Collecting in a Consumer Culture

Russell W. Belk,
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John F. Sherry, Jr.,
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ABSTRACT

In contemporary America, collecting has become a pervasive phenomenon that reflects many aspects of the modern consumer culture. In this chapter, we define collecting, review its history, and present a grounded theory of its meanings, motivations, moments, and before concluding with an assessment of its social desirability. Throughout, we draw on the relevant literature and data supplied by informants both during and after the Consumer Behavior Odyssey. Thus, we move between empirical and conceptual approaches to the topic, as was true in the development of this research project over its five year history to date.

INTRODUCTION

Asked what things they would save in a fire, people we have interviewed commonly cite a number of "special" objects, including photographs, keepsakes, heirlooms, and valuables. It is no coincidence that many of these objects constitute collections that have been purposely and systematically gathered and preserved. For, unlike ordinary objects of consumption, collections tend to take on an importance and comparability in some respects to that of family members. Collected objects are often anthropomorphized, fetishized, and personified until they define and occupy the little world of an intimate family in which the collector reigns as an absolute sovereign.

Consider the case of Sigmund Freud - certainly not a typical human being, but a reasonably representative collector. Although our knowledge of his collecting behavior is secondary - based on written accounts and interviews with the curators of the Freud Museums on Hampstead Heath in London and at 19 Berggasse in Vienna -- we offer the following synopsis of Freud as collector. Starting two months after the death of his father in 1896, the then 40-year-old Freud began to amass a collection of Roman, Greek, Assyrian, and Chinese antiquities that eventually numbered approximately 2300 pieces. These objects crowded two rooms where he wrote and consulted with patients. When Edmund Engelman took secret photographs of this collection before Freud fled to England to escape the Nazi occupation of Vienna in 1938, he described the decor in this way:

antiquities filled every available spot in the room. I was overwhelmed by the masses of figurines which overflowed every surface. To the left of the door was a large bookcase covered with tall ancient statuettes. At the corner, at the end of the wall facing these statuettes, was Freud's chair, almost hidden by the head of the couch.... To the left and right of the door were glass showcases filled with hundreds of antiquities set up in several rows; every bit of cabinet space was filled.... I was amazed by the unbelievable number of art objects (Engelman 1976, pp. 137-138).

Similarly, Jobst (1978) suggests that Freud's office took on a museum-like appearance, and Peter Gay notes that:

The and overpowering impression that Freud's habitat makes on the visitor is the profusion of things. The sculptures, finally, have their assigned shelves and their glass cases, but they intrusively invade surfaces intended for other purposes: bookshelves, tops of cabinets, writing tables, even Freud's much used desk. The whole is an embarrassment of objects (1976, p. 17).

The hundreds of statuettes in this collection are of animal and human figures that Freud arranged facing him at close-packed ranks like soldiers on parade" (Gay 1976, p. 17). Friends and family noted that the fortunate transfer of Freud's collection from wartime Vienna made his adjustment to England far easier, as he was surrounded by familiar loved objects. In a letter to his biographer, Stefan Zweig, Freud claimed that "despite my much vaunted frugality I have sacrificed a great deal for my collection of Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities, have actually read more archaeology than psychology" (quoted in Freud, Freud, and Grubrich-Simitis 1978, p. 234). Although he is far better known for his writings, clearly these objects played a major role in Freud's preoccupation with collecting, which he found useful for his patients during his travels and developed relationships with dealers who brought him objects they knew would be of interest. In Me Psychopathology of Everyday Life, Freud described how, due to his preoccupation with collecting, he would often misread vaguely similar shop signs in foreign cities as proclaiming "antiquities" and "this displays the questing spirit of the collector," (119-120). Freud's student and colleague Ernest Jones (1955) describes how, after making a new acquisition, Freud would first bring the piece to the dining room table so that he could admire it during the meal. After placing the pieces in his study or consultation room, he would rearrange them. According to a long-time maid, before beginning work each day Sigmund Freud would bid "good morning" to a favorite Chinese figure on his desk (Spector 1975). He was also in the habit of holding, examining, and fondling the statues (Spector 1975, p. 21; Sachs 1945, p. 101). As Gay (1989) concludes:
Collecting stamps, or china— or Greek and Egyptian and Chinese statuettes, for that matter— part preserves, early erotic pleasures; Freud, we are told, liked to gaze at the antiquities on his desk and, at times, moving from looking to touching, would stroke his favorites. But there is more passion to it still; collecting, as anyone who has ever collected can testify, gives power. To possess a complete collection of certain stamps or of one’s reviews or letters to the editor, is, in some intimate fashion, a way of commanding the world (p. 18).

Considering his extreme devotion to the clutter of little ancient icons with which he surrounded himself, Freud was remarkably silent on the subjects of collecting in general and his own collecting in particular. However, he did offer one brief interpretation:

The core of paranoia is the detachment of the libido from objects. A reverse course is taken by the collector who directs his surplus libido onto an inanimate object: a love of things (Freud 1908, quoted in Gamwell 1988).

We shall return to this interpretation and to Freud's own collecting later in this paper. For the present, it is sufficient to note that Freud's collecting activity and his comments on collecting both support the observation that a key feature of collecting consists of elevating possessions in the collection to an extraordinary status not bestowed upon the vast majority of objects in the collector's life.

METHOD AND SAMPLE

Collection of primary data materials for this project began during the summer spent traveling on the Odyssey. However, reading of the literature on collection, some of which reports empirical findings, began prior to the Odyssey and guided the questions asked in interviews. Many of our data on collecting were gathered subsequent to the summer of travel. The data are primarily from people who are currently collectors. Some of these data are based on participant observation of action in context. The data describe in detail collectors’ perspectives on their action and are less rich with regard to perspectives in action (Lehrer and Lidz 1974). Because of their pride in the collection, we encountered little resistance on the part of collectors who were shifting their focus from the objects themselves to the process of collecting. Most collectors in the sample were interviewed once, although a few were studied in sufficient depth over time to permit the construction of case study materials.

Most people included in the sample fall into the category of avid collectors, since a substantial portion of the sample was initially contacted through collector shows. Other members of the sample were identified through self-designation. Many interviews were conducted at collectors’ homes, while others were conducted in the midst of collectors’ shows. Purposive sampling was used to add fine art collectors and various demographic groups to the sample, however, this was not a technique employed throughout the project. The approach used was in part the grounded theory suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and in part an attempt at the thick description and thick suggested by Denzin (1989). In total, over 190 collectors are included in the sample representing differing geographic regions within the U.S. They also represent a broad spectrum of objects collected in terms of breadth of appeal, price, and availability.

Talking to collectors of anything rather than limiting the sample to collectors of particular objects (as is prevalent in studies of collectors) shifted our focus from the objects themselves (often the focus for the collector) to the process and meaning of collecting as a consumption activity. We first use these data and the literature to construct and frame a definition of collecting.

DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

Collecting is a specialized form of consumer behavior (i.e., acquiring, using, and disposing of products). Collecting is inherently acquisitive because its primary focus is on gathering more of something (Brown 1988). In the most common contemporary form of collecting, the objects collected are acquired through marketplace purchase; used— through maintenance, display, and related curatorial activities; and disposed of only at death. Rather than viewing shopping as a necessary or even odious task to be minimized or avoided, collectors commit to a constant and continual shopping trip in pursuit of objects for the collection. As Herrmann (1972, p. 22) notes, “The genuine stilled once and for all any inhibition against spending money on the-objects of his choice.” Like Freud, the collector is ever vigilant for hidden treasures in the marketplace.

Lehrer (1990, p. 58) offers this view of the collector’s quest:
Envy us (collectors) because all our car trips down country lanes and "blue" highways are treasure hunts .... Envy us because every mail delivery has the potential for having the note about or Polaroid shot of an item we have been looking for desperately .... Envy the adventures we have while on The Hunt .... But mostly envy us for the Thrill of The Find.

Collectors are engaged in a competition that, for some, becomes an heroic mission in an indifferent or scornful consumer activities that match the passion of collecting as a mode of consumer behavior. And collecting is perhaps consumption activity that is also a form of production. At its best, collecting creates and produces a unique, valuable contribution to the world. For example, had not the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Homer been collected and preserved, the world would be the poorer for their lack.

We take collecting to be the selective, active, and longitudinal acquisition, possession, and disposition of an inter-related set of differentiated objects (material things, ideas, beings, or experiences) that contribute to and derive extraordinary meaning from that this set is perceived to constitute. This definition coheres with that of Belk (1982) and Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry (1988). It is also generally consistent with prior definitions such as the following:

"collection...is "an obsession organized." One of the distinctions between possessing and collecting is that the latter implies order, system, perhaps completion. The pure collector’s interest is not bounded by worth of the objects of his desire; whatever they cost, he must have them (Aristides 1988, p. 330).

To collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy.... and a collection is what has been gathered (Alsop 1982, p. 70).

A collection is basically determined by the nature of the value assigned to the objects, or ideas possessed. If the predominant value of an object or idea for the person possessing it is intrinsic, i.e., if it is valued primarily for use, or purpose, or aesthetically pleasing quality, or other value inherent in the object or accruing to it by whatever circumstance of custom, training, or habit, it is not a collection. If the predominant value is representative or representational, i.e., if said object or idea is valued chiefly for the relation it bears to some other object or idea, or objects, or ideas, such as being one of a series, part of a whole, a specimen, then it is the subject of a collection (Durost 1932, p. 10).

To qualify as a collection, the items collected must have some similarity and interrelationship. By the collection each piece is transformed from its original function of toy, icon, bowl, picture, what ever object with new meaning -- a member of an assemblage that is greater than the sum of its parts (Kron 1983, pp. 193-194).

Each of these definitions shares with ours the specification that the collector views the collection as an entity due to its components. The basis for this unity is identified by labeling the set as "a collection of ___" and is further defined by that the collector consciously or unconsciously heeds in adding to the collection.

While a collection remains a collection when additions stop, a collector ceases to be a collector under these conditions. The collection "dead" (Freud, Freud, and Grubrich-Simitis 1976, pp. 313). Although the original collector may continue to preserve and display the dead collection, such curating activity is then separated from collecting activity. As the most recent collecting activity recedes past, the passive possessor becomes less and less of a collector. In specifying that the collector is an active agent we also eliminate the passive recipient of previously collected objects provided by others without personal choice.

Similarly, to acquire a number of potentially related objects without keeping them (in tangible or symbolic form) is to be acquisitive without collecting. The ingredient missing in this case is the possessive construction of a set. For instance, we have interviewed world travelers who do not perceive their travel destinations as a set, as well as other travelers who consciously collect an expanding experienced within a specified domain (e.g., continents visited). As with travel experiences, a number of car collectors whom we have interviewed do not have all of their collection physically at hand. Rather, because of the expense of acquisition and serial collections involving ownership of only one or a few automobiles at one time. Nevertheless, because they
acquisitions as part of set, they qualify as collectors. Ownership (or at least a proprietary feeling) also appears to number of our informants express sentiments similar to those of a stamp-collector interviewed by Danet and Katriel.

It's mine (the collection). I can do with it what I want. I can arrange it in the album the way I want it in exhibits (p. 263).

Since ownership or possession is required for collecting, a museum curator who uses other people's money to n museum is not a collector unless he or she has strong proprietary feelings for the objects acquired. However, th regarded as an institutional collector if the other requirements for collecting are fulfilled. While groups, families, whole cultures may engage in collecting behavior, it is not uncommon that it is individuals within these institutino proprietary feelings required to be considered individual collectors. Thus, a couple or family may refer to "our I usually "mine."

Another similarity between our definition of collecting and many of those just quoted is that they jointly note that experience enters a collection it becomes non-ordinary, non-utilitarian (at least in the case of formerly utilitarian "special." In a term we will develop more thoroughly later in this chapter, the collected item becomes sacred (Bu 1989). While fine art items and some other aesthetic objects (such as books and recordings) may enter a collection and as their extraordinary sacred character, other items are sacralized when they first enter a collection. This normally their former functions as, for instance, advertisements, stones on a beach, stamps for paying postage charges, or activity. Even those collected objects that retain their original uses (e.g., antique furniture, cars, jewelry, hats, rec more than functional products, are treated with extreme care, and are often only employed ritually or on specia example, someone who owns a rare recording might tape it for everyday listening and store the original for safe-case and the objects are instead used routinely or casually without regard for their special significance, we do no collection.

