MEANINGFUL MATERIALISM:
COLLECTORS RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR OBJECTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The shared language, attitudes, practices and patterns of those who participate in "collecting" in the lower mainland area of British Columbia are described. Recurring themes and patterns emerge in the analysis of data obtained through interviews with thirty collector-informants. The generalizability of collecting as a phenomenon which exists outside of what is being collected is established. Collectors' roles as curators and the serious and consuming aspects of collecting, including the cycles of collecting, affection and sentiment held toward collected objects, and the strategies and approaches to the process of collecting are discussed. Propositions set out by previous researchers Belk, Danet and Katriel are examined in light of the data. Implications for museum studies and museum education specifically, are considered.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Personal collecting, or the systematic selection, acquisition and saving of objects, constitutes one of the deepest and most committed forms of object attachment. It is carried out by a wide range of the population, and constitutes a personal dimension within the circulation of consumer goods. The significance of individual collectors to the larger society is well documented. Collectors are the greatest single influence on the nature and existence of museums, they indelibly affect what is in our museums, which in turn affects our cultural representations. Yet, the attitude of museums toward private collectors is one of deep ambivalence. While the continuous expansion of museum collections is still dependent upon the existence of private, individual collectors, such collectors are also the museum's competitors.¹ Considering the degree of involvement that private collectors have in the formation of museum collections and how they affect whole markets of particular goods, it is surprising how little academic work has focused on collectors or on personal collecting. As Halpin, a curator states; "Who are these collectors? They are surprisingly hidden in public discourse, except as stereotypes, and essentially understudied by academics, except in the emerging field of consumer studies" (Halpin 1991, 1).

Given that in the West private collecting preceded institutional collecting, one might think that institutional collectors (curators) learned what collecting was and how to

¹ See Turner (1980) for a discussion of the private art collector as museum competitor.
carry it out from private collectors. There is no evidence of this tutorial relationship.

The contemporary museum enterprise expresses little interest in the personal collector as other than donor, and benefactor, or in personal collecting as a significant human activity carried out by large numbers of individuals outside museums.

The following research will argue that a greater understanding of the impetus and dynamics of personal collectors and the process of collecting are essential knowledge for museum studies because this form of object attachment results in the large personal collections which both initiate and expand our major museums and fill community and regional ones. These collections, and, therefore, the collectors who assemble them, are influential in creating the "meaning" of objects in larger cultural settings. If we were not collectively and personally "attached" to these objects, they would not remain in the midst of our personal and collective lives.

Within the discipline of museum studies, whose research agenda includes the full range of museum topics, two topics have been avoided: personal collectors and the process of collecting; and the emotional attachment of people to objects, or the "love" of objects. These two topics are deeply connected. Personal attachment, affection, passion and sentiment toward objects are the primary differentiating factors between institutional collecting and that of the private individual collector.

When referring to object attachment, to use the term "love" immediately places this work in the area dealing with human "sentiment"--an area abhorred academically for its association with sentimentality. The lack of research on "serious sentiment" and affection toward objects is part of the denial of the power of objects that permeates most
academic material culture study (See Freedberg, 1989). In museum studies, work has, for the most part, ignored or denied the existence of "sentiment" as emotionally based object attachment. This sentiment, along with other forms of object attachment expressed by collectors, is part of what the following study will attempt to examine as it seeks to understand and study collectors and the process of collecting. Collecting is a process whereby collectors seek, crave, desire, admire, acquire, ennoble and venerate objects. The study's purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of this form of object attachment within the person-object relationship and examine this relationship in light of museum practice.

Material culture theories have focused on exchange, barter, and trade of commodities, but have, for the most part, ignored sentiment held toward objects. Equally, they have ignored the "passionate", "irrational" or "personal" motivations for object acquisition. What is "sentimental" or "personal" is often considered idiosyncratic and has, except in studies of "traditional communities", normally fallen outside of material culture study. The fact goes unrecognized that objects can have "personal value" which may differ from, or even contrast to, that allocated by the larger economic sphere in which people and objects circulate. Personally valued objects affect, create, and interface with cultural spheres such as museum collections. As mentioned, even museum studies has been neglectful of the emotional attachment of people to objects, and of the study of personal collectors in general; yet it could be argued that curators represent the institutionalization of private collecting.

Within what is termed "popular culture" the intense emotive relationship that
occurs between people and objects, though invisible within the academic social sciences, permeates both fictional literature and everyday lived practice. The following research studies "collectors" and "collecting" rather than one aspect or group within the collecting "culture." It focuses, therefore, not solely on the elite collector of reified objects (those objects deemed most likely to find their way into the equally elite museums), but studies collectors in general. Individual collectors of many types of objects were selected for study because of their relevance to the full range of museums. Included in this range are local, eccentric, theme, community, natural history, and art museums.

This study acknowledges, however, that the majority of personal collections do not find their way into any type of museum. Rather, most are haphazardly dispersed, thrown away or sold. Still, it is posited that these collectors exercise and act out the same process as their elite and powerful counterparts, and express the same attachment to the objects they collect. Any study of collecting would be incomplete if it did not include them. One can only speculate as to what kinds of collections will "make it" into the museums of the future. Of more direct importance is the need to understand and examine the phenomenon of collecting--its generalizability, which stands outside of what object is collected. The following research asserts that, as a phenomenon, collecting can be universalized over the object category: that the process of collecting is highly similar, regardless of whether the object collected is a Ming vase or a kitchen magnet.

Based on thirty British Columbian collector-informants, the following research asserts that individuals can be, and indeed are, deeply in love with individual objects and categories of objects. Further, it asserts that this deep attachment or sentiment is
widespread and observable in collectors, and that an understanding of either the museum enterprise or the larger relationship of people and things is incomplete without a recognition of this dimension. As the literature will indicate with the exception of folklore, academic denial of object attachment has spanned several disciplines. It has been seen as a part of psychology, where it has been viewed as both fetishistic and phobic rather than as natural or widespread.

Collecting is part of a complex social and cultural agenda regarding objects. The nature of collectors' object attachment bears a direct relationship to the larger desire to see, cherish, save and value objects collectively, hence collectors' well-documented roles in establishing museums and even whole disciplines, such as art history (Alsop 1981). Even the relationship between collecting and history itself has not gone unnoticed. Yefimov, a photo historian, states, "Collecting practices and history are much more closely related than historians would be willing to admit" (1989, 2). It has been claimed that history as a discipline was made possible by the increased interest in collecting in the 19th century (Turner 1982). Before an understanding of the "content" of our collective "collections" is possible, a much greater understanding of the motivation and vision of the personal collector is needed; for, as Halpin states, "hidden at the heart of the museum, concealed by the ideology of public collecting, of science, heritage, and treasures, is the quirky and passionate private collector" (1991, 5).

In many instances, a whole wing or section of a museum may be devoted to a single individual's personal collection; yet often that individual's interaction with the process of collecting--the role his/her collecting experience played in the personality or
content of that collection--has been under-studied. Once the collection becomes institutionalized, its personal significance to its collector is often absorbed or hidden from view. The "personal" is erased in order to create the collective voice. Indelibly, however, that significance remains in the museum. Major museums built upon such private collections confer credibility and legitimize the values expressed by their contributors, therefore adopting even the goals of those private collectors. Turner, a historian, claims that this adoption of private collectors' goals has "produced bias in collections toward the rare, unique, decorative and finely crafted. These qualities in themselves are not at all negative but they have often been pursued to the detriment of other collecting goals" (Turner 1982, 87).

As collectors have a particularly focused, deliberate, and observable attachment, they have been able to serve as a vehicle from which to examine the cherishing of and intense attachment to objects. Their common object attachment makes them a studiable group, in that collecting is pursued by a sizeable section of the population and applies to a wide range of object categories and types. The informants for this study are thirty diverse collectors, within one historic time frame, cultural milieu and geographic space. In many ways, all thirty exemplify a deep personal involvement, commitment, belief in and passion for objects. Once these collectors were interviewed, and their data recorded and thematically analyzed, insights into the domain of private collecting could be elaborated, along with a great deal of material on the phenomenon of collecting.

As the study progressed, much more was revealed about the connections between the process enacted with objects and collectors' unique relationships with their
collections—a relationship which was understandably inseparable from the influence of the collecting process. Yet the process can only be understood as dependent upon attachment to the category of object collected.

The findings from the data and the process of research took the work into its own dimension, resulting in a more descriptive study of collecting and the relationship collecting produces with the collected objects than was my initial intention. Much was revealed about collectors' actions, attitudes, affections, observations, and metaphors regarding their objects. Collecting was described as a self-cultivating, creative, and entangling enterprise.

This study questions traditional approaches to consumption and possession as purely economic activities. Consumption can be a creative act, an act of resistance, as well as one of personal definition—a place where an object's meaning is created. Collecting, an ultimate form of appropriation and recontextualization, greatly affects the social life of objects. By the same token, objects and their attachment can and do have profound effects upon individuals' lives. With the proliferation of post-modern work in which hidden agendas and hegemonic motives seem to underlie all institutions, it is important to establish and acknowledge that materialism is more complex than was originally assumed, and that objects and their promotion can have a full range of both life-diminishing and life-enhancing aspects. This study contributes to the understanding of how individuals use objects in their continuous struggle for self-definition, meaning and mastery in the modern and postmodern material world.
There is a long and rich history of human reliance upon and involvement with objects—those concrete, tangible things we have interacted with, used in the service of some kind of goal or mandate, or appreciated for their very existence, their qualities, their presence. This engagement with objects, and the belief that it can contribute positively to human cultivation, lies behind a wide range of differing approaches to material culture. Yet our relationship with collected objects remains unexplained, full of contradictions and deficient of any unified theory. Miller, an archaeologist, attributes part of the incomprehensibility of the person-object relationship to the everyday, "natural" quality of objects. He claims that: "The very physicality of the object which makes it appear so immediate, sensual and assimilable belies its actual nature, and that material culture is one of the most resistant forms of cultural expression in terms of our attempts to comprehend it" (Miller 1987, 1).

As has been stated, part of our lack of understanding of this area results from the lack of academic research on the person-object relationship. Negative academic attitudes towards research on "things" have contributed to this neglect; with the exception of folklore, where research has occurred its focus has been limited. Influenced by a paradigm which separates the mind and the body, academic work has become more and more "theoretical", detaching it from any connection to the concrete. Or, as Kouwenhoven states in regard to the lack of significant material culture studies, "we have
been so preoccupied with words that we have neglected things" (Kouwenhoven in Schereth 1982, 81). Cultural studies have been classed as being either about people (culture) or about things (material culture). Discourse dealing with ideas divorced from physical things is seen to be most desirable and has resulted in "a growing second class status for those scholars who have persisted in making material culture a primary focus for their scholarly research and professional endeavors" (Nason 1987, 32).

