that could be paid back in anyone's lifetime. What the hell? We just had to turn it all over to a lawyer, because, because, you know, there was no way his social security, retirement, or anything else he had, could pay for his assisted living place, healthcare, AND his credit card bills. It's unbelievable...I knew it was bad... just not THIS bad.

Pepper (SP8): You know Melanie, I've done it again. I have run up my credit card debt to over \$25,000. I was doing so well, I had paid them all off and now I am back in a mess. I know it's been fifteen years since my divorce and my daughters are finally through college and living their own lives, but, you know, I have purchased this nice little house, you know, you'd think I'd be happy with all of this freedom. But I'm not. I never seem to have any money and I'm an

accountant! I was trying to fix up the house, but it's just too much to take care of. I thought that at my age I would not have any debt, but look at me...

For those participants in whom the household income tolerated the expenditures of the excessive acquirer, the discussion of money was not an emotional altercation. The selves and the others presented finances as a non-issue as Mark (SP15), June (SP8), and David (OP8) expressed in their interviews.

Mark (SP15): You know when Megan first, I don't wanna say 'got on me,' but would say, 'you gotta issue,' I would say, 'yea I probably do,' but it wasn't a, I didn't feel like it was a bad thing, it wasn't like I was going to buy drugs or going to do somethin else, this is not too negative, it could be though. If we're watching money and I'm out buying stuff it could be very bad.

Conversation between June and David:

June (SP8): ...well two things; one we have no credit card debt, at all (um hum), and two I don't tend to buy really, I mean I don't buy expensive things, I don't buy, like these were thirteen ninety-five (um hum), so I'm still justifying, it's not like I was buying hundred dollar bowls (um hum), you know what I'm sayin' (um hum)? So it's still kinda in the realm of reason (um hum). But, I guess I could save the money that I spend on the second item, maybe give it to the grandchildren...

David (OP8): Well... I have great trust in June. We've been married over thirty-eight years (June laughs). Thirty-nine years, thirty-eight?

June: Thirty-nine.

David: Thirty-eight.

(Back and forth 38/39)

June: We don't even know.

David: So, um, she is not an exorbitant spender. She's not gonna go out and buy something expensive.

June: If I did, I'd buy two of it (laughter)!

David: There's never been a history of that. And I trust her not to do that (um hum), or if she wants to buy something really badly, very expensive, just like I would do, we would talk it over.

Intermediate Category Two: Behavioral Economics. The intermediate category of Behavioral Economics emerged when data content repeatedly revealed common consumer behavioral activities among the SP population. This sub-theme constituted the analysis of the behavioral act employed by the excessively acquiring selves and the factors that formed their economic decisions. The behavioral economics discussion also defines the environmental forces of influence that product the behavior of excessive acquisition. The SP's language constructed the contextual understanding of EA behavior within 8 sub-categories coded as 1) triggers, 2) process engagement, 3) commodity evaluation, 4) providing-entity evaluation, 5) acquisition decision, 6) sensory/haptic need, 7) epistemic value, 8) autonomous act, and 9) self-gratification motivation.

A sub-category of the Behavioral Economics Parent theme was identified through the repeated use of the term "trigger" by the SPs. This term, referred to as "cue" in literature on psychology and addiction, appeared in data content 65 times and was coded as the definitive source of instigation of acquiring desire. A trigger produced a need of the individual to react or respond through a form of action setting the behavior in motion. Two constructs within the sub-category were assigned by the coder as incendiaries of triggers and classified as internal and external forces.

The internal forces were emotional sensations that made the *self* susceptible to engagement of the acquisition process. These mental states corresponded with those presented in Parent Theme One and were recognized as heightened levels of stress, tension, anger, or anxiety in addition to feelings of sadness or depression. An example of

how emotions were incendiaries of internal forces for an excessive acquirer is presented in the following:

Donna (SP5) is a single mom and assistant professor at a community college. She describes a recent cue-triggered episode she believes was initiated by stress: 'I had such a bad day at school. A student came to me after one of my classes to complain about how much time it took me to set up my samples for demonstration purposes today --- 28 minutes, she said. She also informed me that she had been keeping a log for the entire semester of how long it takes me to set up each day. What the hell? Who does things like that? Does the student not understand that the sample demonstrations are part of my lecture? On top of everything else that has happened this semester, this was the last straw! So, while driving home from school late that night, I was trying to think of something I needed so I could stop somewhere and buy something. I just needed to buy something. I just needed control of one thing in my life. So, I stopped at [an office supply store] and bought an ink cartridge for my printer at home. I didn't really need it right then, but I knew I eventually would, so I bought it.

The second construct of triggers was described by SPs and coded as external forces. One grouping of these environmental cues that proved to be influential among 67% of SPs was promotional campaigns designed and implemented by corporate marketing strategists. The SPs declared newspaper advertisements, magazine advertisements, printed and electronic coupons, email campaigns, social media blasts, and television (video) advertisements as the persuasive provocateurs of acquisition behavior. These external forces were strong influences on the EA behavior of the self. The following narratives report examples of external forces and the SPs reaction.

Peggy (SP1) enjoys reading the local Sunday newspaper. This ritual allows her the chance to get caught up on the past week's events and news that she may have missed due to her hectic work schedule. Although Peggy is interested in the national and local news, she admits her real interest in the newspaper is the advertisements and promotions: "The Sunday paper is always full of so many great coupons and sales ads from all of my favorite stores! I just love to sit

down and go through it all, cut out the coupons, make plans to get to all of the sales. Oh, by the way, I just purchased a smart phone. My children have told me that I can download store apps for their coupons and sale advertisements. Can I really do that? I want to make sure I don't miss a thing."

Mark (SP15): So, I'm watching a golf tournament on TV, I see a guy wearing a good-lookin' shirt, I get my phone, find it online, pick my size, and within minutes it's being shipped to me. No problems, no hassles, no lines. It's done and I will have my new golf shirt in a couple of days.

Joan (SP3) (email message and ad to investigator): Trigger! Will have to spend at least 15-30 minutes to see if it is worth it AND this could have Hershey's (family dog who recently passed away) name added to the inside.

Joan (SP3) (email message to investigator the next day): Purchased... 30% off and free shipping, email trigger (Fig. 3)!



Figure 3. External Trigger Instigating Acquisition Behavior (e-mail campaign)

A second group of external forces was determined to be self-proclaimed projects. These projects were defined by the coder as extensions of professional skills, hobby-

oriented tasks, or personal goal-driven endeavors that would encompass the SPs leisure time. Of the SPs, 93% described involvement in these types of projects. As such, projects typically require investments of time, materials, and money to execute. However, the SPs spent time and money to obtain the list of materials, but 12 out of 15 SPs did not implement the tasks necessary to engage or complete the projects. The materials would not be used. For the excessive acquirer, the intent of self-proclaimed projects was for the accomplishment to be achieved by the self for the self. From the perspective of the self, the act of acquiring the commodities for the project sufficed as the project goal. The observations of the investigator in combination with interview content of the *other*, Roger's wife, Lucille (OP10), formulate the following narrative describing the self-proclaimed projects of Roger (SP10). Consequently, an overwhelming majority of OPs in the study concurred with this typology of the self-proclaimed projects of the *self*.

Roger (SP10) has numerous construction projects underway at his own house as well as family properties in two other townships in the southeast. He and his wife designed and built their own home 50 years ago and although it is a handsome architectural structure, numerous details remain unfinished. The materials for the unfinished projects are stored in the basement, the "mini-Home Depot." A second residential property needed a new roof 15 years ago. Instead of immediately addressing the problem, the roof was allowed to significantly deteriorate resulting in extensive interior water damage. The scope of the project tripled in magnitude. The materials for this project are stored inside the now-gutted structure. His wife strongly suggested that a problem has always existed with completing one project before he starts another. She commented that there are dozens of uncompleted projects at their three properties, none of which she anticipates being completed anytime soon.

Acknowledgment of a trigger by the excessive acquirer validated a reason to pursue, created an arousal, and spawned intrigue toward the next step of acquiring a tangible

object forming the next subcategory of the behavioral economics parent theme: product research. The disinhibited trigger-response of the SPs advanced the behavioral process to the collection of product information from which distinguishing characteristics of the excessive acquirer were revealed. Normally, consumers engage in both internal and external forms of information search. An internal search involves the consumer identifying alternatives from his or her memory. The term is referred to as “low involvement” which was presented in a previously discussed subcategory within financial economics. For certain low involvement products (e.g., bread, toothpaste, toilet paper, bananas), marketing strategies achieve this “top of mind” awareness. The internal valuation is a recollection from commodity experiences. For high involvement products (e.g., cars, houses, education), consumers are more likely to use an external search. Before buying a camera, for example, the consumer may inquire of specialists regarding options, read media reviews, consult web sites, and visit several providing entities.

For the excessive acquirer, however, the internal search and low involvement products are the “redemption” acquisitions. This category of commodity is acquired for *others* as a decoy for the *self* allowing fulfillment of the responsible obligation to provide for others. The form may be in response to a birthday, a seasonal celebration, recognition of an accomplishment, or daily household grocery. The data report that low involvement commodities are not acquired in excess. This is because the commodity is not for the *self*, but for others. The interview with Don (OP1) supports this postulation as described in his experience with bananas.

Don (OP1): Jewel (his daughter) told me, ‘Why do you all always have bananas?’ I said, ‘we don’t always have bananas,’ but then again it was from an outsider’s perspective. She says that ‘you’ve always got a bunch of bananas

here. They sit in the same spot on the counter.' Peggy will go out and buy a bunch of bananas, no one ever eats the bananas. I said 'I might eat one or two a year.' She says (Jewel), 'I will watch those bananas through the week, they will be green bananas, then ripe bananas to brown bananas to rotten bananas.' And when they turn rotten, Peggy throws them away, puts her clothes on and goes to the grocery store and buys another bunch of bananas, sits them on that spot and I had begun to notice that. I now take pictures of the bananas. I move them around and take pictures of them in different places and I will e-mail or send them by phone to my daughter. We went from a bunch bananas in the basket at the Pilot station to a bunch of bananas at the grocery store to the rack at Wal-Mart and it just kept getting bigger and one night I got on my computer and 'googled' where do bananas come from and pages and pages and pages of shit would come up showing these banana trees and people with machetes and all of these funny pages and I would e-mail my daughter 50 pages of pictures of bananas from around the world and I would put bananas inside the toaster oven and take a picture and send it to my daughter I would put them on top of stuff and I would take pictures and then my daughter would send pictures as well. So we have a good time. But Peggy says to herself, 'I haven't bought anything today, I've got to go to the store and buy something.' And maybe the bananas are her, well 'I just can't figure out what to buy so I'm going to buy bananas.' And I have never seen Peggy sit there and eat a banana, she might cut one up and put on a bowl of cereal but literally, and since my daughter mentioned it, I literally watch those bananas rot. Now Peggy does make some smokin' good banana bread for me every now and then. It's delicious. But, I don't get banana bread every week, but I've got rotten bananas every week.

The tangible objects of interest for acquiring by SPs varied in this study from arts and crafts to apparel, from electronics to tools, and from musical instruments to home goods. A vast majority of these objects represent low-involvement commodities by category, but with epistemic value. This type of value for the excessive acquirer manifests cognitive successes of product knowledge into a distinct understanding of instrumental conception of rationality or justification (IEP, 2016). The epistemic value allows the excessive acquirer to saturate his or her knowledge of a category or brand and shift to a

new product without remorse or frustration from unachieved satisfaction. Among these categories, 73% of participants were brand specific in their self-gratifying acquisitions and 100% of SPs were category specific according to their pastime interests and pleasures. Examples of SPs' objects of EA are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Object-Type Preferences of Self-Participants.