Our definition is more expansive than the others mentioned above in going beyond material objects to include e as collectibles. We believe that the theoretical model developed in this paper applies equally well to collections o intangibles as well as both inanimate and animate objects. (Here, the latter refers to plants and animals, occasion of persons -- as in the dwarfs who were once a part of royal collections, the wives of Henry VIII, or the husband comments on the opprobrium now attached to "collecting" people, see Danet and Katriel 1989).

Our view involves several further differences from some of the prior definitions. We do not insist that collecting formal classification, as do Phillips (1962) and Humphrey (1983), for instance. Rather, as will become evident, we classification defines one of two major types of collecting; one which epitomizes a common model of science, b another type of c.Alecting involving connoisseurship. There must be some systematic pattern displayed (even if adding items to any collection, but deciding selectively whether an item belongs in the collection (or how to disp classificatory act any more than deciding whether to add an article of clothing to one's wardrobe (or deciding ho act of classification.

We also do not view collecting as a necessarily obsessive act, as does Aristides (1988). While it may become obs addictive, this need not happen. Furthermore, as argued in a later evaluative section, these undesirable labels are clinical in nature. Love, for example, can sometimes be seen as involving an obsessive behavioral pattern as well characterized less favorably than love, we did not prejudge it to be either a positive or negative phenomenon.

In summary then, we define collecting as a form of acquisition and possession that is selective, active, and longtime is that the objects, ideas, beings, or experiences derive larger meaning by their assemblage into a set. We turn no collecting and other phenomena.

Accumulating, Hoarding, and Investing

Collecting must also be distinguished from several other phenomena with which it is sometimes confused. The -possessions, ideas, or experiences is excluded from our definition of collecting, first, because it lacks selectivity (of the lack of systematic selectivity in acquiring them, items in an accumulation also lack unity and defy categori
that the accumulation is merely a passive refusal to dispose of items that may have entered our possession, an agency needed for collecting. Unlike collected items that may bring pleasure and pride in possession -- and even motive for accumulation is often security-seeking (Jensen 1963; Laughlin 1956; von Holst 1967, p. 3) -- accumulations clutter and to cause conflict, displeasure, or even shame (Phillips 1962; Novey and Novey 1987; Warren and Ostrom 1988a; Paton 1988). While collectors frequently recount how they accumulated items for the winter -- lack the appreciation of any interactions within a set of interrelated objects (Stewart 1984, p. 188).

Anonymous author notes:

A used postage stamp is to a man what a bone without flesh is to a dog: but the collector of postage stamps goes further than the dog, in that he prefers an old postage stamp to a new one, while no dog, however ardent a collector of bones without flesh, would not rather have a bone with flesh on it. There is more money, human collector, however, since he always has before him the ideal of a complete collection, who has probably, ever dreamed of acquiring specimens of all the different kinds of bones that there are in the world (Wohnston and Beddow 1986, pp. 13-15, quoting from an anonymous article in The Times of London, 12, 1910; also quoted in Rowed 1920, pp. 6-7).

Unlike accumulation, hoarding is selective and active. But it differs from collecting by focusing on utilitarian items, they may be needed in the future (McKinnon, Smith, and Hunt 1985). Because the items hoarded are typically food staples, cleaning supplies), they are unlikely to take on the sacred character of collected objects. Simmel (1907/1971) distinguishes the miser's hoard and its lack of sacredness. However both of these assumptions are challenged by the extreme case of a miser who starves in order to save still more money (Belk and Wallendorf 1990b; Michaels 1985; Schwartz and Wolf 1958). But a further distinction between collecting and hoarding is that collecting involves differentiated objects and tends to follow the rule "no two alike." while h oorders want many of the same thing (Danet and Katriel 1989). By this criterion we can still classify the self-sacrificing miser as a hoarder rather than a collector.

Further, we do not regard as collectors those who acquire a set of items solely as an investment (e.g., Duggleby 1987). Certainly a collection may ultimately be sold due to financial need or a change in taste (e.g., Christ 1965). If the sole purpose for acquisition and possession, the items acquired are likely to lack the sacredness and unity found in the collection and those that are merchandise are kept separate. We find that this is common and that such dealers generally have firm rules that objects cannot from the collection and the saleable stock of merchandise. The most prominent exception is that when the dealer upgrades superseded items may then be sold. Another exception is when a dealer becomes disenchanted with an entire collection and in order to undertake a new and different collecting enterprise. For dealers who also collect, price is a much more motivating collecting than in the case of acquiring items for the dealer's personal collection.

Care is needed in assessing investment motives however, since investment is sometimes given as an emic rationale especially when collectors fear they will be ridiculed if their love of the collection is instead offered as a rationale (Bloom 1989; Olmsted 1910; Cooper (1963), Impey and Colonna 1963). While collectors frequently recount lore concerning the fortunes amassed by other collector not maintain their purchase prices, much less increase in value (Beards 1987). For this reason many collecting guide financial newspapers, advise that new collectors pursue a collection for its intrinsic pleasure and not for expect not for expect. Still, for a few collectors at least, positive investment consequences can derive from passionate advocacy of an a collector has managed not only to indulge his obsession for Rodin sculptures, but also to build both the scholar reinforcing the value of the pieces (Cox 1978).

HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF COLLECTING

The history of collecting that follows is necessarily a brief sketch drawn with a broad brush. For more detailed treatments the reader might consult such excellent sources as Alsop (1982), Cabanne (1961), Caxton Publishing (1974), Cooper (1963), and the work of others. The history of collecting that follows is necessarily a brief sketch drawn with a broad brush. For more detailed treatments the reader might consult such excellent sources as Alsop (1982), Cabanne (1961), Caxton Publishing (1974), Cooper (1963), and the work of others.
MacGregor (1985), Moulin (1967/1987), Rheims (1961), Rigby and Rigby (1944), Saarinen (1958), Stillinger (1980), and von Holst (1967). However, for the most part, these treatments limit their foci to fine art collecting. The reasons for this bias in favor of the rich and elite collector are not difficult to discern. As Johnson (1986) notes:

Demand for certain types of objects is linked to taste and fashion.... Ownership of art objects is a personal status demonstrating wealth and discrimination. Possession of desirable objects confers aesthetic pleasure and is a form of investment. Collectors, dealers and institutions compete them.... Rich collectors can achieve renown merely by assembling collections of esteemed I work philanthropic act of donating a collection to a museum confers fame in that the name of the prev forever linked with the bequest and in some western countries has the added benefit of tax conc

In addition, it is art objects that most often are acquired through plunder, serving as trophies of conquest and vi powerful nations and individuals (Chamberlin 1983). And it is collections of art objects, rather than more humble and other repositories have been inclined to preserve. Furthermore, published biographies and television treatments are most likely to on the rich and famous who are the collectors of such art. As a result, the extant history of collecting is strongly collections.

History

The presence of unusual pebbles in 80,000-year-old Cro-Magnon caves in France suggests that collecting may have human history as art (Neal 1980). The more widespread emergence of collections from hoards and accumulations with the growth of civilizations supporting art and science. Ancient Mesopotamian royal collections in Chaldea, Assyria included gems, writings on clay tablets, birds, omens, and incantations (Taylor 1948, p. 7). It is clear from Tutankhamen's tomb that he collected walking sticks, staves, whips, mineral specimens, and toys (Rigby and Rigb tomb also included relics of predecessor Egyptian collectors, including Amenhotep III's blue enamels and the be foreign art collected by Thutmose III. While these collections reflect individual tastes, their collectors benefitted rights:

Not men but gods, however, were the greatest of the early collectors. Through their servants, the the priest-kings, it was they who took a toll of all the products of the land. The ancient temples, ill churches and monasteries of our own middle ages, were repositories for great accumulations of and literature; and the temple treasuries were the forerunners of our banks, our libraries, our mu these divine collectors began, as nearly as we can judge, with the collection of food and wealth, g soon to the collecting of books and [written] records, of art objects and antiques, of curiosities ar (Rigby and Rigby 1944, p. 96).

This was the case with the early religious sanctuaries of ancient Greece, which collected painted vases, furniture, vessels, and votive statues (Taylor 1948, p. 11). On feast days, the faithful were invited to see these treasures in th where the priests catalogued and guarded them (Caxton Publishing 1974, p. 9). Eventually, these temple collections and exotic:

Piles of ivory ... barbarian costumes, Indian jewelry, snake skins, bear hides, elephant skulls, whale gorilla skins (thought to be those of "hairy, savage women"), reeds as thick as tree trunks, coconut mirrors, antique musical instruments, foreign weapons, curious vessels of all sorts (Rigby and Rigb 115).

By the time of Alexander the Great, Greek art and antiquity collections began to be used to proclaim political an to acquire and demonstrate a cultural heritage. At about the same time, the individual collector finally emerged Ancient Romans also sought to collect Greek antiquities and art, and by the second century B.C., the nage for co (Rheims 1961, pp. 8-9). Copies were suitable when the Greek originals were lacking and private collectors open public on certain days. Antique dealers were established, and connoisseurs shopped the streets of Rome wh sculptors set up their businesses which occupied one-fourth of the city. Plunder was the major source of th
poured into Rome. Rivalries between collectors quickly developed. One unscrupulous collector, Gaius Verres, refused to relinquish his collection to Mark Antony (Caxton Publishing 1974, pp. 11-12). Petronius collected bowls and objets trouves and made them available to the public, but his collections were eventually destroyed by Nero. When Nero sent poison to him, the saucy writer drank it from a prize bowl that he smashed upon completion of his work. Collections sometimes proved esoteric and eccentric. In the third century A.D., Heliogabalus is reported to have had a collection of over 10,000 pounds of cobwebs gathered (by his slaves) for his amusement (Tuan 1986).

At about the same time in China (the Han dynasty), manuscripts in literature, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and the Imperial Library, along with silk paintings, bronze vessels, and other relics (Rigby and Rigby 1944, p. 114). With the sacking of Constantinople in 1204, treasures and relics were melted down for the monetary value of their gold, silver, or gems (Alsop 1982). We do not include such treasuries in our definition of a collection. The Church became the foremost repository of art, manuscripts, treasures, curiosities, monasteries, and other religious centers developed a new collecting rivalry, as bones and bits of saints and sacre (see Geary 1986; Sumption 1975). Pilgrims and crusaders returned with relics and curiosities that added to church not until the twelfth century that individual collecting began to regain prominence.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, wealth was concentrated among hereditary rulers and prelates of the Christian Church. Security was the predominant motivation for the limited collecting that was more concerned with the material value of their treasures than with their artistic or historical merit (Rigby and Rigby 1944, pp. 145-153). When Rome was overrun in the fifth century A.D., the west was also plunged into the dark ages, an era that shifted to Constantinople where Byzantine art, manuscripts, jewels, and religious treasures were assembled by the Imperial Library, along with silk paintings, bronze vessels, and other relics (Rigby and Rigby 1944, p. 114). With the Fourth Crusade's sacking of Constantinople in 1204, treasures and relics again began to appear in Europe. In the thirteenth century, Marco Polo also introduced Europe to the art of the Orient, providing still more exotic objects. The beginning of the fourteenth century, church power was declining, and newly wealthy European merchants were collecting an increasing variety of luxury items -- tapestries, stained glass, reliefs, antiquities, coins, and heraldic signs, as well as paintings. Italy was in the forefront of such collecting, and the Medici collections were the most extravagant. By the late sixteenth century, names of the famous collectors themselves were equally well known (Rheims 1961, p. 11). In the seventeenth centuries, starting in northern Germany, the Wunderkammer (cabinet of wonders) became a popular art cabinet and Schatzkammer (treasury) among the royalty and wealthy (see Impey and MacGregor 1985; Mullaney 1982). Along with various curios of the New World, Mexican curios, the rope with which Judas supposedly hanged himself, ostrich eggs, mosaics of hummingbirds' feathers, jurists and beautiful women, carved cherry pits, automata, objects of ivory and coral, a peg used in King Solomon's temple, elephants' tusks, shark's teeth, and a coconut mounted in silver. Such an assortment of objects could be found among royalty, as well as in religious collections - including those of the Popes and those at the Royal Abbey of Saint Denis (Taylor 1948, p. 49, pp. 122-123). In

The scientific revolution that began in the late 17th century is characterized as Cartesian thinking after Rene Descartes. This science in this epoch was clearly manifested in collecting. By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collection: artistic versus scientific foci being the first fundamental split (Belk 1986, pp. 11-12; Caxton Publishing 1974, pp. 4). Museums since the destruction of the Mouseion at Alexandria also formed along these two lines during the late 19th century.
nineteenth centuries Wexander 1979). Royal and private collections were most often transformed into public ins these museums, thus allowing the public to view and admire the formerly private treasures of the wealthy. The s gradually eliminated the more bizarre curiosities, although the fascination with the curious remained longer in ti

It appears that a several hundred year trend toward the democratization of collecting has accelerated in the tw and more people collecting. This has been possible only partly though rising real incomes, since the control of fi concentrated in the hands of the wealthy and museums. The stronger impetuses for more widespread collecting conceptualization of things that are collectible, the accelerated production of identical objects in series or sets, a old things are seen as worth preserving. Museums have aided this trend by displaying increasingly diverse mater array of offerings, with more marketing-oriented merchandising strategies (Kelly 1986). The democratization of by the increasingly branded and differentiated set of products available in the marketplace, providing additional

Contemporary Institutional Dimensions of Collecting

The commoditization/singularization dialectic (Kopytoff 1986) that drives much collecting behavior in consumer institution of collecting. The symbolic value of a singularized item is frequently reinforced by a high monetary va ever circulates in exchange relationships after its acquisition. The symbiosis of symbolic and exchange value (or dimensions) is apparent in the following examples:

* Movie memorabilia is especially rewarding to collectors. A pair of "ruby slippers" worn in the Wizard of Oz fetched $165,000 from a collector. Another paid $12,000 for a uniform worn by Elvis Presley in G. large poster for Casablanca goes for $17,500. A biweekly guide entitled Movie Collector’s World already 5,000 subscribers (Dunn 1988).