This disdain for research which focuses on things is coupled with a disdain for the area of practice or everyday lived experience and also contributes to lower academic status for research dealing with popular culture. Currently, the distinctions; between "high" (elite) culture and "popular" (low) culture are undergoing criticism. As Shudson and Mukerji state, "the traditional division of high and popular culture has been a political division rather than a defensible intellectual or aesthetic one" (Shudson & Mukerji 1991, 1). Even though these divisions are being examined within the field of anthropology and material culture, little work has been undertaken which deals with this dimension. McCracken states unequivocally that "Anthropologists have been as prepared as anyone to speculate on their own society, but they have been fastidiously unwilling to examine the ethnographic details of mainstream North American life" (1989, 168). At the same time, it is recognized that our culture is an increasingly material one and that consumption is a process which can potentially be used as an instrument of social and personal development. McCracken states:

The logic, imperatives and details of this process of self and world construction through goods are enormously understudied and are only now attracting rigorous study. As the contemporary culture has made material possessions
one of its most compelling preoccupations, it is therefore doubly odd and unfortunate that the study of the use of goods in the construction of the self and world should have suffered such prolonged neglect (McCracken 1986, 80).

Another factor contributing to the neglect of a full investigation of the person-object relationship has been the narrow focus of work on the concept of "objectification." This concept has almost exclusively been applied to the relationship of people to people or to people as things rather than on the relationship of people and things. In the early source writings on objectification, Freud, Marx and Hegel include objects and the environment as significant sources of "objectification," or role models; yet, those who took up the concept later have focused almost entirely on people as objects, a distinctly non-material approach. The study of objects as significant role models has been excluded. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton state, "Social scientists tend to look for the understanding of human life in the internal psychic processes of the individual or in the patterns of relationship between people; rarely do they consider the role of objects" (1981, 1). This exclusion reveals our discomfort in this area of study and is evidence of the continued academic separation of studies involving the physical world from those of the metaphysical realm. Objects are posed as antithetical to ideas; things and ideas, the physical and the metaphysical are set up as a dichotomy. According to Kubler, "The archaeologists and the anthropologists classify things by their uses, having first separated material and mental culture, or things and ideas" (Kubler 1962, 3). In this way, objects have come to be associated with the mind-body dichotomy.
The discourse in regard to "materialism," especially in anthropology, has also limited the conversation regarding the role of objects in lived experience. The approach to "materialism" has focused predominantly on the area of production as the prime location of conflicting social relations, neglecting or tending to simplify consumption patterns. When social archeology and material culture studies have not focused on production as well, they have tended to focus on qualities inherent in objects (such as style), or on patterns of consumption or exchange, rather than examining sentiment or the residual, personal effects of ownership, long term or lived relationship, or engagement with objects. Even within consumer studies, marketing, whose primary focus is on aspects of our involvement with the material world, has focused on the act of consumption, on business as a construct, and on economic theory, rather than on a lived relationship with the goods or on their personal meaning once acquired. Consumer studies researchers Wallendorf and Arnould state, "For the most part, modern consumer research published in marketing has not examined directly the phenomenon of attachment to objects and the meaning of object ownership (Belk 1985) despite the interest of certain of its forebears (Veblen 1899)" (1988, 531).

Academically, the field of consumer studies has been perceived as falling outside of the social sciences, revealing a basic attitude toward consumption as the domain of an applied science rather than of a social one. Only recently have a small group of consumer studies and material culture analysts such as Belk (1982), McCracken (1989) and Miller (1987) used ethnographic methodologies in an attempt to study an expanded notion of both commodity and consumption in our present material milieu.
Another factor which has influenced the investigation of people and objects has been the critique of Western culture which posits "materialism" as corrupt and bad. This position has pointed only to the negative consequences of increased materialism, and suggests that the relationship of people to things is, for the most part, neurotic or fetishistic, or entirely concerned with dominance and status. This perspective has been a significant factor limiting the definition of objects to that of commodities. Growing out of a Veblenian mode of thinking, whereby objects serve primarily as self-advertisement and as visible signs of status, this view has dominated the literature to the exclusion of most others. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton state, "The field has begun to recognize that the eventual meaning carried by consumer goods is enormously more various and complex than the Veblen-like insistence on status was capable of recognizing. It now needs to take account of the alienable, moveable, manipulable quality of meaning" (1981, x). Thomas, a material anthropologist, confirms this when he states,

What is private and idiosyncratic is normally outside the vision of the social sciences, but it seems important to recognize that artifacts can have peculiarly personal value arising from some association with an individual's biography. What passes largely unrecognized in both collective scales of value and in the systemic dynamics of transactions is that this kind of value, like the heirloom status of the treasures discussed by Weiner, is not a principle of exchange but a principle that is excluded by, or is incompatible with, exchange; and in this sense it can hardly be accommodated by any theory that takes value to emerge at the moment of circulation (Thomas 1991, 31).

Thomas goes on to suggest that the identification of this form of value could lead to a micro-ethnography that would relate the personal to the economic. The following
research takes up that agenda by studying the neglected area of personal collectors and collecting--a personally and culturally significant form of object attachment.

As the review of literature will argue, academic work in museum studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology, art history, and consumer studies has rarely focused on the collecting phenomenon; yet all are areas with a potential interest in the subject. Few studies have examined collecting as a process, and no study has thus far looked at the specific relationship collectors have with their objects. Almost no empirical data could be found concerning collectors and their characteristics. As Treas and Brannen state, in regard to serious investigations of collecting, "Scientific investigation of collectors and their motivation is fragmentary, and what has been published is largely based upon speculation" (1976, 234).

As a phenomenon collecting is one of the most dynamic and far-reaching of the processes that transform and create the meaning of objects--perhaps the ultimate form of recontextualization and appropriation. It is certainly a well-recognized pastime or hobby in contemporary North American culture, spanning age, gender, and economic boundaries. Yet, little attention has been given to it even within studies of popular culture. Given the number and percentage of people who collect or who have been collectors, it has been estimated that one out of three people in North America have collected something at one time in their life (O'Brien 1981). It is an activity which offers insights into the larger person-object relationship, and to the establishment and continuance of museums, therefore it cannot easily be dismissed. Rather, it can be argued that a great deal more work is needed. Belk, one of the few researchers doing
work on the topic of collecting, states emphatically, "no comprehensive integrated model of collecting exists in the social sciences" (Belk 1988, 31).

This research has some degree of application beyond that of very specific kinds of collectors. In some ways, we all are collectors, saving and caring for special objects. It will be argued that while the collectors studied have centered their focus on one particular category of object, and present an intensified acting-out of their attachment to objects, they represent an involvement in objects which is shared by all of us in various degrees in regard to our personal possessions.

Collecting is an act which is not only personal but political, inasmuch as it is "concerned with what from the material world specific groups and individuals choose to preserve, value and exchange" (Clifford 1988, 221).

Declaring private collectors to be central characters in both the world of art and in culture more generally, the historian Pomian, speaking of the influence of one group of private collectors in Italy, and of the crystallization of civic loyalty and the development of patriotism which that group affected claims, "It soon becomes clear that their role was actually a political one, as they had a very real, albeit invisible influence on urban life" (Pomian 1990, 2).

People collect that which relates to their subjective realities, so that what they collect helps to define who they are, just as the reified collections which find their way into museums are "continuous sources of data about their varying constituencies, their objectification of the world, and their struggle for control" (Domínequez 1988, 7).
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS RESEARCH

This study focuses primarily on collectors as a vehicle to explore the person-object relationship, especially in the area of object attachment, and therefore hopes to contribute to the understanding of the power and role of objects as shapers of values, goals and meaning. This research sets out to describe the common lived relationships between individual collectors and the objects of their collections, and to describe how those relationships are shaped by the collecting process.

This study of collectors will relate to a line of research and writing in regard to people's relationship with objects undertaken recently by sociologists aligned with the Chicago School: Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), who studied meaningful personal possessions; Miller (1987), who has studied the deep role that objects play in contemporary life; Belk (1988), a researcher in consumer studies, who has been one of the few social scientists who has done work directly on the topic of collecting; and McCracken (1986) who has examined object attachment and individuals' curatorial relationship to personal objects.

The present study is part of and contributes to the work currently being undertaken on the history of museum collections. Describing this "history" Pomian states,

This is the history which is reflected in changes to the contents of collections, to their location and to the context which each category of object is given, not only by those belonging to other categories but also by the language used to describe them. It is reflected too in changes to the way objects are displayed,
to their public and, last of all, to the attitudes of displayers and visitors alike to these collections (Pomian 1990, 5).

The accomplishment of these goals should result in a greater understanding of the intricacy and complexity of personal collectors, and of their entangled relationship to the museum enterprise. This study will provide needed data and analysis which can be used comparatively to study changes in the nature of personal collecting over time and in different locations.

This study should draw more attention to collecting as a significant, personal, life enhancing involvement. An understanding of the personal, social and cultural dimension of collecting should result in an expanded and more substantive notion of the role of object ownership, thereby contributing to the development of a broader definition of materialism—a definition which includes the emotive and personal dimensions of ownership and, therefore, provides a broader understanding of the ways in which we use our possessions to shape our individual and collective lives.

In order to accomplish the broader goals, a set of more specific goals regarding collecting will be accomplished. They are as follows: to establish the lacunae in regard to object attachment and collecting behavior; to establish and describe how collecting is defined within the collecting "culture"; to examine collectors’ relationship to their objects; and to examine how that relationship changes over time; to explore and describe collecting in terms both of an activity and of a relationship to objects; to examine how collectors’ relationships to their objects is affected by the process, time and cycle of collecting; to examine how collecting and the involvement with objects (or a category of
object) have altered the content, quality, and character of the lives of collectors; to
describe a "culture" of collectors, as the shared world participated in through involvement
with the process of collecting; to demonstrate the generalizability of research on
"collectors," regardless of the category of object collected; to explore and describe what
effect collecting has had on the patterns of daily experience of the collector; and to
describe collectors' perceptions of themselves as collectors. In describing a "culture" of
collectors, interaction among them is not implied; rather, each member participates
individually in the languages and strategies which constitute their mutually-experienced
world.

In order to meet the study's goals, a set of working propositions will be drawn
from the existing academic literature and literary work. These propositions will form the
basis of the questioning strategy. The interview data analysis will lead to a set of
propositions regarding collecting, which in turn will be examined against eight tentative
propositions regarding collecting set forth by Belk (1988), along with those extracted
from Danet and Katriel (1987). By this means, the analysis will build upon what is
currently known in regard to contemporary collecting behavior.