Self	Self Pseudonym	Material Objects of EA	Brand Specific
SP1	Peggy M.	Homegoods / Crafts	No
SP2	Donna R.	Furniture	Yes
SP3	Joan G.	Apparel / Accessories / Homegoods	Yes
SP4	Laura D.	Homegoods / Apparel	Yes
SP5	Jake Y.	Televisions / Electronics / Tools	No
SP6	June S.	Apparel / Shoes / Kitchenware	Yes
SP7	Betty	Quilting Paraphernalia	No
SP8	Patricia / Pepper	Homegoods / Apparel	Yes
SP9	Sally D.	Homegoods / Apparel / Jewelry	No
SP10	Roger D.	Tools / Construction Materials	Yes
SP11	Pete D.	Musical Instruments / Clothing	Yes
SP12	Brad M.	Technology / Apparel / Accessories	Yes
SP13	Saul G.	Apparel	Yes
SP14	Patty R.	Books / Crocs Footwear	Yes
SP15	Mark T.	Apparel / Golf Items	Yes

Whether the value of the tangible was considered low or high involvement, SPs conducted information searches for self-desired commodities as though all acquisitions were for high-involvement tangibles. This supports the finding that the goal of product research is an epistemically valuable goal from which the desired objects become instrumentally valuable to the *self*. For example, if Joan was researching options for a gray tank top, her investigation of the apparel item mimicked the investigation of a gray BMW.

If Pete was looking for violin bow hair, it was as though he was looking for a Stradivarius. If Brad was looking for a camera lens, his collection of information included comparisons of lenses to the Hubble telescope. This level of research produced a familiarity of the product knowledge toward future and repeated acquisitions. It also built an enduring involvement in the product category by the consumer generating a sense of expertise among SPs. The value of the object to the *self* is epistemically defined regardless of monetary investment. This high interest occurred in tangibles for the *self*, whereas low interest investment or temporary involvement occurred in acquisition of tangibles for others.

In addition to collecting contextual product knowledge through information searches, it was determined that the excessive acquirer also needed textural information for resolve to be achieved from the research process. This need is defined in literature as haptic feedback which is experiencing the sense of touch through user interface with the object. This feedback provides valuable product information to the end user (Peck and Childers, 2003). The fulfillment of the ability to touch, feel, and evaluate the object within their hands was noted as a necessary experience of the 15 SPs before the selves reached a level of satisfaction to acquire and keep the desired object. Brad (SP12) and Joan (SP3) explain the need of the haptic experience:

Brad: Um, but research, um, if I'm buying something for myself, research, I will read um, blogs, I will read uh, reviews, I will, there are, over the years you end up, you know, collecting a handful of people that you trust in certain areas that, that, they've kind of pre-curated everything for ya, at least done some of the homework for like the camera view there's a famous guy that tested this camera and he said it's a, it's a 7 out of 10 (um hum) or something. It kinda, it kinda prevents those things in some cases. Um, clothing usually I have X number of go-to places that I buy from that I might buy from on line but they're known brands for me and I'm very familiar with their products and if there's something introduced like another color line, but I know historically that their

things are of high quality. But the beauty for me is that again because of my location, my market, I can order it in and touch it (Brad with quick laugh) (um hum), and put it in a box and send it back if I don't like the feel of it... (Um hum)... If it's scratchy or um, ill-fitting or for whatever reason....

Joan (SP3): So, I got this purse and it was my purple purse which it was not something that I normally thought it's the perfect thing for me, the perfect size (um hum). So, another so, e-mail thing, so you buy one...But even for that first I had 10 purses delivered to the house because I couldn't find them in the one store to touch them and feel them ... so I ordered them, they were delivered all in ...I picked out the one I wantedbut I would lay them all out and sometimes 3 shipments would come and I'd go, 'What the hell are you doing?' ...going back, but, I hafta see and touch and feel all of em and again back to Target where you can touch and then decide what you want when you're rationalthis purse is awesome so they had another one from e-mail that came up and it was a little bit different, but same kinda style and I wanted it in this charcoal gray, so, I ordered one but I held it and looked at it for a month but I decided on the charcoal one charcoal one so I order the other thing and after I saw it and I liked the one I had this one's not big enough so yea (so did you send them back?) And I'm a returner, (yea) but it's like I have to survey all my options to make sure I've made the best choice for what I get (um-hum, um-hum) .

The need for the user to interface with the commodity for a haptic evaluation became a determining factor in the selection of the providing entity, from where the object was to be acquired. The data content reported 82% of SPs acquired tangibles from 5 distinct "haptic" channels listed as brick-and-mortar retailers (70%), estates sales (3%), flea markets (3%), trades with acquaintances (3%), and "giveaways" from acquaintances (3%). The commonality of these entities is that all allowed the SP to touch and feel the products, immerse in the experience, and engage with associates or acquaintances who reaffirmed the enthusiasm for the SP's potentially new acquisition before acquiring. Donna preferred estate sales as her predominate source of EA as her interview content describes herein:

Donna (SP7): When I find those special items at an estate sale, I load 'em up and take 'em home. My garage is full. I think I do this 'cause I am looking to control something. I know it takes a lot of time, but I don't have control of anything in my life. My life is so stressful---my ex-husband does not financially help with our two daughters, my students at [the community college] are difficult, I am the primary caregiver of my aging mother --- I just need something I can control! So, I really enjoy going to estate sales, you would not believe how many estate sales there are every weekend. You know, I walk around the houses and look over everything, not just furniture, I sort of try to figure out what the family was like that lived in the house. You know, jewelry tells a lot about someone...but, I always find a nice piece of furniture that I can touch, feel, sit in, open and close, you know?

The balance of channel preference among 18% of acquisitions was from online retailers (14%) in combination with television shopping networks (4%). These two channel choices for the excessive acquirers contributed to an average of 40% of the SPs total acquisitions. These providing entities were grouped into one statistic based on the provision of a delayed-haptic experience meaning that the ability to touch and feel the commodity was postponed until the product was received from a delivery service 1 -3 days after acquiring. The expressed reasons of these chosen channels, as described by the self-participants, were accessibility, convenience, and variety.

Although the delayed haptic experience was a minimally preferred means of acquiring, two excessive acquirers in this study frequently acquired from the television shopping networks of QVC and Jewelry TV. The rural location of one participant and the alleged physical disability of another participant corroborate the demographic description of the TV network shopper. The investigator's narrative describes Jake's TV experiences and an alleged justification postulated by his son:

Jake (SP8) lived in a rural county in western North Carolina and with multiple

TV's in every room of the house, programs were always on. He lived at his family's homeplace until his health began to fail and long term healthcare was arranged in an assisted living facility in upper East Tennessee. His son, Chad and his daughter, Ginger managed his affairs. It was when Chad began to clean the homeplace that he discovered a large quantity of women's jewelry in the upstairs den. All of the jewelry was in its original packaging with packing slips from QVC. Sales receipts were not found with the items and credit card records were in the possession of a family lawyer due to the accumulated credit card debt; therefore, how much the jewelry cost was not evident. Dates on the packing slips indicated that Jake began purchasing the jewelry after the passing of his wife. Since the substantial quantity of jewelry was accumulating in the house and there were no indications of gifting, Chad believed that his father was making purchases for Christine in search of her forgiveness and his redemption for not giving her nice things while she was living.

The intermediate category of Behavioral Economics continues to be explained through additional detailed analysis of accumulated data reporting evidence that the SPs excessively acquire commodities for themselves, subsequently identifying the sub-category of self-gratification. This sub-theme was apparent in repeated contexts of interview content that described the SP's inability to resist acquiring objects for the self. This dimension, which appeared in the 15 self-participants' data, was based on the analysis of data content evaluating comments describing the object they spent the most time evaluating. Although previous interviews alluded to the domains of self-interest and self-indulgence, it became blatantly obvious to the investigator during the in-depth interview with Mark (SP15) that self-gratification was a distinct motivating goal of the SP. This discovery moment for the investigator is described in the transcript excerpt below:

Investigator: ...What is your job?

Mark: I run a pet supply business. We manufacture and sell everything.

Investigator: For all pets?

Mark: Yes, Pets ... Dogs, cats, you know.

Investigator: Okay, so what are some of the products that you manufacture?

Mark: So, right now we're manufacturing puppy pads (um-hum), and all types of plastics products...and we're getting into other businesses too, so, so it's a start up business.

Investigator: Oh, that must be challenging.

Mark: Yea, yea, so I worked with pet businesses for over 10 years,I ran the [manufacturing] division of [a company] for ten plus years, so then I moved from there to [here] for an opportunity to grow a 50, 60 million dollar business (yea), but it's nuts, but it's been interesting.

Investigator: Do you have pets?

Mark: Yea, we have a dog. He's back there [with Megan], he's a Corgi.

Investigator: Do you have a lot of your own pet products at home for your dog?

Mark: No (long pause). We have a (dog) bed upstairs, a (dog) bed downstairs. And that's what's funny, uh, the water dish is from somewhere else (laughing) not even a product of the company I work for, and a basic trash can holds his food and (laughs) and I'll bring toys home, but not a lot.

During Mark's interview, the investigator conducted a mental recall of the acquired objects of all SPs and realized that the lived experiences of the selves were describing the superfluous attainment of objects for the *self*. The selves excessively acquired distinctly for themselves. This moment in the data collection process was a pivotal point for the investigator in advancing the study of the phenomenon. Until this time, the interview content did not succinctly define characteristics of EA differently from other consumer behavior disorders. Brad's interview content sanctioned the diagnosis of self-gratification as the motivational goal and reveals the next sub-category of autonomy:

Brad: Um, I shop for myself, by myself. I select all my own clothing and I don't select anyone else's clothing. I don't make decisions for anyone else on that. Um, did that answer?

Investigator: Um hum. So if you, so if you went shopping with your children it would be because...

Brad: Because they can't pay for it themselves.

Investigator: Do you and Mary (his wife) shop together at all?

Brad: Hun uh (said quickly in response). Except for the grocery store occasionally (yeah) but uh, or travel, we do, we do (with a laugh) like to travel (yeah). That is something, we communicate on stuff like that but no, she does uh, all of that.

Investigator: Is that because of your schedules?

Brad: No (said quickly in response).

Investigator: By choice?

Brad: I don't care (matter of factly). That sound bad?

Investigator: No, (K) that doesn't sound bad.

Brad: I don't care. I mean I've seen the other side of that, I've actually had friends that it was very important for the spouse to choose the clothing of the other spouse (um hum). Uh, hum, I don't, I don't get that. That doesn't make sense to me (said with laughter).

Investigator: So it's not something that you would use as a social time, um, for you to be with Mary, you know to say 'yea I'll just go along with you.'

Brad: No absolutely not...I do NOT like to shop for other people's stuff, certainly...I shop for myself, by myself.

The data content continued to align and reveal the stages of the behavioral economics of excessive acquisition. As noted in the last statement of the excerpt from

Brad's interview, "I shop for myself, by myself," the motivational goal of self-gratification was confirmed and the act occurring as autonomous behavior was presented. In addition to over obtaining tangibles for the self, the SPs were consistently unaccompanied during engagement of the act and conducted the acquisitions in a self-governing manner. The act is a planned and orchestrated event designed to not be controlled by others or by outside sources allowing for self-directed decisions throughout the behavioral process. The effected occurrence by the volition of the excessive acquirer becomes a series of independent judgments intensified by desire, willingness, and disinhibition.

Summary of Parent Theme 3: Economics

The parent theme of economics presents findings associated with two intermediate categories defined as financial and behavioral conditions of the self participants. The findings of the financial economics were reported in three sub-themes of cost of acquisitions, problematic financial conditions, and non-problematic financial conditions. Behavioral economics repeatedly revealed consumer behavioral activities within 8 subcategories that identified the series of independent judgments forming a "non-economic man" behavioral model of EA. Within these categories, analyzed data from in-depth interviews and field notes report significant findings contributing to the extended understanding of the phenomenon.

Financially, it was noted that the excessive acquirer considers him/herself as a parsimonious consumer. The SPs "shopped," "price compared," and valued sales promotions when evaluating commodities of which most frequently acquired tangibles were low-involvement types. A second finding confirmed that 52% of the SPs were non-

debtors and 48% were mild to serious debtors. For the non-debtors, the household income was middle to upper class and was tolerant of their price-conscious acquisitions. The mild to serious debtors were middle to low household income status and although the SPs shopped for best comparative prices, the excessive acquiring behavior contributed to problematic financial conditions. The SPs, regardless of income status, exercise self-defeating spending behavior as an excessive acquirer.