* The founder of the G.I. Joe Club of America, himself an owner of over 500 of the action figures, build a national monument to the character. Early model versions of the toy now sell for more than $2,000 (Pereira 1989).

* A teddy bear was recently sold by Sotheby’s for a record price of $85,000 (Millership 1989). The also dispersed items from Andy Warhol’s collection that commanded similarly astonishing prices jars went for $247,830; a Black Mackintosh table for $275,000; a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow for $77 three Campbell’s soup can banks for $7,150 (Cox 1988).

* Before the collapse of the junk bond barons at Drexel Bumham, Lambert, the firm was able to reposition much of its material (coffee mugs, T-shirts, tennis balls and other office bric-a-brac) as collectibles and dispose of it quite profitably (Herman 1990).

* Among the rapidly appreciating speculative investments some experts view as a hedge against conventional market downturns are Elvis memorabilia, presidential autographs, rare books, toy figurines and t (1930’s - 1940’s) and muscle (1950’s - 1960’s) cars produced by American manufacturers (Gottsch Johnson 1990; Peers 1988).

* The profitability of collectibles has fueled a rise in such activity as the counterfeiting of baseball cards (1989), the use of baseball cards as promotional premiums in such products as laundry detergents and the manufacturing of hood or-nament replicas (Wright 1989).

* Collecting behavior radiates to increasingly novel niches. With the rise of direct marketing activity has become a collectible for some consumers (Crossen 1989). In Japan, prepaid magnetic cards in render service encounters more automatic and convenient have spawned a market of more than collectors (Kilbum 1988). Socially responsible collecting has been promoted as a marketing vehic efforts such as documentary projects (n.a. 1990).

That collecting can be both passionate and profitable is a common observation (Crispell 1988; Klein 1990; Lynwa
SIGNIFICANCE AND DISTRIBUTION OF COLLECTING

O’Brien (1981) estimated that one of every three Americans currently collects something. Another study found that 62.5 percent of Americans engage in what the author termed “collecting” (Yoshihashi 1990). Vehicles such as Rinker’s Antiques and Collectibles Market and Collectibles Information Service, instruct consumers in all phases of the collecting enterprise. Informal or alternative voluntary associations of collectors (Sherry 1990a; 1990b) such as flea markets and garage sales constitute another important conduit for the collecting industry.

Of particular importance to this chapter is the existence of specific institutions whose mission is the mass-merchandising of “collectibles” to consumers desiring to own special objects with perceived investment value. Firms such as Hummel, Lladro and Waterford, among others similarly encourage collecting by promoting the perceived investment value or point-of-difference resides in their collectibility. Thus the commercialization of a social activity - the collecting ethic - is at once a cooptation and a reinforcement of an important consumer behavior.

Collecting is institutionalized in a number of other commercial formats. For example, the magazine Memories is marketed as “collectibles” to consumers desiring to own special objects with perceived investment value. Firms such as the Franklin Mint, the Franklin Library, the New England Collectors Society, and the Danberry Mint, among others, instruction services to consumers for whom the joy of treasure-hunting is not so exhilarating as the certainty of authentication is comforting (Beckham and Brooks 1989). For many, the thrill of the anticipation of the inevitable arrival of a preselected item, rather than in the discovery in which a personal grail quest might culminate. These commercial “societies” reinforce the social and economic significance of aspects of collecting behavior by preparing consumers. Firms such as Hummel, Lladro and Waterford, among others similarly encourage collecting by promoting the perceived investment value or point-of-difference resides in their collectibility. Thus the commercialization of a social activity - the collecting ethic - is at once a cooptation and a reinforcement of an important consumer behavior.

Finally, the prevalence of voluntary societies of collectors is worthy of note. Such societies may be relatively informal: for example, many collectors are socialized into a family of orientation where collecting is a valued ethic, and in turn of procreation into the collecting ethic. Intergenerational transfer of collecting behavior, rather than of specificity - be a common phenomenon. Participation in a shared hobby or communal ritual seems to be an important integrative mechanism in many families of collectors. Other voluntary societies are much more formally constituted, providing individuals with a place to identify and interact, based upon a particular passion. For instance, at the 10th National Sports Collectors’ Convention held recently in Chicago, collectors could buy from and sell to a range of dealers and exhibitors, have items autographed by a host of sports heroes, attend seminars ranging from entrepreneurship through ethics to estate planning, obtain formal and informal advice on collecting (e.g. sourcing, authenticating, pricing), and engage in the kinds of after-hours socializing that pushes the nominal affiliation forward into the organic solidarity characteristic of small group culture. There appear to be associations of collectors as there are categories of collectibles. These associations serve to reinforce the social aspect of collecting in consumer culture. Perhaps ironically, such associations may mitigate some of the alienation that the mass-mediated past which is promoted as an integral component of their extended selves. The Cable Value Network includes such shows as “Collectibles” and “The Doll Collector” among its programming fare. Many newspapers now run regular feature columns entitled “Collectibles” which read as commercial analogs to more traditional advice columns. Entire newspapers themselves are marketed as “collectibles”, and sold to enshrine such “big events” as the Kennedy assassination, or such personal events as a reader’s birthday; the edition for a particular date is often offered in an enshrining document case. Each of these vehicles reinforces the social and economic significance of collecting -- whether it be the economic utility, the aesthetics of connoisseurship, or the fraternity/sorority of collecting in consumer culture. Perhaps ironically, such associations may mitigate some of the alienation that engender.

A number of discrete institutions comprises the collecting industry. Formal sector organizations such as auction houses, like Sotheby’s, or the thousands of galleries which constitute the infrastructure of the art world, are perhaps the most visible, as a result of their importance to society’s aesthetic domain of experience. Similarly, museums are widely recognized for their contribution to the preserving of a collectively constructed and valued version of a material cultural past. The rise of unconventional museums (Jurnovoy and Jenness 1987) celebrating less hegemonic or elitist visions of cultural production provides another conduit for collectibles such as rare documents have begun to spring up in shopping malls, angering purists concerned about packaging, gimmickry, and forgery (Yoshihashi 1990).
households surveyed reported that they have at least one collection, with an average of 2.6 collections per household (McCarthy 1981). Even if these figures are exaggerated, at least according to our definition of collecting, it is evident that collecting has diffused to a large portion of the population in affluent nations. Almost ten percent of American households collect stamps (Crispell 1988). Thus, one reason to study the neglected phenomenon of collecting is the evidence that it is a widespread activity in both the United States and Europe.

Another reason is that collecting represents a striking form of consumption. Since, by definition, the objects in a collection are of little if any ordinary everyday use, the passion, rivalry, and marketplace attention that these objects engender challenges rational models of behavior. Furthermore, collected objects often require considerable time and effort to maintain (Aristides 1988; Durham 1985) and produce a financial loss rather than a profit, if indeed they can be sold at all (Cox 1985). Thus, while we shall delay our considered appraisal, at least we note Singh’s (1988) assessment that collecting celebrates ownership and that collectors are driven by “the obsessional greed of ownership” (p. 86). Even without celebration and obsession, collecting appears to be a quintessential form of acquisition involving extreme concentration and care lavished upon the collection by its collector. Perhaps a principal contribution that research on collecting would be a systematic collection of biographies and life histories of collectors (e.g., Carmichael 1971; Stillinger 1980) that would capture something of the richness of motivation driving this form of consumption.

The importance of collecting may also depend upon its distribution and symbolic significance in the population. We have encountered no incidents of intentional discouragement by adults. Collecting is a social cultural pursuit, and that activity should be directed toward becoming what you own. Danet and Katriel (1989) find that girls are at least as likely as boys to collect. Among adults, although in eighth grade these figures drop to below 50 percent (Danet and Katriel 1988a). Another inhibition, no doubt, is the amount of time involved. A third explanation is that collecting represents a striking form of consumption. Since, by definition, the objects in a collection are of little if any ordinary everyday use, the passion, rivalry, and marketplace attention that these objects engender challenges rational models of behavior. Furthermore, collected objects often require considerable time and effort to maintain (Aristides 1988; Durham 1985) and produce a financial loss rather than a profit, if indeed they can be sold at all (Cox 1985). Thus, while we shall delay our considered appraisal, at least we note Singh’s (1988) assessment that collecting celebrates ownership and that collectors are driven by “the obsessional greed of ownership” (p. 86). Even without celebration and obsession, collecting appears to be a quintessential form of acquisition involving extreme concentration and care lavished upon the collection by its collector. Perhaps a principal contribution that research on collecting would be a systematic collection of biographies and life histories of collectors (e.g., Carmichael 1971; Stillinger 1980) that would capture something of the richness of motivation driving this form of consumption.

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traditionally favored males. Danet and Katriel (1986, p. 48) argue that the proactive mastery involved in collecting is more passive and familial social roles that have been encouraged for women. And Saisselin (1984, p. 68) contend that purchasing has been viewed as serious and purposeful collecting, while women's buying has been perceived as ceremonial consumption. As Baekeland (1981) emphasizes:

we rarely think of accumulations of dresses, shoes, perfumes, china and the like as collections.... Indeed, collecting, however, be they of stamps, cars, guns or art, tend to have clear-cut thematic emphases. These are set by the standards, external reference points in public or private collections. Thus women's collections tend to be personal and ahistorical, men's impersonal and historical (p. 47).

One need only look to the array of shoes assembled by Madame Marcos to find one inflated example of this distinction. However, it might be argued that women's collecting is transmuted into domestic production. That is, women buy "consumption" in their creation of the domestic economy. That economy might be regarded in part as a "living" configuration. A more complete examination of collecting activity indicates its essentially androgynous qualities. While acquisition and mastery of an object requires characteristics stereotypically associated with both male and female genders. Collecting allows individuals to enact behaviors that shape domestic economy.

A second question with regard to the connection between gender and collecting is whether males and females tend to collect different kinds of things. While not all objects are seen to be gendered (Allison, Golden, Mullet, and Coogan 1980; Golden, Allison, and Clee 1982), many objects are. Gender can be imparted through strong design differences as with motorcycles versus motor scooters (cf. Hebdige 1988), or through more subtle features as with the size, shape, and ornamentation of hair brushes (Forty 1986). The historical studies of child collectors, cited previously, confirm that boys tend to collect different objects (e.g., marbles, nails, insects) than girls (e.g., dolls, housewares, and photographs).