Having established the lacuna of object attachment and collecting behavior within
the area of material culture study I proceed with definitions of relevant terms, a
discussion of the assumptions regarding objects and the person-object relationship as
utilized in this study, and an outline of the study's limitations.

Chapter two surveys the relevant literature for studies pertaining to the
person-object relationship, object attachment, the role of personal possessions and the
existing studies which have examined collectors in order to extract tentative propositions.

Chapter three describes the research design of this study, the procedures employed in the selection of informants, the development of propositions, the interview methodology, the questioning strategy, and the approach to data analysis. It also introduces the thirty collectors used as informants in this study.

In chapter four this data is assembled, analyzed and examined for shared themes and patterns. Here, the tentative propositions regarding collecting are examined against the interview data, new propositions are developed out of the data, and tentative ones are adjusted or clarified.

Chapter five contains the concluding sections which summarize and discuss the nature of collectors' object attachment, the effects of the process of collecting on that relationship and the curatorial relationship collectors describe toward their collection. The implications of this research for the fields of museum studies and material culture are discussed. Finally, the need for and direction of additional research in this area is outlined.

**ASSERTIONS, ASSUMPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS**

Embodied in the how and why of research as well as in its content is a set of underlying assumptions and definitions which become part of what is asserted within the argument. The following section discusses some of the relevant assumptions under which this research was conducted. It contains the definitions of key terms, such as "objects,"
"person-object relationship," "collector," "collecting," "collection" and "object attachment" or "sentiment."

OBJECTS AND THINGS

The literature search presented in chapter two examines research from the fields of museum studies, psychology, social archaeology, material culture, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and consumer studies. Drawing from such a broad range of disciplines raises the problem of having to adapt to widely differing terminologies. Within each discipline, such terms as "thing," "object," "possession," and "artifact" each have a set of connotations particular to that discipline. Generally, a field develops a particular terminology because it suits the questions, the methodologies, and the specific focus of that field. To utilize only that work which has used the term "object" in the sense utilized by this study would, therefore be very narrowing. From one field to the next, identical terms rarely refer to identical entities or concepts.

Differences are sometimes subtle: sometimes one concept includes the other. In the case of "object," for example, the term "valued object" refers to attachment, while "possession" refers to ownership and a sense of "control"; archaeology generally uses the term "artifact," where consumer studies would use "commodity"; psychoanalytical material generally uses "object" in relation to a "subject." For the sake of clarity, then, the term "object" has been used to denote the broadest encompassing category of physical entity, subsuming all other terms.
The term "object" carries with it some rather complex semantic baggage. Some of its possible definitions are: "that which is aimed at"; "that toward which the mind is directed in any of its given states or activities"; "a person or thing to which action, thought or feeling is directed, as 'his object of attention'"; "anything visible or tangible"; "a material product or substance"; "a sight, appearance or representation"; "in English grammar, a noun or substantive that directly or indirectly receives the action of the verb or one that is governed by a preposition"; and "in philosophy, anything that can be known or perceived by the mind" (Random House Dictionary, 1987, 1335).

Even those definitions which are no longer tied to a concrete physical entity allude to material origins. Dominguez states, "In these other uses and senses of object, process, interaction and relationship are always indexed-implied and constitutive" (1988, 4). These definitions carry with them the implication of a force or of an associated action in which one "thing" is acting upon the other, where there is a receiver--"the one dependent on the actor/doers for a definition of self" (Dominguez 1988, 4). In the past, the generic common term "object" has implied a neutral, concrete, static, tangible thing with a separate "existence" from its perceiver. This implication is currently being called into question. An object now is seen to have a fluid and changing "social life"--an identity and perception which is not inalienable, but which are greatly affected by context. (See: Thomas (1991), Appadurai (1986)).

Appadurai (1986), a social historian, defines commodities as objects which are perceived as valuable. Simmel (1978) uses the term "economic objects" to make the same distinction. Appadurai argues that commodities are "things with a particular type
of social potential," and that they are distinguishable from "products, objects, goods, artifacts, and other sorts of things--but only in certain respects and from certain points of view" (1986, 6). Certainly, both "commodity" and "possession" can be subsumed in more than one of the definitions of "object" listed above.

Since the terminology used to describe objects is the basic material from which perceptions of those objects are formed, one's approach to that terminology must influence any interpretation of the literature. In this study the term "object" implies the object's ability to be socialized into a wide range of inter-connected entities such as art, commodity, and possession, as opposed to a role fixed by form or material. As it is utilized in this research, the term "object" denotes a perceptual construction consisting of a concrete physical entity around which a boundary can be drawn so as to mark it off as a unit. A shell, a rock, a butterfly--even a person--becomes an object when contextualized as such. In this study, an object is defined perceptually and by context as much as by materiality.

THE PERSON-OBJECT RELATIONSHIP

The elements of "person" and "objects" are discussed above. How these elements interact forms the basis of the person-object relationship. The literature establishes the significance to the self of its lived relationship with objects, asserting that our very selfhood is first established through interactions with the material world. "Thus the
things that surround us are inseparable from who we are" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 16).

A relationship is considered as an alliance or affiliation between the self and an object or group of objects. Such a connection is active or lived rather than passive. It is viewed as encircling both the self and the object into a common space rather than as being a condition imposed upon an object, which names the receiver and so implies a unidirectional effect. For the purpose of this study, a relationship is always one in which we create the object and it, in turn, creates us: a diagrammatic representation of this analogy would have arrows pointing simultaneously at the self and at the object. (This perspective is also referred to as a symbolic interactionist one). Affection, interest, ownership, attachment, and possessiveness are all evidence of a relationship existing between a person and an object.

Philosophical and psychoanalytical notions of objectification, one aspect of the person-object relationship has dominated the discourse. For example, along with Miller, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton draw their orientation toward the person-object relationship from that literature originally put forth by Hegel and Mead. As described by Mead, objectification theory focuses on the role modeling aspects of the objects.

Where objects serve as the other,

inanimate objects could serve as elements of the 'generalized other' as role models. Although the intent was on persons serving as role models, the early work did not exclude objects from this function. It is possible for inanimate objects, no less than for other human organisms, to form parts of the generalized and organized--the completely socialized other for any given human individual...any thing--any object or set of objects, whether animate or inanimate, human or animal, or merely physical--towards which he acts, or
towards which he responds, socially, is an element in what for him is the generalized other; by taking the attitudes of which toward himself he becomes conscious of himself as an object or individual and thus develops a self or personality (Mead 1934, 154n).

As the modeling agent or object interacts with characteristics of the object, particular traits of the person are called out. Rochberg-Halton elaborates on Mead’s use of objects as role models: "In other words, objects can objectify the self. In telling us who we are, what we do, and who and what we might become, things can act as signs of the self and as role models for continued cultivation" (1986, 150). A simplistic notion of the relationship Rochberg-Halton describes is one in which the object serves the self, acting as an assist. This view belies the degree to which objects make up the framework of experience, which, in turn gives direction and dimension to our existence. The notion of a relationship in which objects are but the receivers of our actions places objects in a passive role--one in which they do not determine behavior, but only reflect it.

As this research defines the person-object relationship, it is dialectic, existing between the person and the object--not as Freud would frame it, emanating from the self to the object. Regarding the limitations of this Freudian type of psychoanalytic perspective, Rochberg-Halton states, "there is no room for aesthetic experience, that is the experience of the inherent qualities of things" (1986, 15).²

This research views the person-object relationship as one which can carry a world of meanings not reducible to the dynamics of the individual psyche. Rochberg-Halton asserts the same position: "Objects have a definite character or inherent quality that will

² Freud was a collector of Middle Eastern Figurines!
have an influence on the possessor and that is realized through the transaction of person and thing" (1986, 155). Miller also attributes power to the physical presence of the object as well as to the self in the construction of the person-object relationship. "The importance of this physicality of the artifact," he writes, "derives from its ability thereby to act as a bridge, not only between the mental and physical worlds, but also more unexpectedly, between the conscious and the unconscious" (Miller 1987, 99).

COLLECTING DEFINED

At the present time two types of collections and collectors coexist: the private collection and the museum collection, the private-collector and the curator-collector. The private collection is defined in this research as one built or assembled by (through) the personal judgment and discretion of an individual whose collection, due to it's personal nature may not be known publicly. The museum collection is defined as a collection which belongs to an institution, public or private, which is mandated to save, exhibit, collect, sort, and preserve that which is assembled. The definitions of collecting which follow can be applied to both contexts.

First and foremost, collecting is a process of construction--the upholding of an agenda in regard to a group of objects intimately connected with acquisition. It goes beyond the securing of things to the assembly of another entity: the collector constructs the collection out of what remain separate pieces. The labour of collection, which usually occurs over an extended period of time, consists of searching, selecting, and
acquiring, all of which are directed toward the assembly of the product, which is the collection. The term "assembly" means the fitting together of parts to form a single entity. The collection is such an entity—the result of the labour of production—not of a component object but of the collection as a whole. As a whole—an object itself—the collection can possess its own discourse and critique, as well as a value which springs from the labour, energy, vision, and aesthetic of its collector. The collection must be formed, created and constructed. The process of collecting is, therefore, a creative one.

Collecting is a process of acquiring or assembling objects for a predominantly non-utilitarian purpose.

The trucks and locomotives lined up in the railway station carry neither freight nor passengers. Nobody is slain by the swords, cannons and guns on display in the military museum, and not one single worker or peasant uses the utensils, tools, and costumes assembled in folklore collections or museums. The same is true of everything which ends up in this strange world where the word 'usefulness' seems never to have been heard of, for to say that the objects which now await only the gaze of the curious were still of some use would be a gross distortion of the English language; the locks and keys no longer secure any door, the machines produce nothing and the clocks and watches are certainly not expected to give the precise time of day (Pomian 1990, 7).

The act of collecting transforms an object's meaning from one determined by use, to one "like" art, where objects are destined for some type of display or arrangement. Part of the definition of a collection is that the collected objects are physically brought together in what can be deemed a "display." "Collectors with more modest means have show cases built, boxes and albums made or else clear a space somewhere for objects to be placed, the aim every time seemingly being the same, namely that of bringing objects together in order to show them to others" (Pomian 1990, 8).
The act of collecting transforms an object's meaning from one determined by use, to one determined by ownership. As Benjamin, himself a collector, points out regarding the collector, "his existence is tied to a mysterious relationship to ownership, to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage of their fate" (1969, 60). The object is acquired to own it, to have it, to call it one's own.

Collecting differs fundamentally from simply saving or hoarding in that it involves much more than simple preservation or accumulation. Hoarding generally involves keeping whatever crosses one's path, in an indiscriminant manner. Collecting is more directly involved with the seeking of specific objects within a designated category, thereby making it more rule-governed and purposeful—a game with strategies. Rules might be individually constructed or shared by complex networks of collectors all "competing" in the same collecting game. It is a process of seeking, attaining, and ordering. Wherever it is carried out, it is an accomplishment and an act of authority.