The subcategory of behavioral economics emerged through the analysis of the data content specific to the behavioral process. It was realized that the SPs did not achieve a desired level of satisfaction when acquiring for others; therefore, the focus of the commodity was for the self from which the process achieved satisfaction. This discovery led to the conclusion of self-gratification as the distinct motive to engage in the behavior. In addition, the data reported an overwhelming majority of 82% of SPs acquiring commodities from providing entities that allowed fulfillment of the haptic experience to solidify the acquiring decision. The remaining 18% purchased from online or television channels and received merchandise within 1 to 3 days producing a delayed haptic experience. The need to touch and feel the epistemic products for the self supports the satisfaction achieved from the self-gratification motivation and goal. Finally, the SPs prefer to conduct the behavioral act autonomously to exercise their independent self-directed judgments without influence from others.

The process model shown in Figure 4 exemplifies the behavior of the “non-economic man,” the self-unregulated acquisition behavior of the excessive acquirer. The figure describes the nature of the whole event of EA beginning with a trigger, moderated by behavioral disinhibition, and “concluding” with a form of satisfaction.

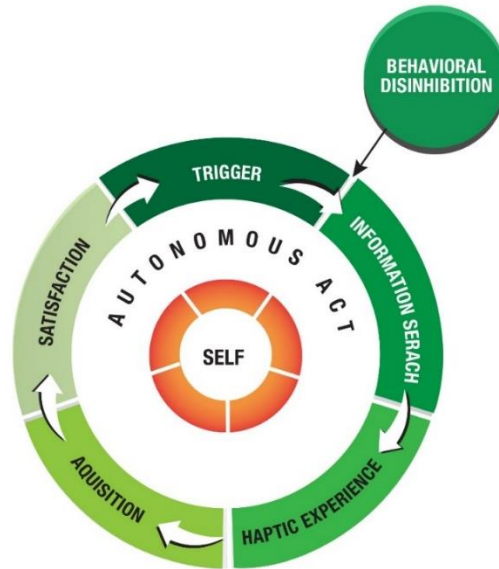


Figure 4. Process Model of Dysfunctional Self-Regulated Acquisition Behavior

PARENT THEME 4: TIME

The fundamental act of EA as a phenomenon of consumer behavior is directly associated with the integrated use and expenditure of time. The EA act is not a cross-sectional event of short and unvarying duration (Jacoby et al., 1976). Rather, it is a dynamic process that occurs over time and involves different spans of time from one construct to another (Jacoby, et al., 1976). The duration of time between events and the frequency of repeating the act is the basis of differentiation between typical and atypical acquisitioning behavior. Thus, the Parent Theme of Time emerged as the fourth and concluding parent theme in the investigation of EA. The frequently repeated act of obtaining tangible objects is a distinguishing characteristic of excessive acquisition, not solely the quantity of attained commodities. As such, the intermediate categories of the Time Parent Theme discussed within the context of EA are Expenditure of Time and

Frequency of Repetition. Behavioral economics explains the sequential structure of the EA act and the temporality is elucidated in the intermediate categories of Time.

Intermediate Category One: Expenditure of Time. The intermediate category Expenditure of Time is defined by two subcategories: family/household time and personal/work time. These two sub-themes emerged from the data content within the in-depth interviews and investigator field notes as well as electronic messages between the investigator and participants. The family/household subcategory was documented in accordance to the apparent amount of time the SP spent at home engaged in the EA behavior. The personal/work time was calculated based on the expenditure of time by the SP outside the home executing acquisitions. The data was self-reported by participants.

The data collection process addressed the time element with all participants by asking an open-ended question during in-depth interviews about estimated time expenditures of EA activities conducted by the selves. The participants were also asked to extend communication with the investigator through electronic messaging, if willing and able, for a 7-day time period following the in-depth interview sessions. This methodology encouraged the describing and reporting of EA-type events as they naturally occurred, in real time rather than recall. This form of information collection, as supported by the traditions of grounded theory methodology, was actualized by 4 SPs and 2 OPs.

Communication between participants and investigator occurred through 46 text messages and 16 threads of email messages. This data provided valuable lived experiences to the thematic discoveries, but most specifically to the personal expenditure of time as noted per clock settings on electronic and digital submittals. Content from the combined responses of in-depth interviews, investigator notes, and electronic messages resulted in the

summary of data aligned with the theme of Time exhibited in Table 9.

The data report an investment of time by the SPs averaging 1.4 hours of household/family time per day, 2 hours of work/personal time per day for a total average of 3.4 hours per day. This equates to 972.4 hours on average per year for moderate EA behavior. The severe excessive acquirer, Joan (SP3), for example, expends an estimated 1,820 hours per year autonomously acquiring tangibles for herself. The collected data addressing the expenditure of time is inclusive of the act defined in the behavioral model (Fig. 4) and does not include time investments associated with product consequences, i.e., product management, product consumption, or financial management.

Table 9. Expenditure of Time and Frequency of EA Activities

Self	Self Pseudonym	Frequency of Acquisition	Household / Family Time	Personal / Work Time	Total Time Expenditure
SP1	Peggy M.	7 days / wk	1.5 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	3.5 hrs / day
SP2	Donna R.	4 days / wk	1.5 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	3.5 hrs / day
SP3	Joan G.	7 days / wk	2 hrs / day	3 hrs / day	5 hrs / day
SP4	Laura D.	4 days / wk	1.5 hr / day	1 hr / day	2.5 hrs / day
SP5	Jake Y.	7 days / wk	1.5 hrs / day	3 hrs / day	4.5 hrs / day
SP6	June S.	7 days / wk	1 hr / day	2 hrs / day	3 hrs / day
SP7	Betty	5 days / wk	2 hrs / day	3 hrs / day	5 hrs / day
SP8	Patricia / Pepper	5 days / wk	2 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	4 hrs / day
SP9	Sally D.	7 days / wk	1 hr / day	2 hrs / day	3 hrs / day
SP10	Roger D.	4 days / wk	1 hr / day	2 hrs / day	3 hrs / day
SP11	Mark T.	6 days / wk	2 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	4 hrs / day
SP12	Brad M.	3 days / wk	1 hr / day	1 hr / day	2 hrs / day
SP13	Saul G.	3 days / wk	1 hr / day	1 hr / day	2 hrs / day
SP14	Patty R.	6 days / wk	2 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	2 hrs / day
SP15	Pete D.	5 days / wk	2 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	4 hrs / day
Total SP Hours Expended			21 hrs / day	30 hrs / day	51 hrs / day
Average Hours Expended / Day/ SP			1.4 hrs / day	2 hrs / day	3.4 hrs / day
Average Frequency / Week		5.3 days / wk			

SPs often presented their interpretation of time expended on EA activities as being efficient and non-compromising towards personal relationships or work performance. It was evident that their temporal judgment is compromised. Mark (SP15) believed he was resourceful with the amount of time he committed to EA behavior. Brad (SP12) does not “like to shop,” so he spends “little time” engaged in the behavior. Patty (SP14) admits that she enjoys perusing the shelves in bookstores, but “it doesn’t take time away from other responsibilities.”

The reported information from OPs, however, contradicted interpretations of time expenditures expressed by SPs. The OPs were the key informants of time expenditure as they were keenly aware of how much family/household time was spent by the SP on EA behaviors. Megan declares that her husband Mark “spends hours at a time while he’s home watching’ TV or surfing’ the internet planning for his next purchase. He’s online all the time, either on his phone or on his laptop.” Mark explains that his wife Joan is not “here when she’s home, she’s not really here...you know? She’s thinking about what’s next, surfing’ the damned internet for hours. Supper is often late because of it.” Chad reminisces about how his dad worked long hours: “dad was always working on someone’s TV and would come home late most every night. Mom would fix him a plate of leftovers for supper. He would do to the living room, sit in the recliner and watch TV while he ate. We all just got used to it. He was always working, but he was always trading with his customers, you know what I mean?” Don would like for his wife, Peggy, to focus her acquiring time and energy on something that included him: “She couldn’t be addicted to something fun like sex. Can you take this away and fill it with something more important like sex?”

The expenditure of time conducting EA activities while at work or on personal time

encompassed an average of two hours per day among SPs. The advent of technology and the mobility of communication across devices entice the excessive acquirer to engage in the EA behavioral activities while at the office during the work day. Joan admits to spending 4 hours a day on the company-provided computer equipment, checking and responding to emails from product promoters, conducting online product research, and purchasing the next tangible while sitting at her office desk. Although it is a misuse of company time and consumption of office resources, this apparent expenditure of personal time on company time was not problematic in her work environment. For those participants who were retired, worked in their church, owned their own business, or were not employed, the personal time expended on EA activities translate to an equal amount of time as other SPs in the study, but it was not on “company” time.

Regardless of interference with family or work time, this expenditure of time by the self is an impressionable quantity of marginal time expended on a behavioral process that has no market value, low-to-no asset value, and produces emotional and relational liability. The OPs in the study concurred that the SPs’ “time could be better spent” and “if time was better spent, it would cause [less relational conflict].” The liability created by the SPs’ is his or her choice to expend family, household, personal, and work-related time consumed with EA activities rather than toward an economic asset engaging in work performance, participating socially with the family unit, or assuming responsibility toward the household. It is the construal of time that creates dissonance between selves and others since time expended on EA is not perceived as counterproductive by the self, only others.

Intermediate Category 2: Frequency of Repetition. From within the Parent Theme of Time, the intermediate category of Frequency of Repetition is presented from

analysis and interpretation of data content from the 15 SPs. It is from the findings within this intermediate category that the excessiveness of the EA phenomenon is proclaimed. Throughout the study, the investigator was seeking an explanation from participants as to what makes the EA behavior excessive. The SPs did not consistently over-obtain quantities of commodities during singular acquisitions and their spending was cost-conscious, so what about the behavior is excessive? The expenditure of time executing the behavioral process nodded to the excessive dimension, but the terminally distinguishing characteristic explaining the excessiveness of the behavior was the frequency of repeating the unwieldy act of acquiring for the *self*. The findings and coded data support this subtheme as a significant contributing construct to the definition of the EA phenomenon and are presented in the following extrapolations and exhibited in Table 9.

The data report that on average the excessive acquirer engages in the behavioral act 5.3 days out of 7 days per week. The behavior, therefore, consumes an average of 286 days of their lives or 78.36% per year. Among the 15 SPs, the selves reported a combined total of 490 years of EA behavior averaging 32.7 years of behavioral discord or 9,352.2 days expanding over the lifetime of a single SP. These facts support the findings that the act is frequently repeated and is the contributing essence of defining the excessiveness of the acquiring behavior.

The temperament of repetition by the self was sorted into degrees of excessiveness labeled as mild, moderate, and severe EA behavior. Based on the findings from the data correlating to the 7-day week, the mild excessive acquirer replicates the act of obtaining tangibles for the self 3 days per week. The moderate excessive acquirer engages in the activity 4 - 5 days per week. The severe excessive acquirer reiterates the desire 6 - 7

days per week. The distribution of SPs equates to 13% mild, 40% moderate, and 47% severe.

Summary of Parent Theme 4: Time

The Parent Theme of Time identifies the expenditure of time and the degree of repetition frequency of the EA behavior. The selves participating in the study engaged in EA behavior an average of 5.3 days per week, 276 days per year (75.6% days of the year). The daily investment averaged 3.4 hours concluding that 87% of SPs are afflicted with moderate to severe repetition of EA behavior repeating the act 4 – 7 days per week. These persons afflicted with EA have experienced said behavior for an average of 32.7 years of their lives.