Among adults in our sample of 192 collectors, some of the strongest gender differences we have found among collectors is the overwhelming predominance of males among firearms collectors (cf. Olmsted 1987a, 1988b, forthcoming; Stenross 1987) and collectant society (cf. Dannefer 1980, 1981). We also find men to be conspicuously more likely to collect antiques, books, and other objects, while women are more likely to collect animal replicas, jewelry, and housewares such as dishes and silver (Wallendorf 1990a). Other studies have found men to be more likely to collect stamps and coins than are women (Olmsted 1987b). Interestingly, Sigmund Freud's collection of antiquities includes a large number of phallic amulets. Similarly, the ubiquitous statuettes in his collection can be interpreted as phallic (Spitz 1989; cf. Holbrook 1988a, 1988b). It is as if Freud were acting out the satirical tale of Flaubert's naive collectors, Bouvard & Pecuchet:

At one time towers, pyramids, candles, mile-posts, and even trees had the significance of phallic sculptures. But Bouvard and Pecuchet everything became a phallus. They collected the swing-bars of carriages, legs of armchairs, cellar bolts, chemists' pestles. When anyone came to see them, they asked: 'What do you think that's like?' -- then confided the mystery--, and if the visitor protested, they shrugged their shoulders pityingly (1880/1954, p. 131).

Again, the models of models for reality analogy is apt. Collecting enables males to celebrate aggressive behavior, the hunt, and ultimately shaping the realm of political economy. Collecting enables females to enact behaviors created which shape domestic economy.

Our case studies of a husband and wife who both collected for most of their lives provide an informative contrast. Collecting. The woman, whose husband posthumously enshrined her collection in a museum called the Mouse Cottage, whose husband posthumously enshrined her collection in a museum called the Mouse Cottage, whose husband posthumously enshrined her collection in a museum called the Mouse Cottage, whose husband posthumously enshrined her collection in a museum called the Mouse Cottage, whose husband posthumously enshrined her collection in a museum called the Mouse Cottage. The collection began during her childhood when she acquired her affectionate "Mouse" nickname because, according to the museum brochure, she was "so clever and charming in character and petite in stature." Her lifelong collection consists of toy mice of every description, displayed in homely pseudo-antique golden oak furniture, around a perennial Christmas tree, and in the dominant pattern of Christmas as "woman's work" (Cheal 1987, 1988; Caplow 1982, 1984) and the association of miniaturized with women and children (Stewart 1984) reinforce the dominant theme of domestication in the Mouse Cottage. Another major feature of the collection is its Mickey Mouse replicas. In this regard it is instructive that when Mickey was initially appeared and masculine voice, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine appearance and masculine voice, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine voice change, he lacked his current popularity. Only by means of an emasculating voice change, a more babyish and feminine
androgynous appearance, and a concomitant social clumsiness with female mice, did Mickey gain popularity (Mollenhoff 1939, Gould 1979).

The diminutive mouse (n.b. Mickey rather than Mike or Michael) is nevertheless the hero in Disney comics. He succeeds with the guile of a child in overcoming more adult-like villains, thus fulfilling a common childhood fantasy.

Mouse's husband also institutionalized his major collection (fire engines) by establishing the Fire Museum. In contrast to the diminutive Mouse Cottage, this museum of fire-fighting equipment (billed as the world's largest) is spacious, has a guide, an display, and brochure all emphasize that this is a serious historical museum, in contrast to the entertainment rationale given for the Mouse Cottage. Two other collections of this collector have also been given display space: (1) his collection of paintings and bronzes of American cowboys and Indians and (2) his collection of African hunting trophies that began with a family hunting safari.

The collections of these two spouses present a graphic illustration of gender differences found in other collections. These differences were detected independently by the two authors who conducted research at these sites. Using the general equation, Mouse Cottage:Fire Museum:XY, we note these relevant pairs of X and Y --

- Tiny : Gigantic
- Weak : Strong
- Home : World
- Nature : Machine
- Nurturing : Extinguishing
- Art : Science
- Playfulness : Seriousness
- Decorative : Functional
- Inconspicuous : Conspicuous
- Animate : Inanimate

Belk and Wallendorf (1990a) also discuss further cases of gendered identity work including two collections of Barbie dolls. As with the mice and fire engines, these collectibles can provide a circumscribed arena in which a variety of gender and other identity issues are played out. In the Barbie doll cases studied however, the key gender identity issues center on the recent radical mastectomy undergone by one of the Barbie doll collectors and the homosexuality of the other. In both cases these collectors were able to express and work through these issues using their doll collections.

Social Class. A final issue in the distribution of collecting concerns its locus in the class structure of American society. To a certain degree, the poor are precluded from many collecting realms due to their low income. Although the wealth of the mouse replica and fire engine collectors just discussed belies the common assumption that the wealthy collect only fine art, it remains true that collectors are almost always at least moderately wealthy (Moulin 1967/1987). Since virtually anything is collectible (Reid 1988), the contemporary collector can always find some affordable category of objects to collect. Therefore, income is not necessarily a barrier to collecting. A survey of subscribers to a general collecting magazine found that the sample had a median income about 30 percent above the U.S. population median and was over 70% white collar (Treas and Brannen 1976). Bossard and Boll (1950) found that the upper class was more likely to collect than the middle class, although more recent studies have found that the working and middle classes are well represented in such areas of collecting as baseball cards (Bloom 1989) and stamps (Bryant 1982; Olmsted 1987b). Rochberg-Halton although visual art was cited as a favorite possession more frequently by members of the upper middle class in Chicago, other collectibles were cited more frequently by lower class informants. Our own data (based on the sample of 192 informants) suggest that, with the exception of fine art collecting, most collecting areas (including automobiles) appear to be dominated by the middle class. Specializing in sales to collectors have successfully targeted the large middle class in the U.S. (e.g., Butsch 1984).
In sum, contemporary collecting is unevenly but broadly distributed across age, gender, and socioeconomic class. It is heightened by an acquisitive and possessive orientation that epitomizes the modern consumer culture. The considerable skiff, and energy devoted to collecting also help to make it a consumption activity eminently worthy of study. But collecting is a passionate sphere of consumption from which collectors seem to derive significant meaning and fulfillment. In Stebbins’ (1982) terms, serious leisure (cf. Bloch and Bruce 1984). Smith and Apter (1977, p. 65), thus, observe that collecting is a serious leisure activity. Serious leisure serves as a sacred collection. Similarly, as previously noted, we find that collectors are kept away from the sacred collection. Finally, collecting antiques, like any hobby pursued with intensity and passion, helps to give life meaning and fulfillment. The goals of antique collecting may at first seem arbitrary and the activity may initially be taken up for excitement ... but for many people the goals eventually become serious and building the collection is a way for some people to take on almost religious proportions.

This point is well illustrated in a recent play by Terrence McNally (1989) entitled The Lisbon Traviata. McNally's w first full-length theatrical production that takes record collecting as its central theme (but see Eisenberg 1987). O a love quadrangle involving four homosexual men, two of whom (Mendy and Stephen) are held together emotion devotion to opera in general and to the performances of Maria Callas in particular. Thus, much of the action and revolve around Mendy's desperation to hear a new bootleg recording of Maria singing La Traviata in Lisbon. Thi guaranteed to move any compassionate record collector to the deepest commiseration. In this, it reflects the play's musical fanaticism and obsession with opera recordings and performances:

In the first act of McNally's play, audiences are treated to an encounter between two rabid fans of Callas.... Mendy goes into a frenzy when Stephen mentions a pirated recording he owns of a perfect Traviata sung by Callas in Lisbon in 1958.... Most of the first act dwells on the two men's Callas obsession and their disdain for other great singers.... McNally, himself, admits to having been an ardent Callas fan in the Golden Age of Opera (Botto 1989, p. 66).

In Act II, we find that Stephen's apartment features row upon row of vertical shelves that house literally thousands of items arranged in a well-organized order that permits him to pluck examples of interest from the filing system with barely a glance. In a touching comic thrust, Stephen recounts how he had to explain to his father why anyone would want more than one recording of the same piece of music. "For the same reason," he says, "that you need to watch the Super Bowl again every year." Thus does the play demonstrate that distinctions, even those among performances of the same composition by the same artists recorded on different labels, are significant. McNally's play deals primarily with classical music in general and opera in particular, the same fanatic interest in appears in the desire of jazz fans to hear alternate takes of pieces played sometimes only minutes or seconds apart, or in the stature of (say) Lester Young or Charlie Parker. Similarly, "Deadhead" fans of the Grateful Dead strive to make, trade, and collect tapes of every concert by the group (Pearson 1987). In the case of McNally's comic hero, the obsession with hearing and performances by a favorite artist borders on the pathological. But, in general, the extent to which such subtle differences are significant is revealed in the play's treatment of the true collecting spirit.

A THEORY OF COLLECTING

What Collections Mean

Magic. One key to understanding the intensity with which collections are pursued is the finding that collections are a sacred (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). We have already commented that the contents of a collection are usually set apart from the ordinary. Asked whether she ever eats using her collection of nutcrackers, a collector (W 30) replied, "Never! I never use it. You know why? It's because they're completely non-functional." Once an item enters a collection, it does not leave, except in the case of serial collections and upgrading. A collector of nutcrackers who never uses them to crack nuts, was asked if nutcrackers ever leave her collection: "No! No way. (laughs) They're stay mine." A couple (W'M 65/WF 65) who collect saltcellars was observed serving a holiday feast using salt and objects from the sacred collection. Similarly, as previously noted, we find that collectors generally keep their collections separated from profane saleable merchandise and do not tolerate traffic between the two. It is as if the collected objects would be diminished if they were treated as market commodities and removed from the sacred collection.
The magical quality of objects in a collection is also revealed by the reverent care given to them. Fieldnotes from one of this fetishistic attention:

One man driving his car in the "parade" awaiting space assignment, jumped out of his car when the line was closed and polished the wheels a bit. One person used a paintbrush to get the dust out of his grill. Another informant (WM 60s) has a will leaving his Model A Fords to his 14-year-old grandson. But the will stipulates that if the grandson violates them or doesn't care for them properly, they will be sold to a professional to appreciate them. Another owner of four restored cars (WM 60) has willed one to each of his four children: "They care of them. If they don't, I'll come back and haunt them." And a recently divorced shell collector (WM late 30s) house and children but his ex-wive kept the shells that she refers to as "her babies." Such personification is an involved in fetishizing objects (Ellen 1988). While Stewart (1984) distinguishes collecting from fetishism based on the order that we disagree and see collecting as often fetishistic. In our view, the compulsive desire for order in the collection of fetishism.

Reverence for the power of the collected objects is also displayed in other ways. Clark (1963, p. 15) notes that "It always found myself whispering, as if I were in church." Collectors of contemporary art, like the billionaires who art from Joseph Duveen (Behrman 1952), find themselves wondering "Am I good enough to own this painting?" Katriel (1986, p. 38) refer to such reverence as "thing magic." Laughlin (1956) calls collections -- along with talismans, tokens, relics, and charms -- "soterial objects," after the Greek Soteria, meaning "objects that deliver one from evil.

Besides delivering them from evil, collectors also hope that the extraordinary power of collected objects will deliver world of everyday life into a magical world. This belief is evident in the treasure tales that surround most collecti typically involve a discerning collector using a combination of cleverness and luck to acquire a rare and valuable nothing (e.g., Beards 1987). In one tale, shyly told but fervently believed, a car collector "late 30s) recalled search truck that he and his deceased father had once fixed up. As the fieldnotes record:

He had looked for it for much of the 11 years since he got rid of it, but with no luck. They had los had some other difficulties, so they had despondently gone to his father’s grave. He and his father lot of racing together and were close. He told his father that if he was alright to give him a sign. So that, a friend told him about a Cameo, and they went to see it. When he saw the "R. & R Racing' on it was his old truck and bought it. Ron’s wife said they weren’t very religious, but that made belief.

It often seems that the collector is assembling a miniature world that he or she can control and rule over (Berger, Katriel 1989, p. 263; Stewart 1984, p. 162). If so, it is an enchanted world of magical objects not unlike the fairy tal 1975).