The following is a working definition of collecting, a definition which will be examined in light of the data: Collecting is defined in this research as the purposeful act of acquisition wherein objects show evidence of variation or seriality within a certain category or theme; these objects are kept out of the economic circuit on a temporary or permanent basis and are given special status or protection by the individual or institution that owns them. They are contained, displayed, or cloistered, so as to not be contaminated either physically or visually.

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Belk (1982), Kron (1983), and Danet and Katriel (1987) all emphasize the interrelatedness of that which is collected, and consider collectors to be more selective and category-oriented than accumulators or hoarders. Belk defines "to collect" as "to acquire an interrelated set of possessions" (1982, 185). The interrelatedness of that which is collected is often highly subjective, though, and may or may not reflect or depend upon categoric structure which exists elsewhere. "Every taxonomy is governed by the logic of things being collected" (Dannefer 1980, 401). A new and creative collecting category may forge entirely new connections and associations.

It should not be assumed that money or leisure time are prerequisites to amassing substantial collections, as many collectors collect objects which are not purchased, such as plant specimens or shells. What people collect changes, but that they collect appears at present to cut across, economic, class, age, educational and gender boundaries. Even though collecting can occur institutionally, or as an occupation, this research focuses on thirty personal, individual, non-professional collectors--a collector being an individual engaged in the collecting process.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

All research is executed under a set of general, specific and methodological limitations. This research is limited by the western historical and cultural specificity of collecting. More specifically this particular study represents a historically particular investigation of collecting as it occurred in the southwestern mainland area of British
Columbia between 1989 and 1991. How the practice of collecting in this place and time relates to collecting in other contexts is not known.

The history and cross-cultural manifestations of collecting are outside the scope of this research, owing greatly to the lack of comparative data. Some material does exist on collecting in Israel (Danet and Katriel 1987), the United States (Belk 1988) and Japan (Backman 1991). The data and analysis from this study may be useful for future cross-cultural studies of collecting behavior.3

A general lack of demographic information regarding collecting also limits this study. It is not known, for example, who collects what, when they collect, or over how large a sampling of any population collecting occurs. It is not known if there are more urban or rural collectors or if one geographic region or gender is more prone to collect. Nor is it known if demographic factors determine what object category is chosen. Since the focus of this study is on what collectors have in common, the general lack of associated research leaves corresponding gaps in what is known on the topic.

There is no way to know how the thirty collectors I studied compare to other collectors or to what extent they are representative. Informant selection was aimed at providing a broad sampling of the collecting culture, and as statistical analysis was not the intention of this study, thirty was deemed an adequate number of informants. Also, recognizing that collections occur of objects not considered part of the material domain, such as quotations or experiences, this study was limited to collectors of material objects only.

3 See concluding section on the need for research in this area.
The focus on individual collecting behavior as defined in this study can be viewed as a limitation since collecting is a process which is dynamic and occurs in a context of wider social actions. This research isolates a particular aspect of this behavior for study: collecting behavior which operates in complex personal, social, and economic systems. The time and space available for an academic thesis necessitates a limiting focus--research simply cannot be all-encompassing or describe all aspects of a complex activity. For example, this research did not attempt to find people who were no longer collecting, to study the complex social collecting networks, or to interview those who deal regularly with collectors, such as family members or antique dealers, any of which topics might warrant a study in itself.

Hoarding or accumulating were not examined and were deemed outside the scope of this study. This study may be limited because it seeks to describe a phenomenon and culture, but does not address psychological or psychoanalytical issues relating to collecting, such as obsessive, phobic, fetishistic or pathological attachment. Such lines of inquiry would be beyond the scope of the author's background, intentions and application in museum education.

This research is limited to individual collectors and explores neither institutional collecting nor the large, organized and varied social world of collecting. Only non-occupational collecting was studied, as a part of the leisure activity conducted outside of the work world of each individual. None of the informants were "professional" collectors, making a livelihood by trading or selling that which they collected. A comparison of data on the institutional or professional collector and the personal or amateur collector
would be useful in placing and in defining the personal collector, but is outside the scope of this study.

One limitation which doubles as a strength is this study's interdisciplinary approach. Each discipline tended to make a slightly different use of terms such as "object," "thing" or "commodity"—a limitation which is discussed fully in the introduction.

As a museum professional, I have a vested interest in not only a fuller understanding of collecting and collectors but also in the promotion and appreciation of the collecting phenomenon. Research undertaken toward fulfilling a particular agenda—that of museum education—provides the perspective from which to view the topic. Due to its application to museum education this study focuses only on certain aspects of collecting. The applicability of the research is limited to material and economic anthropology, consumer studies, museology, popular culture studies, and museum education.

The use of only one research instrument is a further limitation, as is the varying communicative inclinations of the informants: some interviews were not useful because informants were inarticulate, and the interviewer's own interest or energy affected interviews. Collectors who volunteered to take part in the study may be unusually extroverted; those considering themselves "collectors" may be unusually zealous. Even though an attempt was made to interview collectors whose collecting had progressed to different stages, no comparison was attempted between collectors and non-collectors. Also, the very fact that this is an analysis of verbal data poses certain problems. Collecting is defined not directly—by collectors observed behavior—but by their personal
verbal definitions. Because interview data is privileged, there is no way to determine the accuracy of responses. It is on the basis of faith and intuition that the cooperation and sincerity of the informants is accepted and used.

The study's research method involved collecting, categorizing and analyzing data solicited from collector informants in order to discover cultural themes. The qualitative nature of this study brings with it a set of limitations: data analysis is limited by the researcher's subjective decisions while organizing, categorizing and sorting; data quantities are limited to those which could be gathered during a limited period, and themselves are limited by the facts that they are specific to time and place, and that they are obtained only from English-speaking informants.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH AND WRITING ON THE PERSON-OBJECT RELATIONSHIP

In some research areas it is possible to trace tidy theoretical lineages—a process which provides a comforting sense of "familial" unity to a body of material. The literature within traditional material culture study, however, does not suggest a progression of developed theory. When compared, for example, to linguistic study, theory regarding the person-object relationship has been relatively stagnant and underdeveloped. In order to explore theory which might be relevant to a study of collectors and to broaden the discourse in regard to commodities, it is necessary to reach into a variety of disciplines, each of which touches upon, rather than focuses on, theories of the person-object relationship and the meaning of personal possessions. Ironically, the most comprehensive theoretical striving on this subject has come from philosophy, a discipline which has dealt with objects in a most un-concrete manner and only, one might say, in passing.

The following review ranges over a wide array of disciplines, each with its own rationale for considering individuals' relationships to the "object" world. The first two sections examine the larger field of the person-object relationship and work done on possessions, ownership and object attachment, of which collecting is one of the richest
and most intense forms. Then the review narrows to the specific work done on collectors and collecting.

The first section outlines the work done in anthropology by Douglas, whose work calls for an expanded notion of commodities, and in sociology by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, who introduce and define the concepts of terminal and instrumental materialism.

The second section looks at the research in psychology and consumer studies which deals with object attachment, possessions, and personally valued objects. It examines early work which shifted from a perspective on attachment to objects as a neurotic phenomenon to one from which such attachment may be viewed as normative and contributing to development.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth sections deal specifically with collectors and collecting. The third section deals with the perspective of museum studies toward the private collector. The fourth considers the work done on collectors from other areas within the social sciences--areas such as consumer studies and sociology, especially the work of Belk (1988), Danet and Katriel (1987), and Treas and Brannen (1976).

The fifth section deals with the popular literature on collectors, which includes publications intended for collectors, collecting club newsletters and popular magazine and newspaper articles.

The sixth section includes several fictional, biographical and autobiographical literary works which describe collectors relationships to their collections. Chatwin's *Utz* (1989), Nabokov's *Speak Memory* (1966), and Fowles's *The Collector* (1963), for example,
provide useful source material for constructing propositions regarding the collector-object relationship.

RESEARCH FROM MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY

In addition to philosophy, the social sciences (including material and economic anthropology), economics, archeology, sociology, psychology and consumer studies have all dealt in some way with the person-object relationship. In some areas, such as archaeology and material culture, studies on the qualities of objects (such as style or form) have dominated the discourse. Little attention has been directed toward the relationship individuals have with everyday objects they own or use or toward the emotive aspects of such a relationship.

In archaeology, artifactual evidence is generally considered a reflection rather than a determinant of behavior. Generally, its literature has focused on the "use" of objects (a relationship of dependence and utility), or on certain objects or technologies as determinants of cultural or social practice (Franklin 1990; Winner 1980).

Anthropology has emphasized the abstract constructs of religion, beliefs and social organization, rather than material objects, as strong determinants of behavior. For example, artifacts have been "read" as receivers of social action and ideology whose significance is located primarily in patterns of exchange. The anthropological focus on the larger collective domain of objects has emphasized the role objects play as social markers in group definition, the stage they set in social relations, or their role in marking
position or prestige. In material culture studies, the role of objects in self-definition has gone mainly unnoticed, even though, as Clifford posits, "Some sort of gathering around the self and the group--the assemblage of a material world, the marking off of a subjective domain which is not the other--probably is universal" (1985, 238).

In economic anthropology, objects frequently have been analyzed in terms of their roles as commodities or items of exchange, or for their place in production and labor relations (Hyde 1983; Levi-Strauss 1979; Mauss 1967; Ragnar Johnson 1986). More recent work has examined the historical and political-economic uses and meanings of objects (Appadurai 1986; Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Mukerji 1978). Writing on ideology and objects, Mukerji states,

objects are carriers of ideas and, as such, often act as the social forces that analysts have identified with ideology-as-words. Objects can help make autonomous forces out of ideas by remaining in the physical environment long after their production. They can create a setting for behavior (including intellectual activity) that simultaneously encourages people to behave in ways that take advantage of that environment and restrains them from acting in ways that the environment frustrates. Material culture is not located in the human mind, although it shows the stamp of its creators and is known to people through their senses; it does not gain its autonomy through free will or the world in which people must function (at least until it is destroyed or replaced by other goods) and to which they must adapt their behavior. That it can be both a physical and symbolic constraint gives material culture a particular power over human action (Mukerji 1978, 15).

Most of the current work in economic anthropology and consumer studies deals with a particular type of relationship with objects--that which falls under the general construct of "materialism." Rochberg-Halton defines that construct as,
the self centered pleasure or status prestige derived from material wealth. It remains true that not only is some level of material existence inescapable but that material goods can act as genuine materials for the cultivation of their possessors. Hence the question of materialism is not simply one of physical things per se, but of the purposes embedded in and derived from things (Rochberg-Halton 1986, 180).