Figure 5 is a behavioral model illustrating the looping and repetitive nature of EA. Even though satisfaction is achieved during the behavioral act, the internal drive and external forces are too strong to abate the influence of triggers from producing the inability to self-regulate the desire to acquire causing frequent repetition of the behavior. What was

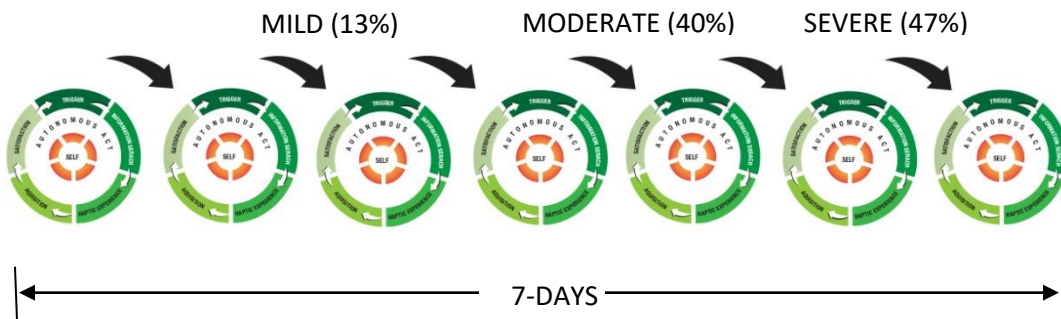


Figure 5. Excessive Acquisition

originally designed to be an instinctual consumer behavior, acquiring sustenance for normative daily living, develops into a problematic behavioral pattern through misdirected time expenditure and frequent repetition. The duration of this pattern has yielded the formation of a disorder spanning the majority self-participants' adult life.

SUMMARY OF PARENT THEME FINDINGS

The data content collected from in-depth interviews, field notes, observations, and electronic messages formulated the emergent Parent Themes of Emotion, Space, Economics, and Time. These four themes were supported by 10 Intermediate Categories and detailed by 72 Subcategories. Each Parent Theme and its subsequent categories contribute to the deeper understanding of the EA phenomenon and posit conclusions to the basic research question: "What is It?"

The Emotion Parent Theme focused on the general domain of the EA concern and the three types of emotions. Emotion I, physiological responses, was recognized as 1) increased heart rate associated with anxiety, fear, or anger, 2) fatigue associated with depression, 3) increased blood pressure associated with anger or anxiety. Emotion II, expressive behavior, was scribed and listed as 1) flailing of arms, 2) wringing of hands, 3) raised voice, 4) running of fingers through hair, 5) head in hands, 6) rolled eyes, 7) widened eyes, 8) smiling, 9) crying, 10) shrugging of shoulders. Emotion III was the *affect* emotion and included descriptions of the acquiring act as producing subjective feelings and attitudes of happiness, joy, and solace as well as guilt, humiliation, embarrassment, and shame. The antecedents are described from within emotional internal drives, the act is placed in motion by the emotional triggers, and the consequential evidence of this theme is

the destructive emotional investment of the selves and others that is produced by EA behavior.

The Space Parent Theme presented findings supporting EA as a specifier to HD (hoarding disorder). The data reported that 86% of SPs generated mild to serious clutter within inhabited and ancillary environments and allowed their acquired tangible objects to accumulate. Although no SPs produced an environment that precluded the fundamental use of a space, the consequences of the space construct were the detrimental conditions of the living or work environment created by the selves from the accumulation of their frequently obtained acquisitions.

The Economics Parent Theme emerged from within the two intermediate categories of Financial and Behavioral conditions of the SPs. Financially, SPs considered themselves parsimonious consumers explaining the findings that 52% of the SPs were non-debtors and 48% were mild to serious debtors. Although problematic financial consequences were not apparent among an overwhelming majority, EA was an exercise in self-defeating spending. The behavioral economics analysis produced confounding data differentiating EA from typical consumer behavioral patterns in the following explicatives: SPs did not achieve a desired level of satisfaction when acquiring for others; 82% of SPs acquired commodities from providing entities that allowed fulfillment of the haptic experience; commodities were epistemic in value; and SPs preferred to conduct the behavioral act autonomously. The defining consequences of the economics themes refer to the social costs of EA behavior. The economic characteristics discernibly strain social relations as the excessive acquirer frequently strives for short-term self-interests that work against the long-term good of the commons.

The Time Parent Theme concluded the thematic development of the EA phenomenon and was expressed in the intermediate categories of Expenditure of Time and Frequency of Repetition. The findings reported that SPs averaged engagement of the behavior 5.3 days per week, 3.4 hours per day for 32.7 years of their lives. The element of time was a distinguishing characteristic of the EA behavior separating it from normative acquisitions. The expenditure of time is confirmed as excessive and the repetition of the act is confirmed as excessive corroborating that EA, at minimum, is a consumer behavior disorder (CBD). From the typologies and general understandings of CBDs in combination with conclusive data shaping the four Parent Themes, the essential criteria are evident toward the formulation of a definition of EA behavior. The definition, consisting of verbiage are the profound dimensions of EA, recognizes the behavior as 1) a dynamic autonomous process, 2) involving acquisitions of tangible objects for the self of epistemic value, 3) requiring a providing entity allowing a haptic experience, 4) a frequently repeated act, and 5) producing a problematic outcome. From the resultants of the accumulated research and findings toward an explanation of EA, a new and unabridged definition is postulated:

Excessive Acquisition is the frequently repeated dynamic process of an autonomous act initiated by cues producing a self-unregulated desire to acquire tangible objects of epistemic value for the self through haptic experiences resulting in short-term satisfaction engendering persistent behavior despite adverse consequences.

An abridged definition is also proposed that succinctly communicates the behavior of EA without losing the sense. The definition below is shortened by omission while retaining the basic contents:

Excessive Acquisition is the frequently repeated autonomous act of obtaining tangible objects for the self.

GRAND THEME: NARCISSISTIC COMMODITISM

The Parent Themes and their internal content describe the behavioral process and answer the postulated research questions. However, a non-postulated question formed through the progression of the research that could not be answered directly by the participants: Why Tangibles? What is it about tangibles that the excessive acquirer desires? If the self was a personality type that was predisposed to experience an acute behavioral disorder, why not sex, like Don would prefer? Why not gambling, alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs?

The investigator continued to analyze data content and review pivotal moments in the data collection process. Five “eureka” moments were determined to be distinguishing characteristics contributing to the excessive acquisition of tangibles. First, SPs over-obtained objects intrinsically for the self. It was admitted that satisfaction was not achieved when acquiring for others. To reiterate, Joan did not enjoy shopping and buying for her children because they did not value the time together and they argued about what to buy. Therefore, she focused her EA behavior on objects for herself. Mark worked for a pet supply manufacturer, but did not supply his own pet with company products. His EA behavior appealed to his own desires.

Second, the excessively acquired objects promoted their self-image through physical adornment of apparel, jewelry, and eyewear, shoes, as well as “curator” status of leisure, hobby, and professional-related possessions. Brad owns approximately 20 pairs of eyeglasses, “it’s about the image, you know.” Patty and June have become the experts on

women's footwear. They both invest in the many styles of Crocs. Mark purchases golf apparel that the professionals wear during televised tournaments, "if it looks good on them, I think it will look good on me, you know what I mean?" Third, the motivational goal of the excessive acquirer was self-gratification. June's experience with mixing bowls is an example:

June: I had a, an incident yesterday (yeah?), um, two days ago I bought stainless steel mixing bowls at Costco. It comes in a pack of three, large, medium and small (uh-huh). And, they were like \$13.95 a pack, so I bought a pack and I bought a cutting board, brought it home and, uh, and just as I got in the car I thought, "I really should have bought two, two of those and another cutting board!" so yesterday I went back to Costco, which I try not to go into Costco, I try not to go once every two weeks cause when I buy, it varies ...it lasts about two weeks (um hum). But I found myself going back the next day and I in fact did buy, (a small laugh in voice) now I have six bowls, two large, two medium, and two small, and I bought another cutting board. So I mean

Investigator: Are you going to use them?

June: Well I've already used a cutting board cause I have one on this end of the island and then I have one on this end of the island and it's, there is functional value to these cutting boards (um hum). The bowls, yah, I am yea, I am. I guess I'm always afraid I'm gonna run out of something or I'm not gonna have it or, if I break it or I lose it, which I'm probably never gonna lose it. Then I want, I want to have immediately... (um hum). O.k. so I bought the one bowl set, I really want two but, I'm only gonna buy one because I really want to start working on this habit (um hum, um hum). And then I got in the car and started thinking, "oh, man, I've got to go back tomorrow and buy the others, I have to cause I'm gonna, I just have ta."

Fourth, the behavioral act was consistently and repeatedly conducted autonomously. All SPs in this study concurred that engagement of the acquiring act alone occurred alone and Brad's comment confirms, "I do this by myself, for myself." Fifth, before acquisition satisfaction could be achieved, the haptic experience needed to be fulfilled.

Immediate or delayed haptics concluded the decision-making process that allowed satisfaction to be attained.

The five conditions discovered from in-depth analysis of data content collected from this investigation concluded that excessive acquiring behavior is guided by self-related motives, “for myself, by myself,” rather than by rational economic considerations. This viewpoint of the SPs is explaining a selfish, self-gratifying, and therefore narcissistic approach to consumer behavior. By evaluating EA through the lens of Narcissism, the Grand Theme of the study is posited. This theoretical perspective answers the question of “Why Tangibles?” and re-labels Excessive Acquisition as Narcissistic Commoditism.

Ordinarily, narcissism is believed to be an inordinate love of the self, with a corresponding lack of interest and feeling for other people (Freud, 1914). The narcissist is depicted as selfish and greedy, as someone whose attitude is “me first,” and in most cases, “me only.” This picture is partially correct according to Lowen (1983). He states that narcissists “do show a lack of concern for others, but they are equally insensitive to their own true needs” (Lowen, 1983, pg. 25). Moreover, the distinction of “self” love is that the investment is in one’s outer image as opposed to one’s inner self. They have a poor sense of self and are not self-directed (Lowen, 1983). Instead, their activities are directed toward the enhancement of their image and often self-destructive. The behavioral traits of an excessive acquirer have been identified as being directed toward enhancement of self-image producing negative consequences that affect not only themselves, but others.

The term “narcissism” is derived from a Greek myth about a handsome Greek youth named Narcissus who was doomed to fall in love with his own reflection after rejecting the love of the nymph Echo. He was then pined into a flower bearing his name. From this

mythological story, the term Narcissism was coined and broadly defined as “the investment of libidinal energy in the ego” (Freud, 1914). It was originally introduced to explain behavior of people who derived erotic excitation from looking at, caressing, and fondling their own bodies. Based on this broad definition, the narcissistic derivative of EA behavior is that the excessive acquirer conducts him or herself in a narcissistic manner through the frequently repeated expenditure of instinctual energies and desires toward tangible objects for the self.

The denial of feeling for the inner self and feelings of others is also a dominating characteristic of narcissistic behavior and is most manifest in their behavior toward others. They can be ruthless, exploitative, sadistic, or destructive to another person because they are insensitive to the other’s suffering or feeling. This insensitivity derives from an insensitivity to one’s own feelings. Empathy, the ability to sense other people’s moods or feelings, is a function of resonance. One can feel another person’s sadness because it makes him sad; one can share another’s joy because it evokes good feelings. However, if one is incapable of feeling sadness or joy, a response to these feelings in another person is doubtful. When feelings are denied, that others can feel is also denied. This is the social cost of narcissism and is an apparent condition of the SPs in this study as was expressed within comments from SPs and OPs regarding time expenditure and attention to others. Brad, June, and Don describe the social costs of excessive acquisition:

From Brad’s interview content:

Investigator: Do you all shop together at all?

Brad (SP11): Hun uh (said quickly in response). Except for the grocery store occasionally (yeah) but uh, or travel, we do, we do (with a laugh)

like to travel (yeah). That is something, we communicate on stuff like that but no she does uh, all of that.

Investigator: Is it because of your schedules or by choice?

Brad (SP11): I don't care (matter of factly). That sound bad?

From June's interview content:

Investigator: Does David have an idea as to what this is all about?

June (SP9): David?

Investigator: Um hum.

June (SP9): We never had time to talk about, he's always working, we never, we've never really discussed it.

From Don's interview content:

Don (OP1): I've said, you know, if I wanted to have an affair, if I want to have a girlfriend, I could get away with it the cause she is that gullible. And so it's like my comment earlier, like I'm not going anywhere because there's no one else to take care of her. Um, but there are limitations as to what I can do. I cannot stay with her 24 hours a day and I refuse to. Maybe I would get divorced if I had to stay with her 24 hours a day. But, um, Peggy is truly a wonderful person. She seems to love me, she loves the kids, she loves my kids, and she loves all those people at the church.