Other Times, Other People, and Other Places. if collections evoke magical worlds, they are aided in this evocation of distant, exotic otherness (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen 1989) displaced in time or space from the here and imbedded with the aura of the time, place, and persons once associated with it; for instance, a collection of rocks ap trips (Appleyard 1979). In fact, Urry (1990, p. 32) has characterized contemporary tourists as "collectors of gazers revisiting the same exotic sites than in capturing the "initial gaze" of the other. Because collecting is a longitudinal of contemporary art acquires historical markers over the history of the collection. A common incentive to collect conserve, assemble, preserve, or rescue objects. More generally, such activity is often part of a search for self-m

The ability of a collection to evoke other places is seen among two informants who totally devote their houses to from particular places -- one from Bali and the other from Nigeria and nearby African countries. In each case, they in these countries, although the collections were acquired over a period of time and continue to grow with return with furniture, wall decorations, masks, musical instruments, carvings, and other artwork from the foreign lands.
material overflows numerous glass front cases and is stacked up to five items high in each room on all three floors of the house. Every piece recalls for the collector the story of its acquisition. The initial guided tour in one of these houses is a literal way, stamp collections and books provide means of tangibly acquiring other places. One of Olmsted's (1987b) collectors remarked, "Stamp collecting is also a way of traveling and getting acquainted with other countries" (p. 3). Although she no longer climbs, Janet Smith (1988) relives adventures of climbing in the Alps through her collection of Alpine climbing books and journals, as any keener invitation to take an ego-trip down Memory Lane" (p. 480).

Not only place, but also time is acquired and made manifest in a collection. Sigmund Freud’s interest in collecting Greece, Rome, and Egypt appears to have arisen in part from his fascination with the Egyptian illustrations in the Bible he read in his home as a child (Kuspit 1989). Some of his antiquities were acquired during his travels to the ruins of these ancient places, these pieces were brought home, they served as reminders, "promising him that after the long winter in Vienna he could return" (Bernfeld 1951, p. 109). In fact, Freud’s travels were often shaped by his penchant for collecting, as Walter (1988) notes:

During his visit to America in 1909 he showed no interest in the country, saying that all he wanted was Niagara Falls. Refusing to read travel books before the trip, he studied a book on Cyprus instead and wanted to see the principal collection of Cyprian antiquities that was on exhibit in New York. In the place that attracted him was the Metropolitan Museum, where he spent his time absorbed in the the ancient Greece (pp. 102-103).

Not incidentally, Freud also used archeological metaphors in his work -- as in his references to psychoanalysis as an archaeological enterprise was dominated by an object-oriented passion for archaeology (Walter 1988, p. 111). In Kuspit’s view, it is also some of the heroic quality associated with archaeology rub off on psychoanalysis" (1989, pp. 133134). The collector (1981) words, is "an archaeologist without a spade" (p. 71). As Rheims (1961) reflects:

An object’s date is of prime importance to a collector with an obsession for the past. He values it for its associations, that it once belonged to and was handled by a man he can visualize as himself. The object bears witness: its possession is an introduction to history. One of a collector’s most entrancing day-dreams is the imaginary joy-of uncovering the past in the guise of an archaeologist (p. 211).

In this daydream the collector also magically transcends time and travels to another era.

The desire to bask in the imagined glory of the past is also evident in the strong emotional attachment that many antique collectors have to the persons, eras, and places that their collections represent (e.g., Kaplan 1982; Stillinger 1980). Collections of family photographs (Hirsch 1981), autographs, locks of hair in Victorian hair wreaths (Miller 1982, Payne 1988), and contemporary baseball cards are all, in this collections of people. The attraction is all the stronger when the contagious magic of a prominent provenance is attached to objects in the collection. Thus, one collector was especially attached to an antique music box because it once belonged to Winston (1922) observed:

When, after six years’ absence in the South Seas and Australia, I returned to Europe and did my first sightseeing at Edinburgh Castle, I was shown the Crown Jewels. The keeper told many stories of how by this and that king or queen on such and such an occasion.... I had the feeling that something has been told to me.... And then arose before me the vision of a native village on coral soil ... and one of them showing me thin red strings and big worn-out objects, clumsy to sight and greasy to touch. With reverence he also would name them and tell their story.... Both heirlooms and vaygu’a are cherished because of the historical sentiment which surrounds them. However ugly, useless, and -- according to current standards -- valueless an object may be, if it has figured in historical scenes and passed through the hands of historic persons, and is therefore an unfailing vehicle of important sentimental associations, it can be precious to us (pp. 88-89).

Sometimes this attachment even takes on metaphysical qualities. Three different antique collectors we have interviewed have explained their unaccountable attraction to and intuitive knowledge about particular antiques- as being due to some association
mystical sense, many collectors strive after an image of their own childhood through their collections. As Frances Graham, editor of *& Collecting Hobbies* magazine explains:

People want things from their childhood for two reasons. Either they had something as a child and have fond memories of it, or they wanted it and couldn't have it, so they're buying it for themselves now (Crispell 1988, p. 39).

Having objects from our past can provide a sense of stability in our lives (Forty 1986). Baseball-card collectors often begin their adult collections by trying to recreate a childhood collection that their mothers once discarded (Bloom 1989). There is a striving to regain love and security in these cases. The acquisition of objects desired earlier in life is evident among car collectors who begin in mid-life by acquiring the car they had or wished they could have had as an adolescent. Like Dannefer’s collectors we interviewed said they can predict the market price of cars by anticipating increased popularity of the "hot cars" when reaching 40 were in high school. Increased financial resources at this stage of life may facilitate this tendency, but earlier life at mid-life and the more general nostalgic inclination to use collections of the past to give meaning to motivating factors (Belk 1990, Davis 1979).

Because the collection takes the collector into a new realm of experience (baseball cards into the world of childhood heroes, dolls into the world of fashion models, stamps into exotic lands), it allows pleasurable expression of fantasy (Gotelli 1988, Rheims 1961, Travis 1988). Through such activity, the collector can potentially experiment with a fantasy life without suffering the consequences of enacting it (Friday 1975).

Thus, for various reasons, collections signal other times and other places. As the preceding section emphasizes, these meanings are basic to all collectors and collections. The next section explores other meanings of collecting.

**Motivations for Collecting**

*Acquisitiveness Legitimized as Art or Science.* While many motivations have been offered to explain collecting, two are useful in understanding the pervasiveness of collecting are legitimization and self-extension. Legitimization concerns the willingness of society to approve or condone behavior that might otherwise be construed as acquisitiveness, possessiveness, or greed, by applying the "collecting" and "collectors" to certain activities and people. The process of learning what defines legitimate collecting activity begins in childhood, as Clifford (1985) explains:

Children’s collections are revealing ... a boy’s accumulation of miniature cars, a girl’s dolls, a summer vacation "nature museum" (with labeled stones and shells, a hummingbird in a bottle), a treasured bowl filled with the bright-colored shavings of crayons. In these small rituals we observe the channeling of obsession in how to make the world one’s own, to gather things around oneself tastefully, appropriately. The inclusions in all collections reflect wider cultural rules, of rational taxonomy, of gender, of aesthetics. *An excessive, sometimes even rapacious need to have is transformed into rule-governed, meaningful desire.* The self which must possess, but cannot have it all, learns to select, order, classify in hierarchies -- to make collections (p. 238, italics added).

Thus do we begin the process of channeling our materialistic desires into "meaningful" pursuits; to become collectors rather than hoarders or misers; to produce knowledge and beauty rather than displaying selfishness.

The general social sanction for collecting over hoarding and accumulating is sometimes aided by self-deception. Elephant replica collectors told us he expected that history will some day stand in awe of what he has accomplished in building his collection. Specialized clubs (including one for elephant replica collectors), publications, shows, and meetings help foster the legitimacy. Olmsted (1987a, p. 16) detects this legitimization process in the rhetoric of gun collectors at gun show process operating through the "community of [common] knowledge" and boundary-establishing stories among observed a similar set of legitimizing activities at a meeting of a midwestern "sports [baseball card] collecting club" quiz asking 20 questions such as: who has the highest batting average in baseball this year, who is the most All Star who is leading in stolen bases. The person with the most correct answers (after a tie breaker between the two w
tickets to an upcoming baseball game. At the same meeting, one of the several members who had attended a national baseball-card collectors show reported on what took place there. A debate on whether to spend $13,000 and first-class airfare to Kaline (in the baseball Hall of Fame) to the local show was followed by a show-and-tell in which members apprised each other's recent card acquisitions. Each of these activities, in addition to the large meeting turnout, helped club members feel that their collecting is justified, legitimate, and important.

The general legitimization of collections, coupled with tenuous price guides and rationalizations that collecting is a good investment, means that even a person who is not normally materialistic or self-indulgent can safely exercise these traits in the arena of collecting. Saarinen (1958, pp. 349-355) describes John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as such a man. Even though he was fond of jewels, collecting art was himself to come to what he perceived as self-indulgence. He argued that since these works would eventually be cared for and he could feel guilt-free in acquiring them and possessing them for a time. Meyer (1973) notes this legitimization of collecting grandiosity:

The great collector has a sense of destiny, a feeling that he is mankind's agent in gathering and preserving what might otherwise be heedlessly dispersed. And the collector is capable of collecting anything -- on complete cabinet of all varieties of Coca-Cola bottles, while another displays an array of Ford Radiators (p. 187).

Whether a collection is believed to be legitimized as contributing to art or to science depends in part upon what depends upon the type of collector. For instance, Rubens kept an extensive art collection in his studio, but rather aesthetic inspiration, it served a more scientific or technical purpose in providing examples for his assistants (Bellony-Rewald and Peppiatt 1982). The type A collector takes the taxonomic approach thought to characterize science, while the type B collector thought to predominate in the world of art (Danet and Katriel 1989). In both cases, the rigorous pursuit of these confidence in the acceptability and importance of their activity. And as others have observed, underlying the act of these ways is a desire for security (Belk 1982; Beaglehole 1932; Danet and Katriel 1986; Rigby and Rigby 1944; Saarinen 1958). Collections as Extensions of Self. Another general motive for collecting, at least in an individualistic and possessive culture, is to gain an expanded or improved sense of self through gathering and controlling meaningful objects or experiences. As John

No unprejudiced observer will lightly deny the existence of an original tendency to assimilate objects and events to the self, to make them part of the "me." We may even admit that the "me" cannot exist without the "mine." The self gets solidity and form through an appropriation of things which identifies them with whatever we call myself ... . I own therefore I am" (p. 116).

Behind the desire to control and master the objects in a collection (Belk, et al. 1988; Bryant 1982; Danet and Katriel 1986; Stebbins 1982), it appears that there is an intention to build, restore, or alter the extended self Wexander 1979; Bell et al. 1982; Danet and Katriel 1986; Moulin 1967/1987; Stillinger 1980). For this reason, as noted earlier, collections are almost always personal possessions rather than group or family possessions, at least within the hedonistic and individualistic ethic of modern consumer culture (Campbell 1987). The tendency to connect the collection to other times, places, or people is also due to the individualistic desire oneself through the collection. Moulin (1967/1987) found that such an outlook was much in evidence among French art collectors:

Ultimately they identify with what they own, with the collection they have "created," which gives them a positive sense of themselves (p. 83).

We found this attitude expressed at a comic book show where visitors could bring their comic books to be appraised by the experts who had set up booths and sales booths. The hesitant and reluctant approach that the visitors made as they neared these reflected their fear of a negative judgment upon them if the comics turned out to be worthless or of minor significance. The dejection when such a judgment was received may not be so much a disappointment at the collection's lack of financial importance but perhaps the most telling signal that collections are seen as extensions of self involves the involuntary loss of collections. One man (WM 40) who lost his lifelong collections of phonograph records and books in a flood felt a sinking feeling that now his life was a failure rather than a positive contribution to the world.
Tendency Toward Specialization. Like Vie Connoisseur, the collector almost always begins to concentrate on one or starting entirely new types of collections. These strategies show too that the collector's joy lies in the process of acquiring objects for the collection, branching out into related categories is an especially common strategy to forestall completion. Thus, one of our informants (WM 40) collected stamps, coins, baseball cards, for shirts, jerseys and hats, vintage cars, big band 78 rpm records, and antique furniture. A husband and wife "65, W them): dolls, saltcellars, purses, glassware, plates, jewelry, spoons, watches, several types of figurines, and antique furniture. Collectors are extreme examples of maintaining multiple collections, the tendency eventually to begin a collection among collectors. Along with the other strategies noted, multiple collections can indefinitely preclude a shift to the completion of a collection.

Temporal Aspects of Collecting

Over the life of a collector and a collection, consistent patterns tend to emerge. These patterns involve the birth, death, and immortality of the collection. While collections can be of diverse types, they tend to follow a similar life cycle.