In the anthropological literature—even in the area of material culture studies—few works deal with personal attachment to objects, or the changes that occur in individuals over time, because of their engagement with objects, as it has not been a primary interest of material culture studies. The role of objects and their effect upon self-definition has been taken up within the fields of human development, psychology, sociology and consumer studies.

In anthropology, Douglas and Isherwood’s work stands out as relevant to my inquiry. Their work on commodities, as laid out in *The World of Goods* (1979), emphasizes the social aspects of an individual’s consumption of goods:

We can never explain demand by looking only at the physical properties of goods. Man needs goods for communicating with others and for making sense of what is going on around him. The two needs are but one, for communication can only be formed in a structured system of meanings (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 95).

Here, Douglas and Isherwood go beyond the Veblenian notion of goods as markers of social status and class, to a broader sense of the role of goods in social communication. For Douglas, goods are used to "decipher our social surroundings, locate our social self, and transmit knowledge about who and what we are" (1979, 116). Even though Douglas’s work is not primarily concerned with object attachment, she does acknowledge
the ability of goods to serve as personal markers, thereby suggesting their role in self-definition. She emphasizes the neutral quality of objects which are transformed into a multiplicity of roles, and therefore emphasizes, as does Appadurai, the fluid social life of objects. "Their uses are social; they can be used as fences or bridges" (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 12).

The implication of this literature is that individuals play out dramas involving objects which are externally controlled or manipulated by larger cultural systems. What remains unclear is that, within this larger field, individuals make choices and perform individually meaningful and purposeful actions regarding consumption. By collecting objects which are produced and marketed for collection, collectors create rarity, share that for which they strive, and play out a group "game" according to informal, unwritten rules. The perception of what constitutes a prize find is shared. Growing out of the above literature the following propositions will be examined in this study: Collectors set their own rules within the larger rule governing domain in which goods circulate. Not only are objects social markers, they are also storehouses for individual experiences. Collecting is an intricate and structured form of social drama and often part of a larger system or culture. Both socially and personally, collecting serves a communicative function.

Until recently, in economics, consumer studies, and economic anthropology, the Veblenian notion of the role of goods in conspicuous consumption has been strongly associated with "materialism." According to Veblen, conspicuous consumption of goods is seen as a means to enhance status and prestige by showing that one has money to
waste. Brooks (1979) proposes that, since Veblen’s time, Americans have begun to seek status by mocking conspicuous consumption through parody displays, such as ownership of pop art pieces that reflect satiric wit rather than pretentious seriousness (Belk 1983, 515). At the heart of this negative definition of materialism is an association with ostentatious excess. The implied assumption might be stated,

If things attract our attention excessively, there is not enough psychic energy left to cultivate the interaction with the rest of the world. The danger of focusing attention exclusively on a goal of physical consumption-or materialism-is that one does not attend enough to the cultivation of self, to the relationship with others, or to the broader purposes that affect life (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 53).

According to this notion of consumption, the self is part of what stands to be consumed. In the literature that deals with materialism, there is frequently an implication of danger, of a threat to the individual which occurs when objects become the receptacles of attention and of emotion. Linder, an economist, voices this attitude concisely when he writes:

The acquisition and maintenance of objects can easily fill up a person’s life, until there is no time to do anything else, not even use the things that are exhausting all of the energy (Linder quoted in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 53).

Generally, this line of criticism presupposes that the pursuit of material goods occurs at the expense of higher goals. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton declare, this position has been the dominant one:
Those who pursue the terminal end most fervently have a goal of becoming a pure individual, yet can never satisfactorily attain this goal because they are always dependent upon other people to appreciate their individuality and give them the status they so desperately want. In terminal materialism the objective end remains social, serving the purpose of a competitive comparison with other’s goods, though the foundation remains paradoxically to approach individualism, to stand alone and to be seen standing there (1986, 181).

In terminal materialism, consumption becomes an end in itself; but Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton question the belief that this can be the only outcome and dimension of materialism. Their research suggests that such a view is far too simplistic. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton do not dispute the force of this "terminal" materialism or its negative impact; however, they acknowledge another relationship with objects which is generative or self-cultivating, and which they term "instrumental materialism."

Instrumental materialism involves the cultivation of objects as essential means for discovering and furthering goals, so that the objects become instruments used to realize those goals with "this type of materialism there is a sense of directionality, in which a person’s goals themselves may be cultivated through transactions with the object" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 231). These two types of materialism do not occupy separate domains, but exist simultaneously, and are intertwined.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton assert that individuals can and do realize goals in and through relationships with objects and that objects can act as instruments for the expression and development of the self. A proposition that will be examined in this research is as follows: collectors, though defined as passionate in regard to their
collecting, are, for the most part, not consumed by their objects or by the collecting process.

**OBJECT ATTACHMENT**

As it relates to this research, what has been documented in the area of psychology regarding the major work by psychologists on the person-object relationship has focused on the critical role that objects play in self-definition, and on the intensified relationship of people to particular things, as in object attachment. In psychology, the bulk of early literature regarding the person-object relationship focused on the fetish or phobic object and on a relationship to objects in which attachment hinders growth or blocks development. The following section outlines the limited work done in psychology and human development which has to any degree examined object-attachment. From this work, tentative propositions have been drawn regarding collectors' relationships with their objects.

Although psychology has recognized that transactions between people and things constitute an important aspect of the human condition, the field has never formally acknowledged the normative, constructive, or cultivating role of objects. Discussing psychology's interest in material culture, Grauman stated, "psychology, at least inasmuch as it is the study of human behavior, has been and still is oblivious of the world of things" (1974, 390). He went on to suggest that, "the ubiquity and importance of things in our daily activities is depreciated and largely overlooked in psychology" (391).
In terms of self-definition, Goffman (1961) and Carroll (1968) have both documented how the removal of the personal objects of institutionalized and mentally retarded individuals results in the stripping of identity. In Carroll’s work, such deprivation resulted in the patient attempting to reverse the stripping process by collecting treasured junk objects from the normal world and saving discarded materials of others.\(^4\) The loss of objects in fires, for example, is seen as a personal tragedy and a violation of the self beyond the economic loss, and often results in a diminished sense of self (Belk 1987). It is the emotional investment these objects represent which makes them irreplaceable and invaluable. The following proposition grows out of this literature: Collections represent a large emotional investment; therefore collectors both fear and are diminished by the break up or loss of their collections.

According to Hsu, research from other cultures provides comparable illustrations of the fundamental attachment between people and objects (Hsu 1985). Wallendorf and Arnould state that, "although the meaning of self differs cross-culturally and varies in its link with individualism, the fact that these conceptions of self are expressed to some degree through objects seems to be universal" (1988, 532).

In psychology, the literature on object attachment, special possessions, or the emotional significance of valued objects derives mainly from the pioneering work of Winnicott, who first observed and described well-adjusted children’s attachment to possessions (1953). The object, often a doll or blanket, came to be known as the "transference object." Rather than viewing the child’s attachment to the object as

\(^4\) See also Thompson 1979.
neurotic or pathological, Winnicott viewed it as benign and useful to development. On Winnicott's work, Meyer writes, "Winnicott saw special possessions as serving a crucial soothing function, and facilitating growth during the earliest phase of development" (1985, 560). Building on Winnicott's formulation that a child's attachment to a first special possession facilitates and is supportive of personal growth, Metcalf and Spitz (1978) have described the earliest special objects as "psychic organizers" or signifiers of certain essential developmental processes, such as memory, creativity and imagination.

Tolpin's work describes the role of object attachment in self-actualization. By imbuing an object with soothing qualities, a person eliminates the need for a second person to assist in that process (1971). The majority of the "object attachment" literature has focused on the moment of earliest object attachment, often viewed synonymously with the "substitute" object assumed to be the breast. Tolpin establishes the fading of the attachment to teddy bears and blankets as occurring around age six to ten, assuming later object attachment to be pathological, relating to fetishistic attachment. Little work has been done on a non-pathological or normative view of adult attachment, although one theorist, Vlosky (1979), found that adults considered well-functioning do in fact report significant emotional attachment to special possessions.

A few theorists, such as Kahne (1967), Halpern (1968), Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), have written on emotional attachment to special possessions. Focusing on the meaning that individuals associate with special possessions, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton establish that attachment to such possessions occurs throughout the life span. "It is apparent that attachment to special possessions
occurs at all ages, although the possessions themselves and their importance is of course different for an adult, an adolescent or a child" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981).

In phenomenological and ethnographic studies, Meyers (1985) and McCracken (1986) examined attachment to special objects at various ages. Meyers reports an emotionally rich and intense nature of the attachment.

It was obvious that such possessions are not static memorabilia, that they do not merely catch a moment for nostalgic reflection; at the time of their greatest importance, such emotionally significant possessions appear to reflect and influence the individual's growth, in a dynamic process (Meyers 1985, 562).

For Meyers, object attachment is a dynamic process involving interaction between the individual and the object. She places it in "the third area of experience," which includes fantasy, creativity, play and imagination--those qualities which make us both unique and fully human (1985, 562).

Sentiment remains more elusive and discredited than the wider concept of object-attachment of which it is an aspect. It is discredited even in it's definition, which is often posited as a cast of mind, a position or an orientation--in this case toward objects--which is "colored by" emotions. I wish to elevate the very notion of sentiment toward objects, by defining it as judgment informed by emotions. Sentiment can be a complex subjective judgment based on feelings or affection, or a complex emotional and cognitive response to the object. Sentiment remains one of the powerful responses to
objects and is usually associated with an investment. One direct result of sentiment is a privileged status toward objects.

STUDIES OF COLLECTORS AND COLLECTING EXAMINED WITHIN MUSEUM STUDIES

Museum studies has not, as previously mentioned, "studied" the private collector or researched contemporary collecting practices; however, a wide literature has recently emerged concerning the history of museums and the role that private collectors played in their establishment. Dealing predominantly with the influential, powerful, or wealthy European collectors and collections and the establishment of early private and public museums. This is a very specific history of the personal collector; restricted to the elite, prestigious collector of reified objects. Pomian, who has written extensively on early elite collections, describes the collectors as, "those who occupied center stage" (1990, 217). Alsop's (1981) study of private art collectors and their role in the establishment of the field of art history builds an impressive case for crediting collectors with the establishment of art markets, art dealers and the field of art history.

The increased interest in early collecting patterns has resulted in the introduction by Oxford University Press of a journal on the subject which followed a major publication on the history of collecting (Impey and MacGregor 1985). These publications, however, focus on institutional collecting and private collectors whose
collections became associated with early western museums. Commenting on the renewed interest in early collections Haskell states,

The reappraisal of the subject (collecting) that has taken place during the last decade or so has been stimulated first by the willingness to study collections with respect to their values in their own times rather than to those that prevailed later. In this respect the history of collecting has followed the example of historical writing in many other fields (Haskell 1992, 27).