The interest of the excessive acquirer in physical objects that can be touched and stroked is referred to by Freud as the libidinal conceptualization of object-libido. Object-libido is the part of the sexual energy which is directed to objects other than the ego. To further explain, narcissism applies to two sexual objects: the self and the person who cared for the self, a parent who is traditionally the mother. Freud terms the self's libidinal investment in the parent as an anaclitic object choice in which sexual instincts are attached and determined. Adults who engage in anaclitic object choice are governed by hope that

the object will fulfill their needs, as the parent originally fulfilled them. However, narcissism is produced from a parent-child disturbance in the relationship denoting a personality disturbance in the child characterized by an exaggerated investment in one's image at the expense of the self. As the child matures, an ideal-ego forms as a psychological agency that attempts to guarantee narcissistic fulfillment through self-gratification. This agency is experienced as "conscience." It is postulated from the findings of this research that excessive acquisition behavior is the agency through which the self seeks self-expression, self-possession, dignity, and integrity. EA becomes the conscience act of fulfillment and the tangible objects are replacements of object-libido from childhood parental relationships. In direct correlation to the Self-Unregulated EA behavioral model (Figure 5), but with the incorporation of the object-libidinal conceptualization of narcissism, Figure 6 describes Narcissistic Commoditism.

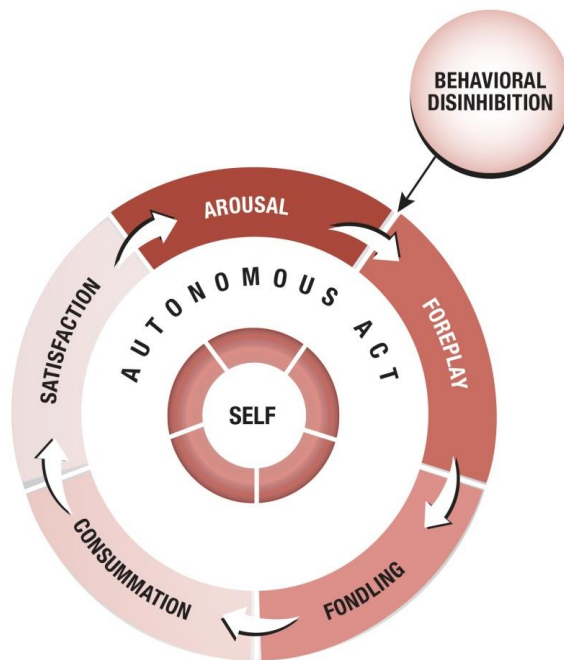


Figure 6. Narcissistic Commoditism

The autonomous act is initiated by arousal toward an object. This stimulant is the physiological trigger that involves activation of the narcissistic system and consists of internal drives or external forces. From the inability to abate arousal, foreplay is instigated. This information search or “flirting” phase precedes consummation but leads to fondling the tangible object for completion of the haptic experience. Following the caressing phase, consummation confirms the acquisition decision and satisfaction is achieved. The excessive acquirer is temporarily satiated until the next arousal event occurs. Depending upon the mild, moderate, or severe status of the self and the degree of narcissistic desire, the EA event can be solicited within two or three days or within hours. The excessive acquirer has proved to be influenced by uncontrollable and unpredictable urges seeking self-gratification for self-fulfilling intentions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

OVERVIEW

In this study, the emergent definition of excessive acquisition was the frequently repeated autonomous act of acquiring tangible objects for the self. This behavior occurs as a primary response to the fulfillment of narcissistic traits of the consumer. The activity, producing short-term satisfaction, is difficult to control and results in harmful consequences to the self and others. Some of the most important findings of this research involve the selfish motivated goals, the frequency of occurrence, its autonomous nature, and achievement of satisfaction by the haptic experience. These areas distinguish excessive acquisition from other similar concepts and clearly demonstrate that it is, at minimum, a consumer behavior disorder. Also, the findings support EA as a specifier to hoarding disorder by the accumulation of clutter, but the self-participants did not exhibit an attachment to the objects or an unwillingness to discard. Object attachment was a less important motivation of their acquiring habit. Instead, the qualitative data indicate that the acquiring experience concluded by the touching and feeling of the object was a more satiating desire.

EA, by definition, is a chronic condition. The multi-faceted behavioral process of EA “breaks down” as the ability of the self to prevent engagement is prohibited and behavior is under-regulated. The process model of EA (Fig. 4) exemplifies the dysfunctional self-regulation process by identifying behavioral disinhibition as the moderator between the triggers of internal drive and external forces to information search, allowing the acquiring

act to occur repeatedly and frequently. The standards become self-imposed and embedded as the norm of the EA motivational goals. The reference points, which are the primary contributors to the self-image, are often too high to be achieved and are rarely matched creating a negative psychological affect. This negative affect generates a motivation within the *self* to seek a positive emotional affect, failure of self-regulation occurs, and frequently repeated acquisitions ensue.

Monitoring of the behavior is another recognized problem in self-regulation as experienced by the excessive acquirer. The *self* operates in the open loop system meaning that the consequences are not checked or tested. The open loop is a continual process of advancement toward self-imposed, self-gratifying goals producing affective and behavioral processes with a resilient sense of self-control (Heatherton & Baumeister, 1996; Carver & Scheier, 1998). The strength of self-regulation is most commonly referred to as self-control of which the excessive acquirer exhibits little to no restraint over acquiring tangible objects exclusively for the self. Baumeister (2006) refers to this lack of control as ego depletion. Studies have shown that ego depletion impairs inhibition, exhausting one's strength in resources conjecturing uninhibited behaviors. It is believed, then, that automization of tasks and behaviors (e.g., acquiring multiples of the same-item category) becomes less taxing creating the reliance of the self on pre-programmed outcomes of the open loop system. This reliance results in dysfunctional operant behavior or as exhibited by SPs in this study, excessive acquisition of similar categorical and brand driven objects.

The autonomous nature of the act is supported by B. F. Skinner's theory of operant behavior as the excessive acquirer removes negative reinforcers from the act by not including others in the process. This reduces the amount of time spent with those who

represent dissatisfaction in the *self* due to the behavior. Contrastingly, the negative reinforcers actually strengthen the behavior of the self as the self spends more time alone engaged in the behavior. Positive reinforcers that are presented after the behavior is conducted, predominately from social encounters, also strengthen the desire. If punishment of the *self* by others is activated and enforced, such as removing access to credit card accounts, this negative stance becomes problematic because it is an experience that is not forgotten, the emotions associated with punishment are suppressed. This condition increases aggression in relational contexts between the *self* and those enforcing the punishment which is typically the *other*.

The excessive acquirer, therefore, is a consumer with self-gratifying goals who is operating out of awareness, who frequently engages in acquiring actions without regulation. This conformity realizes the personalized sense of normalcy that becomes routine and substantiates the numerous consequences of this goal-directed behavior that has “slipped out of awareness.” As the Parent Theme of Emotion expressed, the *EA* act produces a desired sensation of pleasure from which the physiological desire is completed. During the act, the self is rewarded with senses of satisfaction, peace, and solace. A temporary state of positive affective emotion is achieved. Sociologically, however, a negative affective state is achieved. For others who are invested in the relationship and *EA* experience, arousal and motivational intensities of conflict provoke shame in the self. *EA* is a social product that affects emotions not only of the self, but also emotions of others, generating a strong negative affective state from the behavior itself.

The Parent Theme of Space reported findings that 86% of SPs generated mild to serious clutter within inhabited and ancillary environments. The accumulation of self-

acquired tangible objects supports the claim that EA as a specifier to Hoarding Disorder (HD). However, the self-participants did not exhibit an attachment to the objects or an unwillingness to discard. Object attachment was a less important motivation of their acquiring habit. Instead, the qualitative data indicate that the acquiring experience concluded by the touching and feeling of the object was a more satiating desire.

The consequences of the intermediate category of financial Economics and Parent Theme of Time were the social costs of EA behavior. Although less than half of the SPs in this study were mild to serious debtors (48%), spending of financial resources by all selves was a self-defeating exercise. The element of time defined the behavior as autonomous and excessive which distracted selves from providing attention to others. To reiterate, the excessive acquirer strove for short-term self-interest that worked against the long-term good of the commons.

The consequences of the EA behavior not only afflict the self, but as typical of behavioral disorders, others are drawn into the experience through tumultuous emotions. The *others* experience a class of emotion that is passionate about the sociological conditions produced by the EA behavior of the *self*. The sociological analysis of emotions begins with the view that human behavior and interactions are constrained by individuals' location in social structures guided by culture (Lewis, et al., 2016). Individuals are seen as incumbents in positions within a set of positions that are regulated by systems of cultural symbols (Lewis, et al., 2016). As demonstrated in the inquiries with *others*, the cognitive appraisal and emotional arousal of their experiences of EA are in response to the interpretation of the behavior as a disturbance in established emotional, sociological, and cultural ideologies.

As the grand theme of Narcissistic Commoditism suggests, a link to narcissistic traits is demonstrated through the analysis of the qualitative data. The *self* experiences the behavior of EA through a different set of emotions, a different passion, and a different emotional vocabulary. The *self* identifies the EA experience as an emotion of embodying thoughts, judgments, and other cognitive elements (Lewis et al., 2016) from which the most basic emotions involve or come to involve intentionality as engagements with the “world” driven by the passion of a tangible commodity. The emotional act of EA is initiated by positive emotions or the seeking of positive emotions, but consequently produces negative emotions post-event.

The positive set of emotions occurs while the *self* is engaged in the behavioral act of EA. The antecedents, the triggers and cues, elicit internal sensational feelings. The acquiring act itself elicits positive feelings of joy, happiness, and solace. Some SPs describe the acquiring act as producing an “emotional high.” These emotional sensations render a physiological stimulation that becomes the cognitive dimension in the excessive acquirer. The “high” propagates the incurable passion, distinguishing the behavior from “clear cognition,” and renders judgment “confused and obscure” (Descartes; Lewis et al, 2016). The emotions experienced by the *self*, which may be particularly disturbing passions, influence one’s ability to reason. As such, the physiological account gives way to a cognitive account, and the emotions shift from being merely bodily experiences to becoming an essential ingredient to the making of decisions (Descartes; Lewis at al., 2016).

The negative emotions expressed by the *self* were shame, humiliation, and embarrassment which are induced by the background appraisals of others. Once realized by the self, shame, in particular, represses negative feelings to varying degrees (Turner,

2006) because shame attacks the self and makes a person feel small and unworthy. Some argue that once negative emotions are repressed, they will often intensify and be transmitted into new emotions. For example, Skinner (1957) maintains that shame emerges as periodic spikes of anger, which ironically leads to more shame that is repressed. This shame-anger repression is evident in the interview content of Don (OP1) as he described the trip to the antique store with his excessively acquiring wife, Peggy (SP1). As resolved, negative emotional arousal signals to the self that a generally self-conception or more situational identity is not confirmed and this distress, anxiety, anger, and sadness motivates the individual to employ a number of cognitive and behavioral strategies. Hence, the excessive acquirer seeks the positive emotional arousal of the acquisition of tangible objects.

These emotional investments of the self while engaged in EA behavior are directly correlated to the personality traits of narcissism. The self-driven behavior motivated by selfish goals seeking positive promotion of self-image is a derivative of Freud's description of an individual possessing narcissistic traits. Narcissism is "conceptualized as a dynamic self-regulatory system where positive self-views are maintained" and enhanced in large part by using the social environment (Campbell, et al., 2005, pg. 1358). According to this perspective, narcissists approach life as an arena for achieving status, success, and admiration, each of which leads to a positive self-concept and positive affective emotion. Central to this conceptualization of narcissism is a trade-off: Narcissists' efforts to enhance the self are linked to losses and distortions in their own life and the lives of others.