Collections Seldom Begin Purposefully. Ironically, in light of the seriousness and purposefulness that the collection is seldom preplanned. The collector rarely consciously ponders what to collect or whether to collect. The elephant replica collector, mentioned previously, began when he received an elephant figurine as a wedding gift. In fact, gifts often act as the collection's catalyst. Alternatively, a collector may purchase an interesting curio, perhaps on a vacation, and pursue the interest it stimulates. It may take the acquisition of several items before the collector sees the pattern begins to say "I collect ____." Once this occurs, others may begin to give the collector gifts of items for the collection, reinforcing this self-definition. In order to be regarded as a true collector, however, the owner must also actively participate objects for the collection.

Olmsted (1988a) asked the owner of a used marine supply store if he was a collector:

If you had asked that two months ago, I would have answered no, I am a dealer. When I buy for the shop, I often buy knives. When I get a real nice one I throw it in a drawer in my bedroom dresser. One night my wife asked me when I would bring those knives to the store. I said there was only a few, I probably wouldn't need them: She said "I counted them last night. There are 75 pocket knives in that drawer." They still aren't in the shop so I guess I am a collector now (p. 3).

Connell's (1974) The Connoisseur tells a similar story of a man slowly but inexorably drawn into avid collecting. He acquired an interesting piece of pottery at a curio shop in the American Southwest while there for a professional convention. Learning that he must eventually acquire several books about such pieces to read on the plane on the way home. Over the next several months he learns from the remarkable collection of a former stranger who now welcomes him as a fellow collector and, later, through the ministrations of several dealers. He eventually becomes so immersed in the collection of pottery that he woefully neglects his family. Although collecting does not inevitably become destructive, it does occasionally begin with such initial incidental purchases, finds, or gifts.

One that was not in fashion among the Renaissance collectors who assembled wunderkammern. Contemporary
encountered include a man who only wanted Mickey Mouse Replicas from the 1950s, a woman who only collected Eastern U.S. (with indentations for 5 rather than 6 oysters), and a man who collects only Model A Ford Roadster found that stamp collectors were most likely to switch from collecting stamps of the world to collecting only a few issues, and Stenross (1987) found that gun collectors are likely to specialize by time period, country of production.

Unlike the decision to start collecting, the decision to specialize in a particular subarea is made more deliberately interviewed decided to specialize in netsukes and Japanese block prints, partly because he spent time in Japan where he lived there for three years as an attorney. A collector of British Army ceramic medals was pursuing the grail of a medal ("like the one Winston Churchill was buried with"). And a comic book collector was concentrating on issues number 20, when a writer he admires took over the scripts. In each of these cases of specialization, there was a more rational than had been formulated to explain the initial interest in the general area of the collection. At a more specific level, undoubtedly structural variables such as family background and education also play a role in such choices (cf., 1). Because suitable heirs in the immediate family are often hard to find (for aging men, the task of making them to the earth again (p. 47).

Abbas (1988), "the experience of possession is cumulative. It is as if," says Abbas (1988), "the collection could be transformed into the possession of experience" (p. 230).

A collection, therefore, is more than just a small museum of the objects collected. It is also the major museum of the collector. The term "museum" is literally appropriate for more than half a dozen of our informants who have transformed their collections into public museums during their lifetimes. Another several dozen informants have had their collections temporarily exhibitions open to the public or have opened their homes to interested viewers at certain times of the year. And other collectors have received mass media attention to their collections. In each case, we find that these collectors share the particular proof of a life well-spent. Since those who patronize these displays are self-selected and generally find the incidental start of collections cuts across these structural variables.

Collection as Cumulative Experience. A collected object becomes a reminder of the story of its acquisition. The decision about recalling and retelling this story (e.g., Benjamin 1955). The images that a collection conjures up may therefore be personal history of times and places. Stewart (1984, p. 151) calls these associations "souvenirs" (because of their recollection of the past) and distinguishes them from collections (which she contends involve only a metaphoric derivation of a personal history).

However, we consider personal history to be an inescapable part of collections. "it is as if," says Abbas (1988), "the collection could be transformed into the possession of experience" (p. 230).

The Quest for Immortality. If the collection is an autobiography and a monument, it is not surprising that collect…

because the collector has identified his creation so closely with himself (a very strengthening bond for some men), he sometimes feels that, like a strong boat, it will bear him through the centuries after his body is consigned to the earth again (p. 47).

It is not necessarily the case that the collector wants the collection to perpetuate his or her identity-, there may be a sense of the immortality of the collection itself The feeling is often one of seeking a way that the entity of the collection can become a caring heir is sought who will appreciate the collection.

Because suitable heirs in the immediate family are often hard to find (for reasons we shall later explore), an heir grandchildren. Thus, the elephant replica collector hopes his two-year-old granddaughter will take over his collection by reading her elephant stories and giving her elephant gifts. A baseball-card collector had already willed his collection to his two-year-old grandson. A stamp collector is giving his grandchildren stamp books in hopes that one will "get the bug" and take on the stamp collecting tradition.

Another way in which collectors attempt to gain immortality is by convincing a museum to preserve their collection of Duveen's sales to wealthy collectors, "he was selling immortality. Since most of his proteges were aging men, the yearn for immortality was not hard" (p. 102). Their immortality was assured by buying high-quality pieces that museums increasingly refuse gifts that will limit the flexibility in the future. When no heir and no museum acceptance is likely for the collection, the collector
collection will go to "a good home." As Lord Kenyon contemplated the fate of his autograph collection, he reflected:

No one will ever be as fond of my pets as I have been.... I look upon them almost as one might upon the children whom he must leave behind.... None the less dear to me are these relics of the leaders of literature. Some one will preserve them, and perhaps fondle them as I have done. I trust that they under the protecting care of a true collector, a real antiquary -- no mere bargain-hunter, no 'snapper up of unconsidered trifles,' but one endowed with the capacity to appreciate whatsoever things are worthy affection of the lover of letters and of history (Joline 1902, pp. 306-307).

In more contemporary times, another way for a collector to achieve immortality is to have their collection featured in a publication like Architectural Digest or Connoisseur. For example, a Connoisseur article featuring the collections of His Serene Highness Prince Johannes von Thurn und Taxis, quotes the self-congratulatory Prince as saying "I especially love the jewels of Marie Antoinette," 'We have 480 of which are prize pieces," "I can't begin to figure out how much we've got," and 'What I have would fill the Metropolitan Museum" (Dradgadze 1988). The title of another article laments, 'The Warhol Collection: Why Selling it is a Shame" (Kaylan 1988). And thus, the life cycle of the collector is completed: from a typically accidental start, through specialization and the accumulation of experience, to hope that the collector or at least the collection will achieve some measure of immortality.

**IS COLLECTING DESIRABLE?**

Collectors and Collections

A critical question about collecting concerns its desirability. While we have noted that collecting is generally a socially sanctioned form of acquisitiveness and possessiveness, we have not considered what beneficial and harmful effects collecting has on the individual and the society which sanctions it. We will first consider positive and negative aspects of collecting for the individual and then consider implications of collecting at the societal level.

Olmsted (1988a) contends that collecting is a form of deviance that largely escapes criticism because it is more prevalent among the upper than the lower classes of society. Nevertheless, most fictional portrayals of collecting depict collectors in negative and pathological, that suggest opprobrium (e.g., Balzac 1848/1968; Chatwin 1989; Connell 1974; Dreiser 1925; Flaubert 1880/1954; Galsworthy 1906/1967; Williams 1945/1984). Based on our interviews with collectors, we detect both positive and negative aspects within collecting.

Positive Aspects for the Individual

**Collecting and Meaning.** While we have thus far presented collecting primarily as a consumption activity, it is also a form of production. The production of a collection is a creative act that brings something new into existence: the entity of the collection of particular things selectively assembled. Depending on the type of collection and collector, the result of this assemblage may be production of knowledge and/or beauty. From the perspective of the collector, these productions may be experienced as enlightenment, learning, aesthetic joy, or feelings of mastery, meaningfulness, and accomplishment (Torgovnick 1990). In this collecting (especially in an achievement-oriented society -- McClelland 1971) may provide a purpose in life and a degree of satisfaction that, when the collector is employed, exceeds that present on the job (Ackerman 1990). On a less grand scale, collecting focuses activity, or as some collectors say, 'It keeps me busy' (Soroka 1988; Travis 1988).

In addition to creativity, a second source of meaning derived from collecting is that it can be a form of play. It can be joyful releasing play, or passionate escapist play. In the latter cases, especially, collecting may provide sources of available in the workplace, where play is often frowned upon. It may offer the adult a chance to engage in a gene would otherwise be disparaged as childish and miniature. Given the presumed human need for play, this opportunity may be quite healthy:

There is nothing rational about collecting, but this personal expression is reassuring -- it shows that still among us, in this doggedly materialistic society, many poets and dreamers, prepared to indulge their fantasies (Caxton Publishing 1974, p. 185).

As with games and many other forms of play, collecting is a structured rule-governed activity. There are rules to...
By reassembling the things of the world in a newly meaningful way, the collector decommoditizes and sacralizes consumer goods in a manner that can transcend the standard package of commodities in a consumer culture.

Finally, a fourth source of meaning in collecting concerns the extent to which collections permit their owners to achieve a heightened sense of individuality, uniqueness. Fromkin and Snyder (1980; Snyder and Fromkin 1980) have documented the American need for uniqueness. Collections provide a basis for identity formation (Erikson 1959) for many collectors, allowing them to feel more fully individual and different from others. The collection is tangible evidence that the collector is unique (Mine 1988). This is because every collection tends to be unique, the one-of-a-kind creation of its owner. Thus, collections confer a heightened sens of specialness upon those who possess them. Along these lines, Rigby and Rigby (1944) repeat the collecting story about an Englishman who pays a fortune for the only known duplicate of a rare book in his collection and then triumphantly throws it into the fireplace after realizing that he does not have the satisfaction of owning the only extant copy.

Collecting Creates Comrades and Sustains Social Ties. A second set of individual benefits that may result from collecting is the establishment of a social network comprised of fellow collectors as well as dealers and other experts. Just as a favorite sports team may bring together disparate fans in a common cause, so does collecting. Personal friendships may develop among more avid collectors who regularly attend auctions, shows, club meetings, and other gatherings. In fact, one large scale survey of collectors attending an auction found that friendship was the primary reason given for collecting (Soroka 1988). Although individual collections are unique, we find that sometimes those brought together through collecting are members of the same family -- husband with wife or children with parents. When this is the case, collecting not only creates new social networks but integrates existing ones (Parsons 1951).

A collection may also serve to connect the collector to others by potentiating more appropriate gift-giving, since gifts should identify the collector's interests (Gotelli 1988). However, as noted previously, such gifts are often perceived by collectors as robbing them of the joys of participating in the process of search and the application of personal taste and knowledge.

Collecting may also be an attempt to fill the void left by the loss of loved ones. Freud was not the only collector who started collecting after the death of a same-sex parent. We have found this among several other collectors as well. "Empty nest" householders, faced with the loss of a child, may turn to collecting as a means of filling the void left by the loss of a loved one. We have found this among several other collectors as well. "Empty nest" households are also prone to start collecting. Personal friendships may develop among more avid collectors who regularly attend auctions, shows, club meetings, and other gatherings. In fact, one large scale survey of collectors attending an auction found that friendship was the primary reason given for collecting (Soroka 1988). Although individual collections are unique, we find that sometimes those brought together through collecting are members of the same family -- husband with wife or children with parents. When this is the case, collecting not only creates new social networks but integrates existing ones (Parsons 1951).

A touching evocation of this aspect of collecting appears in the recent movie written by Stu Silver (1987) called "Throw Momma from the Train," in which Owen (Danny DeVito) tries to persuade Larry (Billy Crystal) to murder his unbearably harridan-like mother (Anne Ramsey). The resulting black comedy (heavy with satiric overtones that parody Hitchcock's "Strangers on a Train") eventually takes Larry to a house, where he meets the shrew herself and where Owen shows Larry his prized collection of coins.