Despite this increased interest, these histories have rarely focused on how particular collections are shaped by the individual collector's vision and personality or on collections that were made but did not impact upon the development of museums.

Contributing to this literature is Pomian's study of private collectors in Paris and Venice from 1500 to 1800, in which he establishes the historically particular context of collecting and therefore also of the changing nature of what is collected, who collects and why collecting occurs (Pomian 1990). For example, "between 1700 and 1720, 39 percent of Parisian collectors took an interest in medals, either to the exclusion of everything else or else in conjunction with pictures, prints and assorted curios" (Pomian 1990, 121). Pomian describes how new objects and previously discarded ones emerge on the collecting scene, like Thompson's (1979), rubbish theory. Collectors play a significant role in this process, often acting as the first catalyst for the revaluing of categories of objects. In this way, collectors serve to give objects new meaning, often by calling forth an aesthetic dimension, thereby turning the discarded into a new symbol--taking it up and presenting it in a new context.
By necessity, the individual collector is included in any history of museums. A parallel exists between the history of the individual collector and the construction and development of museums. Most accounts trace the history of Western collecting from the wunderkammer, an early form of personal collection which contained what appear now to be disparate things such as instruments, fossils, ethnographic and art objects—things made by the hand of man or God. The collecting project of the wunderkammer was one of presenting a unified, wondrous universality. These collections were very much personal collections and stood to increase the stature of the collector as someone with the wealth and worldliness to create such a collection. Travel was often an essential and costly aspect of forming such a collection. These collections for the most part were only accessible to friends or other elites.

The existence of community or eccentric museums attests to the existence of a wide range of collectors, but their history is less documented. A few scattered accounts of the eccentric collections of non-wealthy Europeans attest to the existence of a wider range of collectors at the time, but little is known of the collecting habits of this range of the population. It would have to be assumed that the only way a collector becomes known is by the end-fate of their collection. Those not possessing a place in the academic history "remain in the wings because of the modesty and thus invisibility of their collections" (Pomian 1990, 217). Save for a diary or journal the record of the collecting of many is lost with the dispersal of the collection. Therefore the gap in terms of history from the elite, early European collector to the beginnings of collecting among a wide range of the population has not been reconstructed. The history of collecting
must bridge class, geographic, cultural and historic differences to construct histories that
run from the European wunderkammer to present day hockey cards.

It is important to note that the literature from within the museum on the private
collector differs over time and its nature is defined by what kind of museum the writing
is coming out of, and what type of collection is being written about. A superiority of the
institutional collector over the private collector is a matter of discipline and of historical
time. The attitude of art museums toward art collectors, for example, differs greatly
from that of archaeologists toward archaeology collectors or natural history museums
toward collectors of natural history objects. Typically, more "equality" is afforded the
private natural history collector by that field than the private ethnographic collector by
anthropology curators. For example, in the directory of natural science collections of
England published in 1986 (Brewer and Davis 1986) all collections, private and
institutional, are listed with biographical notes on each collector. Many directories of
museum "collections" exist within these specific kinds of collections, and special holdings
of museums throughout the world are listed; but the individual collector--often the single
source of many of these collections--generally is not listed. Who has amassed these
collections prior to the museum is not determinable from these directories.

There has been and continues to exist within the museum literature a genre of
writing which generally accompanies the transference of personally collected material to
the collective museum context. This literature focuses almost exclusively on the occasion
of the gift, the donation of the private collection, the dedication of the wing or the
"resurrection" of a seed collection on the anniversary of the museum's founding. An
article in *El Palacio Magazine*, in which an interviewer questions collector Alexander Girard about his folk art collection at the time of the opening of the Museum of Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico is typical of the twenty such articles I gathered. Girard's collection of 106,000 pieces of folk art formed the seed collection and impetus for the establishment of the museum. The article recounts how Girard's collecting began and progressed, and speaks of his passion and appreciation both for particular objects and for folk art in general. Phrases such as "mastermind," and "driving force" are used to describe Girard's collecting (*El Palacio* 1982).

A flourish of attention at the time of the donation occurs in the form of essays and catalogues which focus on the "accomplishments" of the particular private collector. Distinction is publicly bestowed, the quality of the collection is praised; but rarely is an objective appraisal of the contents done at this time. Most of the writing, even in this genre, is devoted to the objects themselves rather than the collecting habits or history of the collector. On one such donation occasion, the curator stated, "The unity of the collection is temporary, and will be extinguished in October, 1991, when the pieces are submerged in MOA's African research collection (it can, of course be reconstructed from the museum's records)" (Halpin 1991, 1). This literature reflects the tension that exists between the present day collecting institution and the private collector. The aesthetic value, its need within the larger collection (to fill out a collection) or its research "use" rather than the "uselessness" of the private collection is purposely called out. What often remains is the name of the collector as a identifying label, as with the "Katharine White Collection" or the "Koerner Collection." These become associated because they are the
descriptors museums use in their discourse regarding the body of work; but the
collector's "voice" is not heard again, it does not appear on label texts. Not only is the
collection "subsumed," but the institution, often in the curator's voice, now speaks for the
objects.

The meaning of a collection shifts almost imperceptibly as it loses its single
owner--an owner who does not need to justify to anyone the object's value or existence.
In this transference can be seen one of the primary differences between the private
collector and the curator-collector; which is continuity. Museums usually represent
permanence where private collections have an end, and are most often dispersed after
the death of the collector. In order to insure that the collection will stay together, the
collector must "place" the collection, although, in actuality, what the collector places,
unless he/she can arrange otherwise is not "the collection", but the objects. The personal
collection is sacrificed--it is no longer an entity, a visual whole.

STUDIES OF COLLECTORS AND COLLECTING IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Given the estimate that one out of three North Americans collects something
(O'Brien 1981), it is astounding that so little serious academic work on the process of
collecting or on collectors' relationship to their objects has been done in sociology and
consumer studies. Although the collecting phenomenon is an extremely visible, intensely
involving form of leisure activity and a significant form of consumption, only recently
have researchers in consumer studies begun to examine it. As Trees and Brannen state,
"Collecting is a growing activity and represents a significant new market, but little research has been conducted on the demographics of this market or on the factors which motivate people to collect things" (1976, 234).

Most existing studies of the collecting process examine only one component, such as "acquisition" or obsessiveness, or focus on only one type of collector, such as the coin, stamp or car collector. Literature which crosses over the object category of what is collected to deal with "collecting" in general is rare. Only two studies located look directly at collectors relationship to their objects, and cross over a range of what is collected. Generally, a great deal more importance is attributed to the type of object collected than to either the process itself or the collector-object relationship. My research suggests that collecting is a powerful human process that has generalizable characteristics regardless of the type of object collected.

The two types of collecting which have the richest literature are those of art (Alsop 1981) and antiques. Generally, the more the object category is reified, the more has been written about collecting that object. Even at that, though, no study could be found of who collects what, of when and where they collect, or of gender or age differences among collectors.

The few studies undertaken thus far have been from theoretical perspectives and disciplines as disparate as child development, consumer studies and sociology. Those reviewed above serve to frame the present study; those which follow bear a more direct connection, and warrant a fuller commentary.
The growing interest in the sociology of leisure and popular culture studies has spurred several significant works on collecting, of which Dannefer's study of vintage car collectors is one. As a preface to that study, Dannefer explains how the world of old cars becomes a field for sociological study: "By examining one such world, the world of old cars, I consider how such objects come to be regarded as meaningful, how they serve to organize activity into a social world with its own internal logic" (Dannefer 1980, 392). His study included forty interviews and several hundred hours of participant observation at formal and informal gatherings of old-car enthusiasts and collectors. From his research, he hoped to glean some understanding of the passionate nature of old car collecting, which he describes as "a genuine and intense subjective attraction," wherein occurs an almost religious veneration of the object. Dannefer finds that, among the collectors he has studied, "affection and fascination for the collected material seem to be the necessary and sufficient conditions, but the opportunity for self-expression unhampered by the constraints of others is an added appeal of this activity" (Dannefer 1980, 401). Here collecting is framed as an activity which is both creative and expressive, with each collector placing the mark of his or her special interests on the collecting activity. Dannefer claims that there is no rational explanation for this activity --that collecting occurs for the sake of collecting and serves no objective purpose; and yet the objects provide an important subjective sense of certainty and order (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 199, 208). Perhaps most fundamentally, they are there: "their physical presence is unambiguous, fully plausible, tangible, testable, and continually reinforced."
Furthermore, its physicality is obdurate, independent of the enthusiast. It is understandable, definable and classifiable" (Dannefer, 409).

Holbrook, an active consumer studies researcher, studied his own collecting of Jazz records, in what he describes as "an extreme form of introspective participant observation" (1987, 144). He describes collectors of a shared object category as belonging to a sub-culture and suggests that "deeply involved consumption may play a crucial role in shaping one's own sense of identity" (p. 145). In regard to his own collecting activities, as he describes his consumption and devotion to his collection, he establishes a principle of "deep involvement." He suggests that, "at very high levels and with enduring involvement over time, (collecting) may be viewed at its peak as product enthusiasm shared by product enthusiasts such as car buffs, wine connoisseurs, or avid video gamers" (p. 145). With the kind of enduring interest Holbrook describes, a major emphasis falls on the product itself and the inherent satisfaction its usage and possession provides. To Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, this intrinsically motivated satisfaction is the very essence of leisure or play (1975). Further, in accordance with Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, Holbrook's description of his relationship with his collection suggests the following proposition: collections and their display to the self and others help to develop a self-image that lies at the core of one's personal identity.

Men and women make order in their selves (ie. retrieve their identity) by first creating and then interacting with the material world. The nature of that transaction will determine, to a great extent, the kind of person that emerges. Thus the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981, 16).
Holbrook draws a similar conclusion through his implication that, without certain special objects, (chief among which are his records) even his house would not serve as a special place for the self: "Certain objects come alive for me, they make our house a home" (148). This suggests the following proposition: that individuals’ self-images are significantly connected to their personal possessions. Collections are among collectors’ most meaningful possessions.

Pearman, Schnabel and Tomeh (1983) interviewed antique collectors and merchants from three states, using "an accidental convenience sample" (55). Using such indicators as changes in the reasons for collecting, persistence in collecting, progression or development in terms of the item collected, and the amount of money invested in a collection, they attempted to examine the effects of time upon the collecting process. They concluded that antique collecting is a form of social behavior surrounded by social constructions, and that collecting activities fit classifications both of work and of play. This unique placement as "serious play" will be discussed later as an important aspect of the collecting process.