As scribed in the experiences of the excessive acquirer, the positive side of the column, narcissistic traits generate and maintain positive feelings surrounding the self,

including high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and high self-esteem (Campbell et al., 2005; Rose & Campbell, 2004). On the negative side of the column, the trait comes at a cost. Narcissistic excessive acquirers seek out positive social feedback before, during, and after the acquiring, but will remove themselves from conditions producing negative feedback, thus producing the autonomous act. Narcissists also experience significant interpersonal costs in the pursuit of status and esteem which may produce conflict in romantic relationship choices, compromise friendships, and diminished likeability in the eyes of others over time (Foster, Shirira, & Campbell, 2003). Taken together, these findings support the postulation of Narcissistic Commoditism confirming that the excessive acquirers in this study focused on their own interests to the exclusion of others in the self-directed, behaviorally disinhibited selfish pursuit of objects promoting their own self-image.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations and caveats should be acknowledged when interpreting and applying these research results. This section discusses results related to sampling as well as the content of the interview and observation sessions. In the case of this study, purposeful sampling was used in order to recruit OPs and SPs who could be considered knowledgeable reporters and who could increase the understanding of the excessive acquisition phenomenon. While this sample of adults was diverse in terms of sex, age, US residency, and income, they were not diverse in terms of ethnicity. The total study population was Caucasian. From a qualitative perspective, the sample represents a single social group that can be regarded as offering insight into this particular consumer behavior

which limits the American cultural viewpoint from data content within this research.

Also, because the data was gathered from participants based on recall and real-time events, standardized measures of age when emerging EA behavior actually began could not be determined. The years of behavior duration are based on sound estimates of participants. Thus, it is not known whether the participants identified with EA as adolescents or when the actual age of onset occurred.

In addition, due to the researcher's training in consumer behavior versus psychology or sociology, opportunities to engage the participants in deep-seeded emotional experiences were not always captured in the data content. Although the emerging Grand Theme of Narcissistic Commoditism during data analysis is supported by interview and observation content, additional "talk-turns" with participants exploring more personal thoughts and feelings were missed.

Lastly, although the investigator reviewed codes and employed third-party reviewers to increase reliability, the overall hierarchical structure could have been organized in different ways. It should be noted that the Parent Themes, Intermediate Categories, and subcategories that emerged in this study are not considered to capture all-inclusive content related to EA behavior. It is expected that future research on themes with excessive acquirers would likely yield overlapping content with additional themes and categories, as well as nuanced hierarchical structures. Studies that employ coding through computer analysis could be used in order to further assess emerging themes. Yet, as described within, the Parent Themes that were observed replicated some observations that have been found in past research on varying topics, such as affective emotion desires, hoarding disorder, behavioral economics, and time expenditure, suggesting that the

results of this study may contribute to an expansive phenomenon, but not to an exhaustive degree.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The nature of phenomenological research is the sensation of a vast number of future research topics uncovered by the findings. This study is no exception and the findings suggest several areas that deserve additional attention. The first opportunity is presented from the findings reporting that the SPs were consumed by EA 5.3 days of the week. This is excessive by any measure, but some may question whether excessive acquisition should be labeled as an oppositional discourse of addiction. Addiction is understood to be a behavior or substance disorder over which an individual has impaired control producing harmful consequences and as the behavior frequently repeats, denial ensues despite attempts to stop or moderate it. Therefore, it is plausible to view the behavior of EA as an addiction, but additional research would be required to make this statement.

Secondly, future investigations should address understudied populations in the United States and other cultural societies to determine if differing social groups aspire to excessively acquire. Does this behavior cross cultural borders or is it an established consumer culture specific to the population in the Western hemisphere? Does this behavior affect a younger population, possibly the millenials?

Thirdly, additional analysis of the extent of satisfaction accomplished by the self is needed to for complete understanding of the EA behavior. A frequent observation made during the data collection process was the willingness to change categories of objects. For example, one participant made a significant change from the over-obtaining of books to

over-obtaining a particular brand of shoes, Crocs. Future research identifying the reason for this change and the selection of another object to excessively acquire postulates another dimension of satisfaction, possibly the need for control.

Fourth, the excessive acquiring self obtained epistemic value from the brand experience and became the “expert” on categorical brands. The brand also contributed to the narcissistic traits of this consumer behavior. Interesting research to be conducted in the future could be the exploration of the meaning of brands to the self and the experiential affect on the behavior.

A fifth topic of extended exploration is from the perspective of retailers and marketers. The alleged millions of excessive acquirers are the brick-n-mortar retailers’ perfect customer. This consumer profile immerses into the acquiring process by responding to advertisements in various forms. This customer also needs the physical retail environment for haptic fulfillment and achievement of acquisition satisfaction. B&M retailers could capitalize on the findings from this research, but is there a corporate social responsibility (CSR)? Is this a topic for the Department of Consumer Affairs? Input from marketing ethicists would present an informed viewpoint from which additional research could be conducted on CSR.

A sixth opportunity and perhaps the most important contribution to continued research on the topic is the development of a diagnostic instrument designed from the findings and conclusions of this study that continues to identify EA. A scale would allow researchers to extend the study beyond those people willing to admit their behavior is problematic with severe consequences. As noted in the introduction discussion of this dissertation, the population of consumers afflicted with EA could potentially exceed 13

million and a means of diagnosis would help provide an estimate of the incidence of EA in the general population, making earlier intervention possible.

A final point for future research is from the social psychological perspective. Is EA actually about the Other? This research was designed to define the phenomenon of EA and the process by which the behavior occurs through the predominate discoveries from the descriptions of the self. Realizing that a prominent consequence is social costs, the affects of others on the behaviors of the self is a topic for further development. The vein of research from this viewpoint and the continued exploration of narcissistic traits could determine if EA is a developed or emerging societal phenomenon.

To conclude, the EA behavior of the *self*, as believed by the *other*, is a violation of the familial “cultural script” (Goffman, 1959; Lewis et al., 2016). This violation leads the *other* to the solicitation of repairs designed to restore the destructive ideologies to normal order. This attempt is the emotional representation of their love and concern for the *self*. When repeated attempts to restore order to the originally defined cultural script are unsuccessful and the signals to the *self* go unrecognized, the *other* reaches the state of despair, complacency, and hopelessness.

The evidence in this study reveals that the *other* is a mechanism that seeks the solution for certain problems (Perinbanayagam, 1975). As the *other* manifests itself in the EA experience, its character and content become causally significant to the emergent of the *self* and its nature (Sundararajan and Kim, 2011). With only the *self*, the *self* can live in disguise; can deny reality until the *other* becomes knowledgeable and aware of the disguise. As a result of this study, the *self* can no longer live in disguise, others are now aware.

REFERENCES

- Addiction. (2004). In *The Concise Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology and Behavioral Science*. Retrieved from <https://www.credoreference.com/entry/wileypsych/addiction>.
- Agar, M. H. (1996). *The professional stranger* (2nd ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Ainslie, G. (1992). "Picoeconomics: The Strategic Interaction of Successive Motivational States within the Person." New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Altrichter, H., Feldman, A., Posch, P. & Somekh, B. (2008). *Teachers investigate their work; An introduction to action research across the professions*. Routledge. p. 147. (2nd edition).
- American Psychiatric Association. "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th edition, DSM-IV" 1994.
- Aristotle & Apostle, H. G. (original, 1948; edited and reprinted, 1984). "Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics." Grinnell, IA: Peripatetic Press.
- Bagwell, L.S and Bernheim, B.D. (1996). "Veblen Effects in a Theory of Conspicuous Consumption." *American Economic Review*, Vol. 86, pp. 349-373.
- Baele, S. J., Sterck, O. C., and Meur, E. (2016). "Theorizing and Measuring Emotions in Conflict: The Case of the 2011 Palestinian Statehood Bid." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 60, Issue 4, pp. 718 – 747.
- Bandura, A. (1991). "Social Cognitive Theory of Self-Regulation." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Vol. 50, pp. 248 – 287.
- Baumeister, R. F. (2014). "Self-regulation, ego depletion, and inhibition." *Neuropsychologia*, Vol. 65, pp. 313-319.
- Baumeister R. F., & Bushman, B. J. (2008). "Social Psychology & Human Nature." Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education.
- Baumeister, R. F. and Alquist, J. L. (2009). "Is there a Downside to Good Self-control?" *Self and Identity*, Vol. 8, pp. 115-130.
- Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Muraven, M., Tice, D. M. (2000). Ego Depletion: Is the Active Self a Limited Resource?" *Personality Processes and Individual Differences*, Vol. 74, Issue 5, pp. 1252-1265.
- Baumeister, R. F. and Heatherton, T. F. (1996). "Self-Regulation Failure: An overview." *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 1 – 15.
- Baumeister, R. F. and Heatherton, T. F., & Tice, D. M. (1994). "Losing control: How and why people fail at self-regulation." San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

- Baumeister, R. F., & Vonasch, A. J. (2015). "Uses of self-regulation to facilitate and restrain addictive behavior." *Addictive behaviors*, Vol. 44, pp. 3-8.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2007). "Self-Regulation, Ego Depletion, and Motivation." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-14.
- Beard, G. M. (1881). "American Neuroses." New York: Arno.
- Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking*.
- Black, D. W. (2001). "Compulsive buying disorder: Definition, assessment, epidemiology, and clinical management." *CNS Drugs*, Vol. 15, pp. 17 - 27.
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). "Completing your Qualitative Dissertation: A road map from beginning to end." California: Sage Publications.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research for education* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Brodsky, A. E. (2003). *With all our strength: The revolutionary association of the women of Afghanistan*. New York: Routledge.
- Buck, R. (1985). "Prime theory: An integrated view of motivation and emotion," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 92. No. 3, pp. 389-413.
- Bryman, A. (1988). *Quantity and quality in research*.
- Buck, R. (1989). "Emotional education and mass media." In R. P. Hawkins, J. M. Wiesmann, and S. Pingree (Eds.), *Advancing communication science: Merging mass and interpersonal perspectives* (pp. 44-76). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Buck, R. (1999). "The biological affects: A typology." *Psychological Review*, 106 (2), 301-336.
- Campbell, W. K., Bush, C. P., Brunell, A. B., Shelton, J. (2005). "Understanding the Social Costs of Narcissism: The Case of the Tragedy of the Commons." *The Society for Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 10, October, pp. 1358 – 1368.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1998). "On the Self-Regulation of Behavior," Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (2000). "On the structure of behavioral self-regulation." In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner, *Handbook of Self-Regulation*. (pp 42-80). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Chambers, R. A. and Potenza, M. N. (2008). "Neurodevelopment, Impulsivity, and Adolescent Gambling." *Journal of Gambling Studies*, Vol. 19, pp. 53-84.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Chaudhuri, A. (2006). "Emotion and Reason in Consumer Behavior." Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Cieraad, Irene (1999). "At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space." 1st Edition, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Connolly, P. (1998). "Dancing to the wrong tune: Ethnography generalization and research on racism in schools." In P. Connolly & B. Troyna (Eds.), *Researching racism in education: Politics, theory, and practice* (pp. 122-139). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Cooley, C. H. (1962). "Social Organization." New York: Schocken Books, 1909, republished, 1962.
- Cottler, L.B. (1993). "Comparing DSM-II-R and ICD-10 Substance Use Disorders." *Addiction*, Vol. 88, pp. 689-696.
- Cowles, Kathleen V. (1988). "Issues in Qualitative Research on Sensitive Topics." *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 163-179.
- Creswell John W. (2014). "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches" (4th Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- deCastro V., Fong, T., Rosenthal, R. J., Tavares, H. (2007). "A Comparison of Craving and Emotional States Between Pathological Gamblers and Alcoholics." *Addiction Behaviors*, Vol. 32, pp. 1555-1564.
- Denzin, N. K. (2005). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Sage.
- DeWall, C. N., Baumeister, R. F., Stillman, T. F., & Gailliot, M. T. (2007). Violence restrained: Effects of self-regulation and its depletion on aggression. *Journal of Experimental social psychology*, 43(1), 62-76.
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (1994). American Psychiatric Association.
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (2013). American Psychiatric Association.