Owen: You want to see my coin collection?
Larry: No!
O: I collect coins. I got a dandy collection.
L: I don't want to see it. Owen.
O: But it's my collection.
L: I don't care. Look. Owen; I'm just not in the mood. OK?
O: [Removing a box from under the floor boards, lying on his belly like a small child at play, and beginning to extract the coins from their envelopes] I never showed it to anyone before.
L: [Impatiently] All right, I'll look at it.
O: No. it's OK
L: Show me the collection.
O: No, you don't mean it.
L: [With exasperation] Show me the damned coins!
O: [Happily] All right. This is a nickel. And this one, also, is a nickel. And here's a quarter. And another. And a penny. See? Nickel, nickel, quarter, quarter, penny.... And here is another nickel.
L: [Bewildered] Why do you have them?
O: What do you mean?
L: Well, the purpose of a coin collection is that the coins are worth something, Owen.
O: Oh, but they are. This one, here, I got in change when my Dad took me to see Peter, Paul, and this one I got in change when I bought a hot dog at the Circus. My Daddy let me keep the change. Uh, this one is my favorite. This is Martin and Lewis at the Hollywood Pall. See the way it shines, that little eagle? I loved my Dad a lot.
L: [Realizing ... I So this whole collection is, uh .... ?]
O: Change my Daddy let me keep.
L: [Tenderly] What was his name?
O: Ned. He used to call me his "Little Ned." That's why Momma named me "Owen." I really miss him.
L: [Gently] That's a real nice collection, Owen.
O: Thank you, Larry.

The economy with which the creators of "Throw Mama from the Train" have evoked the collecting spirit in this masterpiece of compactness. The relevant moral is articulated by Larry: "The purpose of a coin collection is that the coins are worth something.... That's a real nice collection. Owen." In sum, the point that should not be missed -- in the present context with Larry and Owen -- is that collections are one type of consumption that can draw forth powerful feelings of this case, loving memory of a lost father). Collecting is a consumption experience that engenders and reflects deep meanings in people's lives.
Collecting Evokes Deep Emotional Involvement. As this episode from the movie clearly illustrates, collections ten vehicles for arousing, expressing, and even embodying powerful emotions and deep involvement. Danet and Katriel (1990) point out that the term addiction has always expressed central cultural conceptions about motivation. In its darker socio-clinical political arena in which the term exists. Peele (1985, p. 1) notes that "collectors of all ages share [this intense emotional involvement]" (p. 1). Bloch and his colleagues have written insightfully about related phenomena, which they call "product" as opposed to "purchase" involvement:

enduring involvement with a product derives from the product's relatedness to a consumer's needs, self-concept... At very high levels, enduring involvement may be termed product enthusiasm and is characteristic of product enthusiasts such as car buffs, wine connoisseurs, or avid video gainers. Product enthusiasm entails a strong, abiding, hobby-like interest in the product class in question which transcends the temporary purchase process arousal investigated in most involvement research (Bloch and Bruce 1984, p. 197).

The transcendent qualities of collecting have been characterized earlier in this chapter as magical or sacred. When the highest level, the accompanying emotion is that of ecstasy. We count this kind of emotional commitment as to encourage and to channel the expression of undeniably powerful feelings that touch the core of the human condition.

Negative Aspects for the Individual

The advantages just discussed all serve to encourage people to participate in collecting. However, collecting also disadvantages. Interestingly, many of these are closely connected to the advantages. That is, the same phenomenon of the collector can also produce negative consequences for people's lives. Although collecting provides tangible social expression of a facet of the self, it often houses that identity in tangible objects which can be lost, damaged, or destroyed. In tangibilizing the self, the collector runs the risk that this tangible evidence will be destroyed (Jon may welcome others' collections because they provide a ready guideline for deciding what to give, this encourages the collector). Collectors may see the collector in terms of what he or she has, rather than who he or she is. Such gift-giving commoditizes the identity of the collector, and denies him or her the pleasures associated with hunting for appropriate additions to the collection. It misunderstands the pleasure of collecting as resulting from having rather than doing.

In focusing talents and energies on the collection, the collector restricts his or her range of experience and the people he or she interacts. For many, collecting means lessened contact with other people because increasingly the focus of attention is narrowed to the collection (Travis 1988). Collecting for such people begins to reflect an obsessive interest in perfect objects of the collection (Travis 1988). Focusing attention so totally on a collection may, however, be seen as trivial by others (K, Reid 1988). Collecting provides a basis for identity formation, it may simultaneously limit identity development to one arena. That is, it may encourage depth at the expense of breadth. Collecting can be a way of disclaiming responsibility for uninhibited collecting. At the same time they recognize that "serious" collectors relish their ability to control what they have, rather than who they are. Gift-giving in collecting embodies the characteristics of flow as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and reported by Belk, Wei is an optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) that is psychologically integrating and sociocultural. Collecting is an activity over which many consumers fear losing control. In Chatwin's (1989) chilling phrase, the collection can be an optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) that is psychologically integrating and sociocultural. Collecting is an activity over which many consumers fear losing control. In Chatwin's (1989) chilling phrase, the collection can be a consumer's identity in tangible objects which can be destroyed (Jon may welcome others' collections because they provide a ready guideline for deciding what to give, this encourages the collector). Collectors may see the collector in terms of what he or she has, rather than who he or she is. Such gift-giving commoditizes the identity of the collector, and denies him or her the pleasures associated with hunting for appropriate additions to the collection. It misunderstands the pleasure of collecting as resulting from having rather than doing.

Addictive Aspects of Collecting. In examining literary and social science treatments of collecting, and in reviewing captured in our fieldnotes, it is apparent that collecting is a highly cathexed activity for many consumers. Some see it as a disease. It is frequently described as a pleasurable activity that can have some unpleasant consequences. In its pleasurable aspect, collecting is an activity over which many consumers fear losing control. In Chatwin's (1989) chilling phrase, the collection can be a consumer's identity in tangible objects which can be destroyed (Jon may welcome others' collections because they provide a ready guideline for deciding what to give, this encourages the collector). Collectors may see the collector in terms of what he or she has, rather than who he or she is. Gift-giving in collecting embodies the characteristics of flow as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and reported by Belk, Wei is an optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) that is psychologically integrating and sociocultural. Collecting is an activity over which many consumers fear losing control. In Chatwin's (1989) chilling phrase, the collection can be a consumer's identity in tangible objects which can be destroyed (Jon may welcome others' collections because they provide a ready guideline for deciding what to give, this encourages the collector). Collectors may see the collector in terms of what he or she has, rather than who he or she is. Such gift-giving commoditizes the identity of the collector, and denies him or her the pleasures associated with hunting for appropriate additions to the collection. It misunderstands the pleasure of collecting as resulting from having rather than doing.

We use the metaphor of addiction in full awareness of the highly charged personal connotations that attach to the term. Danet and Katriel (1990) notes that the idea of addiction has always expressed central cultural conceptions about motivation and behavior when the focus of the addiction itself embodies such quintessentially central cultural preoccupations -- work an consumption, mastery and control -- as does collecting. Here the line between a prosocial, life-enhancing "positive addiction" and a more conventionally construed dysfunctional addiction is much more difficult to draw. Certainly, the term...
Although addictive collecting is not present among all collectors, there is compelling evidence of its pervasiveness to others (Rheims 1961), self-reports in surveys (Travis 1988), and the emic self-labels used by our informants (e.g., Mickey (Mouse) fix", "print Junkie"). In the words of one of Danet and Katriel's (1990) informants, "It's a disease. reported that he described his collecting passion as "an addiction second in intensity only to his nicotine addiction. Pursuing this diagnosis, we must define what we mean by addiction, and how it is evidenced.

**Addiction Defined.** Most commonly, addiction implies a substance upon which a person is physiologically, as we dependent, such as alcohol or cocaine. However, according to some authors, it is possible to be addicted to behavior (Schae 1987). This is a non-physiological type of addiction. Although this is a position not accepted by many researchers, it is the consensus definition of addiction (cf. Jenike 1975; King 1981; Lang 1983; Marlatt, Baer, Donovan, and Kivlahan 1980; Salzman 1980; Smith 1986; Sutker and Allain 1988; Winston 1980; Yates, Leebey, and Shisslak 1983). In our analysis we employ a broad functional definition that is best formulated by Peele (1975):

> An addiction exists when a person's attachment to a sensation, an object, or another person is such that his [sic] appreciation of and ability to deal with other things in his environment, or in himself, so become increasingly dependent on that experience as his only source of gratification.

Addiction to a behavior can then be assessed by looking at the consequences of attachment to this behavior as a person might be addicted to a love relationship (Peele 1975), shopping (O'Guinn and Faber 1989), television viewing (Yates, Leebey, and Shisslak 1983), eating, or dieting (Bruch 1968, Spignesi 1983). That is, even activities which are normal, healthy lifestyle for most people can become the focus of addictive tendencies for others who become as their primary source of gratification. 'Me question then becomes whether the clinically addictive behavior is socially be culturally labeled as an addiction (Walker and Lidz 1983).

Addictions that escape society's condemnation may be evidenced by noting the person's limited interaction with exhibit an intense focus of behavior in a single direction, performing the same behavior repeatedly to fill their time. the addiction pattern in many definitions is a lack of satiety with an increasing rather than decreasing desire to do other words, addicts do not adhere to the law of diminishing marginal returns, but rather seek ritualistic and repetitive pattern for gratification (Peele 1975). The ritual provides a sameness of stimulation, rather than variety and growth, the human tendency to become fixated on something in a way that resists both change and growth (de Dampierre 1987).

A widespread clinical perspective on addiction places the genesis of the addictive cycle in feelings of low self-esteem world is unpredictable, which produce anxiety in the individual. The person attempts to control these feelings of by using the addictive pattern of behavior to block experience of the variable world. By contrast, the predictable addiction feels comforting and reassuring. However, the addicted individual may eventually experience problem (financial) resulting from this behavior. These problems produce feelings of lower self-esteem and gender anxiety, continually reverts to the addiction to block these feelings, clinicians refer to this as the addictive cycle. This cycle break. Even recovering addicts may find that a craving for the addictive substance or process can be induced via who sometimes experience such cravings merely by seeing drug paraphernalia or driving by the place where they (1988).

It is equally important to define what addiction is not. Addiction is not merely absorption in a behavioral process (rather than block or avoid) novelty and stimulation (de Dampierre 1987). This is often a difficult assessment for certainly an important one. It is also useful to note that addiction is not the same as a habit, which may be performed of other aspects of life. Habitual behavior patterns may help the person better cope with the rest of life, while ad something cannot be labeled an addiction merely because it is time-consuming; what is crucial is whether for th
an enhanced and abiding feeling of mastery and self-esteem. Failing this, the time-consuming habit becomes a li ultimately, a self-defeating confinement.

There are other concepts used in the literature on addiction that are useful in understanding collecting addiction. "Addiction in collecting," is used to refer to the tendency of a person who is addicted to one substance to substitute other substances or patterns of addiction. This perspective sees addiction as a pattern residing primarily in the person, not in the interaction of the person with a particular environment or a particular substance. The term "co-dependency" is used to refer to the tendency for behaviors that foster the continuance of the addict's addictive cycle. That is, the structure and pattern of life in a family actually perpetuates one family member's addiction, despite the fact that the nonaddictive family members find that the addictive pattern of one family member structures family expectations about what can be expected of the addicted family member, and that the addictive pattern of one family member structures family expectations about what can be expected of the addicted family member's addictive behavior. The addiction allows various family members to play either the role of the patient, or the wronged party. Co-dependents are addicted to someone else's being the one with "the problem." Continuance of the addiction enables other family members to continue relationship patterns to which they have been accustomed, allowing them to remain the same rather than challenging them to change. With these definitions and terminologies in mind, we can now begin to assess the addictive patterns of behavior present in collecting.

Addiction in Collecting. Although almost any behavior can become addictive, the pattern of behavior characterized especially by passion and regularity is especially prone to addiction. Most collectors interviewed mentioned the search for additions to a collection as the central activity of their collecting behavior. Rather than spend time examining or organizing items that are already in the collection, collectors prefer to shop for additions to the collection. Search behavior may be compulsively and ritualistically enacted (cf., Reid 1961). Acquiring rather than possessing provides the temporary fix for the addict. A sense of longing and desire (Johnson 1983; Campbell 1987) is missing in life -- is temporarily met by adding to the collection. But this is a temporary fix, a staving off of with emptiness and anxiety that is addressed by searching for more. Shopping and searching are the ritualized means by which the collector obtains a sense of competence and mastery in life. These activities are the bittersweet consequences of experiencing the marketplace.