Because Pearman, Schnabel and Tomeh limited themselves to studying only one type of collector, it is difficult to say to what extent their findings apply to collectors in general. They found that the antique collectors they interviewed searched for new sources over time but that these sources did not necessarily reflect a trend toward greater formalization. They concluded that more research was needed to determine whether or not a clear pattern of increased formalization or rationalization occurs, but suggested that the motivation of fun and pleasure persists over time.
Danet and Katriel (1986) (education and family studies) conducted a study of collectors in Israel. They were the first researchers to focus directly on a positive aspect of the collecting process. Referring partially to the acquisition of objects "for their own sake" (1986, 8)--for their metaphysical rather than physical use--they define collecting as "a form of aesthetic behavior" (1986, 2).

Danet and Katriel interviewed children and adults who collected a variety of objects. Their study took place over a two-year period, examining the meaning individuals ascribe to their collecting and the satisfactions this activity provides. They focused on differences in collecting behavior over the life span. Their research instrument was a fixed questionnaire, which they administered to fifty adults and thirty children. The research attempted to look sociologically at whether "types" of collectors existed, and if so, along what dimensions they might be classified. They asserted that, first and foremost, collection was, "a process, a commitment to an agenda" (Danet and Katriel, 8).

In the analysis of their data, Danet and Katriel identify two types of collectors, which they term Type A and Type B, called, respectively, the Bureaucrats and the Connoisseurs. Bureaucrats stress relational strategies, thus investing in systematicity well beyond the initial steps of choosing a meta-category and following the principle that no two collected objects should be alike. In contrast, the Connoisseurs base their collecting choices predominantly on aesthetic principles: they are eclectic, placing their emphasis on the qualities of the individual object (Danet and Katriel, 26). Even though Danet and Katriel's results are not stated in their study in terms of propositions, their findings
and their categorization of these two collector types will be examined in light of my research data.

In 1986, Belk set out with a group of consumer studies associates on the "Consumer Behavior Odyssey," a project which involved traveling across America in a van observing everyday consumer behavior. Over a six week period, at swap meets, flea markets, shopping malls, and street corners, the researchers interviewed everyday people on a wide range of consumer studies topics. One topic to surface during this field experience was collecting. The odyssey was a reaction to consumer studies' generally "narrow and isolated view" of consumer behavior--a view which fixates on the purchase act or motivation, to the exclusion of the longer term effects of acquisitive behavior. The group encountered an intense involvement of popular culture in collecting, collectors' networks, and collecting activities, to the point that Belk observes, "possessing and collecting are two prominent alternative goals that transcend the acts of purchasing and consuming" (1982, 185).

By interviewing and interacting with collectors, Belk developed a set of eight tentative propositions regarding collecting. Listed below are a list of these separate propositions, each of which I will discuss more fully in Chapter Four in terms of my own data.

1. Collections seldom begin purposefully.
2. Addiction and compulsive aspects pervade collecting.
3. Collecting legitimizes acquisition as art or science.
4. Profane to sacred conversions occur when an item enters a collection.
5. Collections serve as extensions of the self.

6. Collections tend toward specialization.

7. Post-mortem distribution problems are significant to collectors and their families.

8. There is a simultaneous desire for and fear of completing a collection.

As a study of collecting, Belk's work focuses upon the "acquisitive aspects of collecting", and is, by his own admission, only tentative: "The focus on collecting behavior in this project was not sustained enough to allow a complete development and testing of a theory of collecting based solely on these data" (Belk, 75). It is significant that some of Belk's propositions contradicted the existing collecting literature. For example according to Belk's work, collecting is only partially defined by compulsive or addictive behaviors, tending to a much greater extent to be directed, disciplined, and connected to self-definition and goals.

In a marketing study, Trees and Brannen (1976), examined collecting behavior in terms of the growing collector market. They hoped to uncover some of the reasons behind the increasing interest in collecting and collectibles. Their research findings were based on a questionnaire placed in a "collecting publication". Their research report does not include a full description of the nature or type of this publication. By contacting their collectors through one publication, they produced a survey of a particular "type" of collector rather than a sampling of the full range of collectors, many of whom collect idiosyncratic object categories. Without additional data, it is impossible to know how such a group relates to the larger collecting culture.
The works of Belk and of Danet and Katriel share many of the basic assumptions from which this study proceeds, and bear most directly upon the structure and goals of this research. The propositions extracted from this body of literature were useful in developing questioning strategies and provide the starting point for analysis of the interview data.

THE POPULAR LITERATURE ON COLLECTING

This section characterizes the vast, generally unscholarly, yet revealing popular literature, which appears in newspapers, popular journals, collectors' newsletters and books on "collecting." More relate to the antiques trade than any other object category; but the sheer volume of material available attests to collecting's strong social element. The same material comments indirectly upon collectors' relationship to their objects, and must be considered part of the literature on collecting. It falls into distinct categories: material written for the non-collector; writing which tells "how and what to collect"; profiles and memoirs of particularly accomplished collectors (or famous people who collect); and human interest stories of obsessive or eccentric collectors. There is also a literature "within" the collecting world--articles which are mainly human interest stories or "insider" stories and are aimed at collectors of the same objects. Representative of this insider literature is the magazine, "The Inside Collector" which is published nine times a year and is devoted solely to collectibles. These publications often "feed" the
collector with stories of serendipitous finds or tremendous bargains or describe the contents of a collector's collection.

The story, "Another Collection Lost" (Country Life, October 1987, 188), about the "Lincolnshire Hoard," typifies the public interest in collectors. It concerns an individual who collected two million objects, including, "almost every invention and device in common use in the area of Nottinghamshire between 1800 and 1960." The collection contained, for example, the entire contents of a blacksmith shop. The story tells how, unable to house or manage the collection any longer, the owner was forced to sell it at auction. Poignantly, the article calls the man's collecting his "life's work."

Human interest stories such as "Another Collection Lost" appear regularly, often highlighting the excessiveness of the collector or the uniqueness of that which is collected. Such literature reinforces the connection between individuality, eccentricity and collecting.

Belk's computer analysis of this popular literature's terminology reveals its focus. His "Collecting Reference Concordance" lists key words by which the popular articles are indexed, as well as giving the number of times key terms occur within the articles. Belk's analysis reveals that popular collecting literature clusters around particular behavioral traits of collectors. In descending order of frequency, the most commonly-occurring terms in the studied material were: instincts (22); mania (22); competition (19); prestige (18); legitimization (17); motives (15); hoarding (15); knowledge (14); possession (14); nostalgia (14); classification (13); security (13); disposition (12); and inheritance (12).
Collectors who appear in the popular journals usually have an "impressive" number of items, or exemplify a "hot" collecting item. Typical of these is an article titled: "Glove Passion is out of Hand," about a collector of baseball gloves (Western News, November 9, 1988). Such articles often use an unusual collection as a symbol of individualism and eccentricity, disregarding the fact that such collectors sometimes belong to large networks of collectors of similar objects. Another of this category of article is: "King of the Lunch Box Collectors" which tells of a collector whose small apartment houses 1500 lunch boxes (Shaper 1989, 14). When famous local people or national or international celebrities collect, their collecting habits attract particular attention: articles which describe Burt Reynolds' frog collecting or Bill Cosby's art collection or Andy Warhol's collection of cookie jars are also part of this genre of collecting literature.

Many stories emphasize the economic aspect of collecting--the often astronomical appreciation in value of collected items. The following article, about a postage stamp collection, exemplifies such a focus: "On Friday Wall Street announced it will issue 3.9 million shares for two more collections of South Arabian stamps valued at $386 million retail. No tonnage figures were provided at this time" (Vancouver Sun, April, 1990). Although an extensive search of material of this type was beyond the scope of this review, such material has great potential for analysis in its own right, especially in terms of the commodity aspect of collecting (collecting as an economic strategy), or public reaction to collectors and collections.
Books such as Munsey's *Illustrated Guide to the Collectibles of Coca Cola* (1972) and H.D. and F.L. McCallum's *The Wire that Fenced the West* (1965), a history of barbed wire, are examples of "how-and-what-to-collect" collecting literature. Each includes a history of the thing collected and maps out the full terrain of possible acquisitions. Alsop claims that "the invariable presence of a history of the things collected is easy to explain. In some cases, the history has actually generated the collectors category" (1981, 103). In others the collectors' category has generated the history. Both cases occur in the publications such as *Post Card Collectors' Bulletin* of Vancouver, British Columbia.

Antique shop book shelves are lined with volumes on collectibles such as dolls, stamps, coins--any category of item having its own collecting "group." These volumes are commodity-oriented, but again emphasize the shared nature of one type of collecting. Many of their authors are collectors who have become experts through their own collecting experiences. This suggests the following proposition: Collectors possess specialized knowledge in regard to their category of objects, often becoming experts in that area.

**A SELECTION OF LITERARY WORK ON COLLECTING**

For the sake of formulating propositions, this research includes an examination of fictional literary representations of collectors and their relationship with their objects. From a post-modern standpoint, one may approach social constructs as constructed text; conversely, a semiotic analysis of how fictional literature represents collectors and
collecting provides valuable insight into the larger system of meaning in which collections occur, and provides a model for the textual analysis of ethnographic data. Since literary constructs usually present a view of human behavior as socially constructed and meaningful, they become a very useful model in understanding cultural constructs. Especially useful in understanding the cultural meaning of collecting was Stewart's essay "On Longing-Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection" (1984). In it, Stewart analyses the use of the collection in literature as a metaphor for the objectification of desire, or of a narrative of the self. For Stewart, the collector does not just possess the object but also controls its signification—what the object means. Therefore, collecting is perceived as intimately connected to control.

The following literature review treats biography, autobiography and fictional accounts as three separate literary categories. In each case this literature allows the ethnographer to observe the actions of the collector. Autobiography serves as a form of long interview, in which the collector dictates both direction and content; biography gives the non-collector's view of the collector's behavior; and the novel or short story shows collecting as an analogy for other forms of construction.

As collecting behavior over time is extremely difficult to observe directly, this literature was useful in developing initial propositions. The majority of propositions used in this study's analysis of data arose from the material in this section.

In his autobiography, Speak Memory (1969) poet and author Vladimir Nabokov describes in detail, his relationship to the objects of his own collection. Born into the Russian aristocracy in 1899, Nabokov developed an early "passion" for collecting
butterflies: "From the age of seven, everything I felt in connection with a rectangle of framed sunlight was dominated by a single passion. If my first glance of the morning was for the sun, my first thought was for the butterflies it would engender" (Nabokov 1969, 119). Nabokov's belief that the actual butterfly which initiated his collection eluded his net, to become the object, for forty years, of "a desire...that was one of the most intense I have ever experienced" (Nabokov 1969, 120) suggests that collecting often begins with a withheld or lost object.