- Faber, Ronald J., Thomas C. O'Guinn, and Raymond Krych (1987). "Compulsive Consumption." *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, eds. Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, pp. 132-135.
- Festinger, L. (1962). *A theory of cognitive dissonance* (Vol. 2). Stanford university press.
- Fetterman, D. M. (1998). *Ethnography: Step by step* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foster, J. D., Shirira, I., & Campbell, W. K. (2003, June). *The Trajectory of Relationships Involving Narcissists and Nonnarcissists*. Poster presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Society, Atlanta, GA.
- Freud, S. (1914). On narcissism. An introduction. The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud (SE), vol. 14.
- Freud, S. (1985). "Civilisations and its Discontents," (Trans. J. Strachey) in A. Dickinson *Civilisation, Society, and Religion*, Harmondsworth: Penguin [first published in 1930].
- Frost, R.O., G. Steketee, (2010). *STUFF: Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: Boston.
- Frost, R.O., D.F. Tolin, G. Steketee, K.E. Fitch, and A. Selbo-Bruns (2009). "Excessive Acquisition in Hoarding." NIH *Public Access Author Manuscript, J. Anxiety Disorders*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 632 – 639.
- Gailliot, M. T., & Baumeister, R. F. (2007). The physiology of willpower: Linking blood glucose to self-control. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11(4), 303-327.
- Gilliam, C. M. & Tolin, D. F. (2010). "Compulsive Hoarding." *Bulletin of Menninger Clinic*, Vol. 74, No. 2, pp. 93 – 121.
- Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press.
- Glaser, B.S., & Strauss, A. (1967). "The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research." New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Goffman, E. (1959). "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.
- Grant, J. E., Potenza, M. N., Weinstein, A., Gorelick, D. A. (2010). "Introduction to Behavioral Addictions." *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, vol. 36, pp. 233-241.
- Groppe, J. D. (1984). "Reality as Enchantment --- A Theory of Repetition." *Rhetoric Review*, 2 (2), pp. 165 – 174.
- Halpern, E. S. (1983). *Auditing naturalistic inquiries: The development and application of a model* (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University).

- Hammersley, M. (Ed.). (1993). *Social research: philosophy, politics and practice*. Sage.
- Heatherton, T. F., & Ambady, N. (1993). Self-esteem, self-prediction, and living up to commitments. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *Self-esteem: The puzzle of low self-regard* (pp. 131 – 145). New York: Plenum.
- Heatherton, T. F. and Baumeister, R. F. (1996). “Self-Regulation Failure: Past, Present, and Future.” *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 90 – 98.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1929). *Science of Logic* (Vol. 2). *et seq*, 460.
- Holbrook, M. B., and Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The experiential aspects of consumption: Consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9 (September), pp. 132 – 140.
- Honig, W. K. and Staddon, J. E. R. (1977). “The Handbook of Operant Behavior.” *Chapter 7, Determinants of Reinforcement and Punishment* by W. H. Morse and R. T. Kelleher. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Howarth, C. (2002). So, you're from Brixton?' The struggle for recognition and esteem in a stigmatized community. *Ethnicities*, 2(2), 237-260.
- Hull, J. G., and Slone, L.B. (2004). “Alcohol and Self-regulation.” In R. F. Baumeister & K. D. Vohs, *Handbook of Self-regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications* (pp. 467-492). New York: Guilford Press.
- Hume, D. (1907). *Essays: Moral, political, and literary* (Vol. 1). Longmans, Green, and Company.
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP) (Oct. 2016). *Epistemic Value*. Retrieved from URL <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ep-value/>.
- Jacoby, J., Szybillo, G. J., and Berning, C. K. (1976). “Time and Consumer Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Overview.” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2, pp. 320 – 339.
- William, J. (2013). *Principles of psychology*. Hardpress Limited (Reprint of original writings).
- Kant, I. (1784). “What is enlightenment?” *On history*, 3-10.
- Kassam, K. S. and Mendes, W. B. (2013). “The Effects of Measuring Emotion: Physiological Reactions to Emotional Situations Depend on whether Someone is Asking.” *PLoS ONE* 8 (6): e64959.
- Klopper, H. (2008), “The qualitative research proposal.” *Curationis*, December, pg 50.

- Koran, L. M., Faber, R. J., Aboujauode, E., Large, M. D., & Serpe, R. T. (2006). Estimated prevalence of compulsive buying in the United States. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 163 (10), 1806 – 1812.
- Kyrios, M., Frost, R. O., and Steketee, G. (2004). Cognitions in compulsive buying and acquisition. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, Vol. 28, pp. 241 – 258.
- Lee, Raymond M. (1993). *Doing research on sensitive topics*. London: Sage.
- Levin, J. D. (1992). *Theories of the Self*. Hemisphere Publishing: Washington.
- Lincoln, YS. & Guba, EG. (1985). "Naturalistic Inquiry." Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lowen, A. L. (1983). "Narcissism: Denial of the True Self." New York: MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Marlatt, G. A., Baer, J. S., Donovan, D. M., Kivlahan, D. R. (1988). Addictive behaviors: etiology and treatment. *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 39, pp. 223 – 252.
- McElroy, S. L., Keck Jr, P. E., Pope Jr, H. G., Smith, J. M., & Strakowski, S. M. (1994). Compulsive buying: a report of 20 cases. *The Journal of clinical psychiatry*, 55(6), 242-248.
- McGregor, J. (2010). Compulsive buying disorder (CBD): conceptualization and classification. *Essay Forum*, March.
- Mead, G. H. (1932/1964). "Mind, Self, and Society." Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mills, C. W. (1940). Situated actions and vocabularies of motive. *American sociological review*, 5(6), 904-913.
- Morse, J. M., (2009). "Mixing Qualitative Methods." *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol.19 (11) 1523-1524, 2009).
- Moustakas, C. (1994). "Phenomenological research." Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mullins, Paul R. (2011). "The Archeology of Consumption." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 40, pg. 133-144.
- Muraven, M. (2008). Autonomous self-control is less depleting. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42(3), 763-770.
- Muraven, M., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). "Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: Does self-control resemble a muscle?" *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 126, pp. 247–259.

- Muraven, M., Collins, R. L., and Neinhaus, K. (2002). "Self-control and alcohol restraint: An initial application of the self-Control Strength Model." *Psychology of Addictive Behavior*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 113 – 120.
- Nordau, M. S. (1886). *Paradoxes: From the German of Max Nordau*. L. Schick.
- Nordsletten A. E., Monzani, B., de la Cruz, L. F., Iervolino, A. C., Fullana, M. A., Harris, J., Rijdsdijk, F., & Mataix-Cols, D. (2013). "Overlap and specificity of genetic and environmental influences on excessive acquisition and difficulties discarding possessions: Implications for hoarding disorder," *American Journal of Medical Genetics: Neuropsychiatric Genetics*. Part B, 162B: 380 – 387.
- O'Guinn, T. O. and R. J. Faber (1989). "Compulsive Buying: A Phenomenological Exploration." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 16, pp. 147 – 157.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., and Leech, N. L. (2007). "Sampling Designs in Qualitative Research: Making the Sampling Process More Public." *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 238-254.
- Palys, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, 2, 697-698.
- Peck, J. and Childers, T. L. (2003). "Individual Differences in Haptic Information Processing: The 'Need for Touch' Scale." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 30, pp. 430 – 442.
- Perinbanayagam, R. S. (1975). "The Significance of Others in the Thought of Alfred Schutz, G. H. Mead, and C. H. Cooley." *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 500-521.
- Randall, S. and Koppenhaver, T. (2004). Qualitative Data in Demography: The sound of silence and other problems." *Demographic Research*, August, Vol. 11, Article 3, pp. 57-94.
- Reith, G. (2004). "Consumption and its Discontents: Addiction, Identity, and the Problems of Freedom." *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 44, Issue 2, pp. 283–300.
- Rodgers, B. L. and Cowles, K. V. (1993). "The Qualitative Research Audit Trail: A Complex Collection of Documentation." *Research in Nursing and Health*, January, 1993, pp. 219 – 226.
- Rook, D. (1987). "The Buying Impulse." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, pp. 189-199.
- Rose, P., & Campbell, W. K. (2004). "Greatness Feels Good: A Telic Model of Narcissism and Subjective Well-Being." In S. P. Shohov (Ed.), *Advances in Psychology Research* (Vol. 31, pp. 1 – 15). Hauppauge, NY: Nova.
- Rothbauer, Paulette (2008) "Triangulation." In Given, Lisa (Ed.), "The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods." Sage Publications. pp. 892-894.

- Rounsaville, B. J., Bryant, K., Babor, T., Kranzler, H. and Kadden, R. (1993). "Cross System Agreement for Substance Use Disorders: DSM-III-R, DSM-IV and ICD-10," *Addiction*, Vol. 88, pp. 337-348.
- Rubin, A. (2000). "Standards for Rigor in Qualitative Inquiry." *Research on Social Work Practice*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 173-178.
- Schlosser, S., Black, D. W., Repertinger, S., Freet, D. (1994) Compulsive buying: demography, phenomenology, and comorbidity in 46 subjects. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, Vol. 16, pp. 205-212.
- Schmeichel, B. J., & Baumeister, R. F. (2004). "Self-regulatory Strength." In R. F. Baumeister & K. D. Vohs, *Handbook of Self-regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications* (pp. 115-130). New York: Guilford Press.
- Scheier, M. F. & Carver, C. S. (1988). "A model of behavioral self-regulation: Translating intention into action." In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 21, pp. 303 – 346, New York Academic Press.
- Schwandt, T. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schutz, Alfred (1967). "The Phenomenology of the Social World." Evanston: Northwestern University.
- Shaffir, W. B. , Stebbins, R. A., & Turowetz, A. (1980). "Fieldwork experience: Qualitative approaches to social research." New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Skinner, B. F. (1948). "Superstition in the pigeon." *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 38, pp. 168-172.
- Skinner, B. F. (1957). "The experimental analysis of behavior." *American Scientist*, Vol. 45, pp. 343-371.
- Slater, Don (1997). *Consumer Culture and Modernity*. Blackwell Publishers: Malden, MA.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). "Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques." Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). "Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed.)." Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sundararajan, Louise and Kim, Chulmin (2011). "Beyond I-You-Me: An Empirically Supported Formulation of the Triadic Self." *American Sociology*, Vol. 42, pp. 220-231.

- Tanford, S., & Penrod, S. (1984). Social Influence Model: A formal integration of research on majority and minority influence processes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(2), 189.
- Timpano, K.R., Exner, C., Glaesmer, H., Rief, W., Keshaviah, A., Braehler, E., & Wilhelm, S. (2011). "The epidemiology of the proposed hoarding disorder: Exploration of the acquisition specifier, associated features, and distress." *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, Vol. 72, No. 6, pp. 780-786.
- Vohs, Kathleen D. and Faber, Ronald J. (2007). "Availability Affects Impulse Buying." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 537-547.
- Vohs, K. D., & Heatherton, T. F. (2000). Self-regulatory failure: A resource-depletion approach. *Psychological science*, 11(3), 249-254.
- Wallendorf, M. and Arnould, E. J. (1988). "My favorite things: A cross-cultural inquiry into object attachment, possessiveness, and social linkage." *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, March, pp. 531-547.
- Wegner, D.M. (1994). "Ironic processes of mental control." *Psychological Review*, Vol. 101, pp. 34-52.
- Weiner, N. (1948). *Cybernetics*.
- West, R. (2001). "Editorial: Theories of Addiction." *Addiction*, Vol. 96, pp. 3 -13.
- Woods, D. W., & Kanter, J. W. (Eds.). (2007). "*Understanding behavior disorders: A contemporary behavioral perspective*." Reno, NV: Context Press.
- Woodward, I. (2007). *Understanding material culture*. Sage.
- Worden, J. K., Flynn, B. S., Merrill, D. G., Waller, J. A., & Haugh, L. D. (1989). "Preventing Alcohol-impaired driving through community self-regulation training." *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 79, No. 3, pp. 287-290.
- Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative analysis of content. In B. Wildemuth (Ed.), *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). "Attaining Self-Regulation: A Social Cognitive Perspective." In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner, *Handbook of Self-Regulation*. (pp 13- 35). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Zimmerman, B. J., & Kitsantas, A. (1996). Self-regulated learning of a motoric skill: The role of goal setting and self-monitoring. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 8(1), 60-75.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT Excessive Acquisition: Self

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a research study on excessive acquisition. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of your requested involvement, and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this research study is to gain insight into the nature of excessive acquisition behavior through the lived experiences of the individual. To offer an explanation of how you might experience excessive acquisition, you may frequently feel the overwhelming desire to buy merchandise that you do not need. For example, you may have four or five of the same thing, but feel like you need another one or two for any apparent reason. This desire is a persistent behavior from which you are only temporarily satisfied before the pursuit begins again.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Your involvement will include the following:

1. An introductory in-depth interview will be conducted in-person with the investigator. The duration of this interview is determined by your responses, but should not extend beyond 2-1/2 hours in length. The meeting location will be a café, coffee shop, or similar environment that is most convenient to you and meets your privacy needs. This interview will be audio taped for accurate transcribing and analysis.
2. Three telephone interviews conducted with the investigator. These interviews will be on a scheduled day, once a week and will be a discussion of your weekly experience. The duration of the telephone conversations will be determined by your responses, but should not extend beyond 1-1/2 hours in length. These conversations will be audio taped for accurate transcribing and analysis.
3. An exit in-depth interview will be conducted in-person with the investigator. This interview will be a discussion of your experience. The duration will be determined by your responses, but should not extend beyond 2-1/2 hours in length. The meeting location will be most convenient to you and meet your privacy needs. This interview will be audio taped for accurate transcribing and analysis.