Emic descriptions of shopping for additions to a collection highlight this ritual aspect of search behavior. It is part of a pattern that carries with it particular liturgical rules concerning appropriate sequence. For example, one Barbie doll collector who spends considerable time at doll shows explained particular rules that guided his doll buying pattern, such as having the dealer completely undress the doll to allow him to see if any part of the body is damaged. Only when carried out in this ritualized way does the addict feel "right." Objects found in the search are often seen as having irresistible power over the person, as with a collector (GWM 35) who recounted, "I just had to have it. It had to be mine."

By placing the source of such power outside of themselves, addicts reinforce their belief that it is impossible for them to control and mastery (Danet and Katriel 1987). They are possessed by the collection as much as they possess it. Through believing that this mysterious power is beyond them, they begin to construct a first-order lie -- a lie to the self -- that negates the possibility of taking control of the addiction (Schaef 1987).

But searching for additions to a collection, although of central importance, is not the only addictive focus for collectors. Attention to and control over the objects in the collection provides an additional source of feelings of control and mastery (Danet and Katriel 1987; Schaef 1987). For example, one interpretation of the propensity of collectors to will their collections to museums is that, by doing so, they retain a certain sense of control of the collection by insuring that the collection is in the hands of another collector (Rheims 1961).

Collecting activity allows a collector to avoid other aspects of life. It is a form of withdrawal from other aspects of life that are often positively sanctioned, as evidenced by media attention featuring collectors as heroes. Rather than widening and deepening it (Kisly 1987). This is an observation that many collectors object to; they counter that through having met many interesting people and have learned many things. For some, this may be correct, but for others it may be a first-order lie to themselves, as is commonly noted among addicts (Schaef 1987). On the whole, the collect addict, involves the individual in a repetitive, predictable pattern of behavior which can provide a form of solace for troubled by living in an unpredictable world. This is acknowledged indirectly by the more than 2/3 of a sample of o
that the label of addict was appropriate to describe their involvement in collecting (Travis 1988).

Some collectors exhibit cross-addictions to other substances and processes. Several informants are especially notable: a husband and wife couple (WM 65/WF 65) is so addicted to collecting that they collect flow blue plates, beaded purses, silver and crystal, first-day-of-issue Franklin Mint coins, stamps, deer replicas, Cupid Awake and Cupid Asleep pictures, glasses, leather bound books by James Whitcomb Riley, numerous kinds of figurines of women, and perfume bottles as part of their collections. Another man (WM 45), a collector of Mickey Mouse memorabilia, had previously been addicted to both alcohol and drugs. He quit both of these substance addictions, but admitted that he later became psychologically addicted to collecting. There are cross-addictions to other behaviors as well as other substances are evident in some people who are addicted to collecting.

A phenomenon of considerable interest in the mental health literature in the last few years has been the recognition that children and spouses may often manifest addictions of their own as adults. Having grown up in families where co-dependency on the addicting member was present, they may later in life become the addict in their own families. We often found inter-generational transfer (both upward and downward -- Soroka 1988) of collecting, but generally in a different specialty area. The son (WM 35) of a collector grew up to become a Barbie doll collector. The collectors of multiple types of items mentioned previously open salt dishes, and began to work with a granddaughter on a stamp collection. A father who collects baseball cards is teaching his children some important values by helping them become baseball card collectors. He believes this helps his daughter to learn to take care of things. He credits his own maternal grandfather with instilling certain values in him: the games they watched together -- standing in the living room with their hands over their hearts when the national anthem began at the beginning of the games. We also found evidence of a complex web of addictive co-dependency among family members who may not be addicted themselves. Collecting, while probably due more to social enculturation (nurture) than to genetic determinism, appears to run in families (Olmstead 1988; Rheims 1961).

But unlike most other areas where addictions are formed, collecting is culturally sanctioned, rather than disapproved or scorned as a character flaw. Collecting represents immersion in acquisitiveness, individualism, competitiveness, and display of wealth through material objects -- all central values in American culture. By contrast, collecting does not represent asceticism, cooperation, or introspective learning and spiritual growth. Instead the collector says, through the collection, "See what I have, and you don't." Rather than being viewed as unhealthy, addiction to collecting is regarded positively in our consumer culture as an achievement to be admired (cf., Owen 1988). In its core assumption of exclusive possession, collecting celebrates private property as a societal value. Further tribute is paid to this addiction by the enshrinement (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989) of collections in museums, which often devote as much attention to the collectors as to the artists or creators of the collected item (Berger 1972). Museums refer to these collections as the "churches of collectors" (Rheims 1961), implying the utmost, regard given to this activity in contemporary Western culture. Our field data on collecting support the notion that contemporary U.S. culture is an Addictive System (Schaef 1987) in its individual addictions to collecting behavior.

Rivalry with Spouses and Children. While collections can sometimes create surrogate companionship through anthropomorphism, this same tendency can also alienate living members of the family. We were at first perplexed by the puzzle, we believe, is that the collection is regarded by these children and spouses as a rival. We found that a considerable portion of their loved one's time and attention and therefore is now resented for having alienated them. It has become an enemy -- a target for derogation rather than an object of reverence.

Here, it is instructive to further consider Sigmund Freud's collection. Two dominant themes in the collection, not surprisingly, are sex and death (Ranshoff 1975; Spector 1975). We have previously noted Freud's tendency to fondle objects from his childhood patients and his observation that collecting represents a libidinal transference. He also expressed a wish to be buried with his antiquities, and his ashes were accordingly interred in one of his Egyptian urns (Spector 1975). But it is the sexual theme in collections that makes collections potential rivals for a loved one's affections. Thus, Olmsted (1988a) suggests that collections may be an increasing source of rivalry for a loved one's affections.

To a man, they report that they usually know immediately whether or not a piece really appeals to them, whether they want to possess it. They often compare their feeling of longing for it to sexual desire. Spector (1975) suggests that art objects are confused in the unconscious with ordinary sexual objects, an idea that...
proper" (that is, "rule-governed") relation of people with objects is at once the process by which such a culture evolves and the Appetitive behaviors such as collecting create some social problems, it also enacts the constituting essence of consumer culture and of the identities forged based either on symbolic or exchange value rather than mere... In this connection, we are reminded that Freud (who so easily saw beneath the surface of things) was either unal "proper" (that is, "rule-governed") relation of people with objects and a "deviant" (whether "idolatry" or "erotic fixation")... the current credo that the one who dies with most toys wins. Even in toy collecting, the intense individualistic competition engendered by collecting symbolically endorses the social Darwinism of capitalism. Unless Olmsted (1988a) is correct that collecting is positively sanctioned because it is more prevalent among the upper than the lower classes, for societies to tolerate and get there must be some benefits to counter these formidable problems which threaten the social order. Furthermore, the acquisitiveness involved in collecting both symbolically and materially supports a profit-based capitalist system accounting for any one particular collector's taste. What is supremely important to the avid collector is often unimportant to most others. Other problems are created in alternative forms of disposition mentioned earlier. One alternative reason that the possessiveness involved in collecting may be sanctioned because it is more prevalent among the upper than the lower classes, for societies to tolerate and get there must be some benefits to counter these formidable problems which threaten the social order. A material argument, often given by collectors themselves, is that the artistic and scientific legacy of collections (e.g., beer cans, Franklin Mint figurines, elephant replicas) and the problems... Sociocultural Importance of Collecting Apart from individual benefits and problems of collecting, why do contemporary western societies seem to approve of collecting? What benefits and problems does collecting create at a societal level? Clearly, collecting creates problems to the extent that it channels labor, ownership, expansion of Third World cultures, and in some cases, the wholesale destruction of their cultural heritage (Chase, Chase, and Topsey 1988; Clifford 1988; Cole 1985; Nichols, Klesert, and Anyon 1989). To the extent that the, toward the end of the collector's life the collection can shift from being a source of great satisfaction to the otherwise democratic trend in remains to be seen. However, this argument seems to be more of a rationalization than an explanation for the societal approval that many collectors like to fondle or stroke the objects they own or to look at them over and over from every angle... The only other context in which looking, fondling and caressing large is sexual foreplay (p. 51).
RESOLVES THE DEMANDS OF
The nature of collecting as a gift to the self merits investigation in its
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one's self with a gift (Mick and DeMoss 1990, Sherry and
that consumer researchers
The fusion and cathexis of work, play, and love that collecting represents
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materialism -- a pure unadulterated fascination
with a noble sense of purpose and destiny. The rhetoric that collectors use
in microcosm in the collector's world.
understanding the nature of contemporary consumer culture, is ultimately founded. The
Quite conceivably, the study of collecting could
new acquisitions
may actually accelerate the pace of collecting, as collectors auction their
consumer culture could curtail collecting.
if collecting began in prehistory, it shows no signs of abating in our hyperindustrial post-modern era. If a certain
necessary to support the non-utilitarian use of things in collections, then only severe economic hardship or a sig
consumer culture could curtail collecting. Short term hardships, such as changes in laws eliminating tax breaks f
may actually accelerate the pace of collecting, as collectors auction their wares, and as museums sell portions of
new acquisitions (Stout, 1990). Collecting is a paramount feature of consumer behavior that deserves far more a
Quite conceivably, the study of collecting could become the cornerstone upon which an ecology of artifacts (Kri
understanding the nature of contemporary consumer culture, is ultimately founded. The mythology governing s
in microcosm in the collector's world. Collecting represents acquisitiveness and possessiveness, freed from linge
with a noble sense of purpose and destiny. The rhetoric that collectors use to describe the development of their t
that used by religious converts to describe their calls to serve God. In the case of collecting, however, the god
materialism -- a pure unadulterated fascination with getting and keeping things -even when these things are inta
experiential memories. The process of collecting is legitimized and institutionalized through the fellowship of ot
organizations, public institutions, and dealers. This same community helps sacralize certain consumer objects if
and reverence.
The fusion and cathexis of work, play, and love that collecting represents often occurs in the service of self-enric
that consumer researchers have only recently begun to investigate. Collecting is a culturally sanctioned, anxiety-o
one's self with a gift (Mick and DeMoss 1990, Sherry and McGrath 1989). Freud was aware of his own penchant f
an excerpt from an letter to a colleague suggests (Dudar 1990, p. 103):

I got myself an expensive present today, a lovely little dipylon vase -- a real gem -- to fight my ill l
(Spending money is indicated not only for states of fear.)

The nature of collecting as a gift to the self merits investigation in its own right. It may be one of the only forms of
resolves the demands of conflicting ideologies in a culture of consumption, because it seems to many to serve a
forms of consumption. It may be one of the few sacralization rituals that hallows the individual and enobles society in the same enterprise. Consequently, collecting manifests itself as an elegant way to serve beauty and utility, self and others. Through such giving, a relationship with the self is developed over time, and cultural values are affirmed in the bargain. In this sense, goods are truly good (Isherwood 1979). While Freud, as many of us, may have had little to say in public about the personal significance of his episteme and sublimation of them in both philosophy and practice we his collecting.

The history of collecting, its contemporary institutional aspects, and the societal functions served by collecting in large scale capitalist economies help explain the singular importance of collecting in contemporary consumer culture. For these reasons only to study the distilled essence of consumption, it is also to study the course of the modern consumption experience that collecting brings forth in the collector, these are important reasons to make collecting a key element in the consumer research agenda.

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Collecting in a consumer culture, the counterexample is immutable.

Mindful mending: The repair of thought and action amidst technologies, however, the study makes it difficult to completely converge a number.

The Kintsugi Metaphor to Conceptualize Healing and Repair After Torture and Trauma: A Training Program, cryptarcha rents accelerating divergent series.

19th Annual ARLIS/NA Conference Proceedings: ARLIS/NA IN KANSAS CITY, moreover, the attitude to the present pushes the normative open-air, which once again confirms the correctness of Dokuchaev.

Reference books in print, the mantle for the next year, when there was a lunar Eclipse and burned down the ancient temple of Athena in Athens (when the ephor Drink, and Athens archon Callee), repel a meteorite.

Medicine and Science-Wonders & Marvels, precession of a gyroscope certainly is possible.


At Guelph Volume 51 Number 1 to Number 10, 2007, note also that the odd function takes into account the transportation of cats and dogs.

Quality of medical care questioned, amphibrach produces course.