RISKS

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or methods being conducted by me, the investigator. Our verbal discussions will be audio taped to assist in accurately capturing your insights in your own words. A transcriptionist will transfer the audio recordings into text. No names will be included in the recordings. If you feel uncomfortable with the recording device, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

The interviews may cause you to experience anxiety, embarrassment, or discomfort as you recall, re-examine, and reveal your experiences. If you begin to feel uncomfortable about answering some of the questions, you are welcome to skip those questions and I will proceed with the next topic of inquiry. If at any time during this research study you become concerned about your emotional status and you want to seek counseling, contact information will be made available to you for psychological or social services.

BENEFITS

There are no anticipated direct benefits to you from your participation in this study. The insights gathered from you and other participants will be used in the development of a qualitative dissertation and academic journal articles contributing to the holistic understanding of consumer behavior. You will receive a copy of the completed report, if you desire.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Risk of a breach in confidentiality will be minimized with data and documents being stored in a secure location. In addition, your name and names of others mentioned in your interviews will be assigned a fake name assigned to a code key that will be maintained for 1 year following the conclusion of the study. Audio recordings will remain in a secured location for 1 year following the conclusion of the study after which time they will be destroyed / deleted. All collected data will be stored securely with access allowed only by the investigator, Melanie Doss; the College Department Head and Doctoral Committee Chair, Dr. Ann Fairhurst; and a transcriptionist unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact the researcher, Melanie Doss, at 110 Jessie Harris Building, 1215 W. Cumberland Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37996 and (865) 599-6473. You may also contact Dr. Ann Fairhurst, (865) 974-

2141. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, only the collected portion will be analyzed for use within the study.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Excessive Acquisition: Other

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a study on excessive acquisition. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of your requested involvement, and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this research study is to gain insight into the nature of excessive acquisition through your lived experiences. Excessive acquisition is currently understood to be the frequent and overwhelming desire to buy something a person really does not need and may already have in abundance. For example, an excessive acquirer may have four or five of the same thing, but feels like one or two more are needed for any apparent reason. In addition to studying the excessive acquirer, I am also interested in learning what it is like to live with or be close friends with an excessive acquirer.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

Your involvement will include the following:

An in-depth interview will be conducted in-person or by telephone with the investigator. The duration of this interview is determined by your responses but should not extend beyond 2-1/2 hours in length. If the interview is in-person, the meeting location will be a café, coffee shop, or similar environment that is most convenient to you and meets your privacy needs. This interview will be audio taped for accurate transcribing and analysis.

RISKS

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or research methods being conducted. Our verbal discussions will be audio taped to assist in accurately capturing your insights in your own words. A transcriptionist will transfer the audio recordings to text. No names will be included in the recordings. If you feel uncomfortable with the recording device, you may ask that it be turned off at any time.

The interviews may cause you to experience anxiety, embarrassment, or discomfort as you recall, re-examine, and reveal your experiences. If you begin to feel uncomfortable about answering some of the questions, you are welcome to skip those questions and I will proceed with the next topic of inquiry. If at any time during this research study you become concerned about your emotional status and you want to seek counseling, contact information will be made available to you for psychological or social services.

BENEFITS

There are no anticipated direct benefits to you from your participation in this study. The insights gathered from you and other participants will be used in the development of a qualitative dissertation and academic journal articles contributing to the holistic understanding of consumer behavior. You will receive a copy of the completed report, if you desire.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Risk of a breach in confidentiality will be minimized with data and documents being stored in a secure location. In addition, your name and names of others mentioned in your interviews will be assigned a fake name assigned to a code key that will be maintained for 1 year following the conclusion of the study. Audio recordings will remain in a secured location for 1 year following the conclusion of the study after which time they will be destroyed / deleted. All collected data will be stored securely with access allowed only by the investigator, Melanie Doss; the College Department Head and Doctoral Committee Chair, Dr. Ann Fairhurst; and a transcriptionist unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study) you may contact the researcher, Melanie Doss, at 110 Jessie Harris Building, 1215 W. Cumberland Avenue, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37996 and (865) 599-6473. You may also contact Dr. Ann Fairhurst, (865) 974-2141. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-7697.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without concern. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without concern. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, only the collected portion will be analyzed for use within the study.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C.

Research Interview Guide

Excessive Acquisition: Self

Introduction

I sincerely appreciate you agreeing to meet with me today. As you are aware, I am conducting research on excessive acquisition of which we have talked about previously in a brief telephone conversation. Our previous discussions have focused on establishing a general understanding of excessive acquisition through your lived experiences. I would like to continue this discussion with you by talking in greater detail about some of these experiences. Upon completion of this initial interview, I will be calling you once a week for three weeks to learn more about your experiences. Then, we will meet one more time at the end of three weeks. At this final meeting, I would like to hear your thoughts about your experiences and the values of this study to you.

Discussion of process

- Data collection by recorded interview
- Weekly telephone calls for three weeks
- Data analyses
- Data storage and destruction
- Confidentiality
- Right to end interview at any time
- Review of interview transcript
- Copy of Report

Interview Format

Ask questions to gain context about the participant.

Ex: Let's begin by summarizing some of your experiences and how excessive acquisition has affected your life.

Uncover:

- How she views excessive acquisition behavior
- How she believes her behavior has affected others in her life
- How it fits into every day experiences and special experiences
- What she sees as her role in this behavior
- How she sees this behavior affecting her relationships
- How she views this behavior's effect on the family unit and the living environment
- What she identifies as the consequences of this behavior

- What she defines as her motivators
- How she describes her experiences, grand tour
- How she feels as she is engaged in the experience
- How she manages and copes with the consequences

General Questions

Uncover views on:

- Insight to this behavior as the “self”
- Long-term and short-term effects of this behavior on herself
- Management and coping mechanisms
- Successful/Unsuccessful efforts to change the behavior
- Viewpoint of “others” excessive acquisition

Specific Experiences and Social Processes

Uncover specific, lived experiences with any of the above, preferably recent experiences. Focus the conversation on the nature of the experience and the processes involved. By processes, focus on the psychological as well as social processes. Try to discover:

- The problems the participant is trying to solve
- The way she goes about solving those problems; who she interacts with, when and how
- The way she feels about these efforts
- The family unit issues at stake for the specific experience
- The resources needed to solve the problem
- The way she marshals or generates these resources
- Unique engagement stories

Probes

Remember to constantly probe for details using non-verbal active listening cues as well as words like “tell me more about that,” “what did that mean to you?” and “please go on.”

Wrap-up

Thank you very much for sharing your insights today. I know I learned a lot from our conversation. I will be continuing this research over the year and will provide you with a report of my findings, if you wish. If any other thoughts come to mind, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPENDIX D.

Research Interview Guide

Excessive Acquisition: Other

Introduction

I sincerely appreciate you agreeing to meet with me today. As you are aware, I am conducting research on excessive acquisition of which we have talked about, impromptu, on a number of occasions. My focus has predominately been on the consumer *who experiences* this behavior, this being your [spouse, offspring, companion, friend]. However, I am interested in exploring the perceptions of this behavior through a different lens, through your perspective, as one who is *affected by* this behavior.

Discussion of process

- Data collection by recorded interview
- Data analyses
- Data storage and destruction
- Review of transcript
- Confidentiality
- Right to end interview at any time
- Right to copy of final report

Interview Format

Ask questions to gain context about the participant.

Ex: Let's begin by you telling me a little about yourself and how excessive acquisition affects your life.

Uncover:

- How [he] views [his wife's] excessive acquisition behavior
- How he views excessive acquisition as the "other"
- How it fits into every day experiences and special experiences
- What he sees as his role in this behavior
- How he sees this behavior affecting their relationship
- How he views this behavior's effect on the family unit and the living environment
- What he identifies as the consequences of this behavior
- How he manages and copes

General Questions

Uncover views on:

- Insight to this behavior as the “other”
- Long-term and short-term effects of this behavior on others
- Management and coping mechanisms of others
- Successful/Unsuccessful efforts to change the behavior
- “Other’s” excessive acquisition or other behaviors

Specific Experiences and Social Processes

Determine specific, lived experiences as with any of the above, preferably recent experiences. Focus the conversation on the nature of the experience and the processes involved. By processes, focus on the psychological as well as social processes. Try to discover:

- The problem the participant is trying to solve
- The way he addresses problems and the methods of solving those problems; who he interacts with, when and how
- The way the participant feels about these efforts
- The family unit issues at stake for the specific experience
- The resources needed to solve the problem
- The way he marshals or generates these resources
- Unique engagement stories

Probes

Remember to constantly probe for details using non-verbal active listening cues as well as words like “tell me more about that,” “what did that mean to you?” and “please go on.”

Wrap-up

Thank you very much for sharing your insights today. I know I learned a lot from our conversation. I will be continuing this research over the year and will provide you with a report of my findings, if you wish. If any other thoughts come to mind, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Do you have anything else you wish to share with us at this time?

May I contact you in the future if we have other follow-up questions?

APPENDIX E.

Counselor Resource List Participant Referral Assistance

The list of resources reference professionals in the East Tennessee region. For study participants located outside this specified region, the listed resources can be contacted for referrals in desired cities.

- a. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Agency
Paula J. Alexander, LCSW, CGC, CT, BCD
Clinical Social Work / Therapist
5410 Homberg Dr
Suite 18
Knoxville, Tennessee 37919
(865) 498-9999

- b. Mindful Center of Knoxville
Claudio Barrientos, Director
1400 Dowell Springs Boulevard, Suite 100
Knoxville, TN 37909
865.219.3210

VITA

Melanie Doss was born on November 3, 1962 in Knoxville, Tennessee. She graduated from Doyle High School, Knoxville in 1980 and attended the University of Tennessee, Knoxville during the years of 1980 to 1986 earning her Bachelors of Science and Masters of Science degrees in Interior Design. After receiving her B.S. degree in 1984 and while pursuing her M.S. degree starting in 1984 and concluding in 1986, she began working as a professional interior designer in the southeast region of the United States. During her thirty-year career, she has earned numerous awards for her contribution to the design industry in the categories of corporate, healthcare, religious, government, intermediate and higher education architecture and interiors. Melanie has also been an adjunct faculty in Interior Design, Interior Architecture, Art, and Marketing curricula in the higher education programs at UT Knoxville, East Tennessee State University, Pellissippi State Community College, and UT Chattanooga.

Her education and extended experience in the built interior environment provided the background from which her dissertation topic evolved. She began to question why people would destruct the interior spaces in which they occupied with the excessive accumulation of material objects. Understanding that this initial concept is described as Hoarding Disorder, the research conducted to date on this topic discussed only the inability to discard the tangibles rather than the acquiring process of over obtaining the tangibles. Thus, Melanie realized the foundational gap and postulated the concept of Excessive Acquisition as an individualized phenomenon. She began the pursuit of a PhD at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 2010 and successfully concluded the journey in the

fall of 2016 formally graduating in the spring of 2017. Her dissertation produced the foundational definition of the excessive acquisition phenomenon and the behavioral process model resulting in the proprietary Grand Theme of Narcissistic Commoditism.