Shortly after beginning to collect, Nabokov's appetite for knowledge regarding butterflies led him to devour scientific journals and natural history atlases, suggesting the secondary proposition that involvement with that object leads to the acquiring not only of more objects but of knowledge and expertise in regard to that object category. The process of collecting as an involvement can last over a lifetime.

A bout of pneumonia and a confinement to bed wiped out a previous passion for numbers; yet, as Nabokov relates, his interest in the butterfly survived. "My mother accumulated a library and a museum around my bed, and the longing to describe a new species completely replaced that of discovering a prime number" (Nabokov 1969, 123). A long-term goal orientation is clearly present at age eight, and continues until adulthood, when this goal of naming a butterfly species is finally realized. Thus suggesting the following proposition: Collecting is highly goal-oriented, with goals sometimes stretching over a lifetime, sometimes becoming central life themes.

The aesthetic dimension of Nabokov's collecting is apparent in his description of his fascination with butterflies: "The mysteries of mimicry have a special attraction for
me. Its phenomenon showed an artistic perfection usually associated with man wrought things I discovered in nature the non-utilitarian delights that I sought in art. Both were a form of magic, both were a game of intricate enchantment and deception" (1969, 124-125). The object of collection was for Nabokov his prime aesthetic object, suggesting the following proposition: For collectors, the objects of their collection are their prime aesthetic objects.

Nabokov reveals an ambivalent relationship to his passion for collecting: he reveres his butterflies; yet he also hunts them. He credits collecting with the accumulation of many happy memories, yet describes it as an "obsession" and terms other butterfly collectors "fellow sufferers": Collectors express ambivalence toward both the process of collecting and their objects. In an extremely positive vein, he states, "Few things indeed that I have known in the way of emotion or appetite, ambition or achievement, that could surpass in richness and strength the excitement of entomological exploration" (1969, 126). The "exploration" of which he writes is not limited to the actual collecting process, but includes virtually all interaction with the objects of his collection; and the intense excitement with which he associates that interaction reinforces further collecting: involvement with the object is the catalyst for the collecting process. Throughout Speak Memory, Nabokov acknowledges that self-cultivation results directly from his passionate attachment to butterflies and the resulting collecting: collecting and the attachment to the collected objects has a positive self-cultivating effect upon the collector.
In *Unpacking My Library* (1969), Benjamin sets out to describe his relationship to his objects of collection: "What I am really concerned with is giving you some insight into the relationship of a book collector to his possessions, into collecting rather than a collection" (60). Benjamin attaches importance to the process which brings his books to him, and also to the role he plays in their history. As he describes this role, he "does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate" (1969, 60). Collectors express shared concerns about time and history. For Benjamin, the collected object's potential to capture, contain and release individual histories matter much more than the aesthetic dimension described by Nabokov. "For a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object" (Benjamin 1969, 60). This work suggests the following proposition: that collected objects act as "souvenirs" valued for their ability to release narratives.

Benjamin views an object's acquisition as its "rebirth"—a process of renewal aimed at restoration of the old world: "To renew the old world—that is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things" (1969, 61).

Similarities and differences exist between fictional stories of collectors and collectors' autobiographies. Generally, fiction writers emphasize the obsessive and passionate nature of the collector—his/her longing and drive to acquire, his/her enviable knowledge of the object and its history. The majority of fictional collectors are pathologically disturbed, lonely, or eccentric individuals who sublimate human involvement to object attachment. Fowles' novel *The Collector* (1963), in which a
disturbed butterfly collector kidnaps an attractive young woman and claims her as a specimen, epitomizes the pathological collector. Balzac's *Cousin Pons*, which Stewart (1984) points out was originally titled *Le Parasite*, is about a lonely old man who uses his art collection to compensate for the lack of love in his life. Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie* features a young woman who is unable to cope with the external world, and so takes refuge in a protected internal world, symbolized by her collection of tiny glass figures. In these examples the objects of collection serve as personal metaphors, as self-descriptors and as sublimations which consume or dominate the collector.

In these fictional accounts, as well as in the autobiographical material, the start of the collection is often symbolically linked to a significant early life event. In the novel *Utz*, by Chatwin, after Utz's father dies, his grandmother consoles him by giving him a porcelain figurine he has once admired. The story revolves around his subsequent obsession with collecting similar objects. "He had found his vocation: he would devote his life to collecting--rescuing as he came to call it--the porcelains of the Meissen factory" (Chatwin 1989, 19). His relationship to the objects he collected is clearly described: "An object in a museum case, he wrote, must suffer the denatured existence of an animal in the zoo. In any museum the object dies--of suffocation and the public gaze--whereas private ownership confers on the owner the right and the need to touch" (Chatwin 1989, 20). Collecting allows the collector to "possess" the object, to fully absorb or take the object "in". This is an intimate relationship, one in which each party enlivens the other's existence--where the two entities merge, one becoming a part of the other. When Utz's friend suggests that they flee to the west, he points to his collection and says, "I cannot
leave them" (Chatwin 1989, 25); later, he declares, "The collection held me prisoner. And of course it has ruined my life" (Chatwin 1989, 90). As mentioned above, both fictional and autobiographical literature describe ambivalent feelings held by collectors toward their collections.

The Czech writer Capek has written two short stories focusing on the collecting process and the collector-object relationship. "The Stamp Collector" (1962) comments directly upon collectors and life goals, self-identity and object attachment, and suggests that an affinity occurs between collectors collecting the same category of object. The story concerns two young boys whose friendship springs from a shared passion for collecting stamps, and explores how one boy’s loss of his collection affects his life. Assuming that his comrade has stolen it (his father has lovingly packed it away because he feels his son is spending too much time attending it), he loses both his dreams of travel associated with the objects and his trust in people. Only near middle age does he discover the "put aside" parcel which contains his boyhood collection. He describes his feeling of betrayal at the loss of his collection: "Because of that I had wasted my childhood...because of that I never became attached to anyone. Because of that the very sight of a postage stamp always made me feel annoyed and disgusted" (206). As he begins to handle his re-found collection, he says:

I felt as if ice were thawing inside me: I went through the collection stamp by stamp; they were all there, Lombardy, Cuba, Siam, Hanover, Nicaragua, the Philippines, all the places which I had wanted to go and which I shall never see. On each of these stamps there was a scrap of something which might have been and never was (206).
Here Capek has identified the collection as a symbol of the collector’s dreams and plans. The physical collecting of each stamp has been the rehearsal of goal attainment. The loss of the collection for the young boy represents a loss of self, suggesting that, for collectors, collections and their accumulation serve as rehearsals for life goals. The character states, "I realized that it had been an artificial and impersonal life, which did not belong to me, and that my proper life had never come into existence" (206). At the end of the story the man starts collecting stamps again, recapturing, if not his lost life, at least the lost symbol of his dreams.

Capek’s second story on the collector-object relationship is "The Troubles of a Carpet Fancier." The protagonist is a Persian carpet collector/connoisseur who covets a particular rare and unusual specimen. The object is not for sale, though, which disturbs and challenges the collector. The body of the story consists of his attempts not only to secure the carpet but to do so at a low price. He says, "You know, a collector looks upon it as an affair of honor to pick up a rarity for a song" (138). This particular collector concerns himself chiefly with the sport of acquisition, a sport he likens to "stag hunting" (138). The language of collecting is masculine, that of the sport of hunting, searching and winning, of conquest, part of the collecting game is the sport of capturing the object, of securing the "trophy".

He is determined to get the carpet cheaply and then he would "present it to the museum, because that is the only place for a thing of that sort. Only there’d have to be a label on it with an inscription: Presented by Dr. Vitasek [the collector]" (138). Vitasek reveals his dreams of recognition, of fame for having identified, recognized and acquired
such a desirable "trophy." This suggests that for some collectors distinction is desired and is achieved through the public association of his/her name with the admired object; it is based in part on a recognition of the vision involved in finding, recognizing and acquiring. Vitasek reveals his usurping of an ownership that transcends or even out-weighs the position of the maker (or culture of origin).

So consuming is his desire that he seriously considers killing a watch dog and stealing the rug. The story ends when the collector realizes, to his humiliation and shame that his obsession with procuring the rug has debased his values and behavior. The story describes the potential in collecting for goals to move beyond self-cultivation to become consuming and therefore self-destructive.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN
INTRODUCTION

The following sections outline this study's research approach, which can be described as descriptive and qualitative. The first section outlines the development of a set of tentative propositions, and describes their use in guiding interviews and later in analyzing data. The second section describes informant selection criteria and the extended open-ended interview used as this study's primary research instrument. This approach allows the researcher to identify, isolate and define categories as research progresses and data suggests new themes. A wide range of assertions, some contradictory, guided the interviews. The open-ended format allowed the researcher to use later interviews to pursue propositions and hunches arising from earlier ones.

This research is qualitative. It is designed not to test for generalizability, but to discover broad cultural categories, beliefs and assumptions, thereby providing a basis upon which to develop an understanding of how collectors experience their collecting world. A limited number of informants may therefore be sufficient.

PROPOSITIONS AND APPROACHES TO THE DATA

Since so little serious academic work has been done on the topic of collecting, a

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5 See Glasser and Straus in McCracken (p. 16) for a description of this approach.
variety of sources are used in the development of guiding propositions. As noted in the previous chapter, searches of a number of key sources yielded a set of tentative propositional statements. The first key source category encompassed writings about personal possessions and the person-object relationship, including collectors’ biographies and autobiographies. This type of account enabled the researcher to "observe" collecting behavior, attitudes and thoughts over a span of time, and served much the same function as interview data. Observations derived from the literature provided a relatively fixed point against which to plot a course of questioning. Writings in material culture suggested different approaches to person-object relationships. Assertions surfaced in the related research, many of which invited comparison with collector's responses. Many of the same assertions surfaced again in the data analysis, along with others from the research alone. Further propositional statements originated in a pilot study in which four collectors were interviewed.

Included in the set of tentative propositions are several set out by Belk, Danet and Katriel, the only social scientists to attempt to develop a more comprehensive model of collecting behavior. Belk's propositions had particular importance in establishing this study's initial momentum. He admits, though, that "the focus on collecting behavior in this project was not sustained enough to allow a complete development and testing of a theory of collecting" (1988, 78). This study questions, clarifies, and builds upon Belk's assertions.

In this study, which follows McCracken’s methodology (1989), the long interview was used as a tool "to get into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse at the
categories and logic by which he or she sees the world" (1989, 9). Each collector in the
group describes a particular image of the experience and culture of collecting; by viewing
those images together, I hoped to discover whether some commonality or generalizability
exist among collectors.

An important intention of the research process is to allow the collectors to reveal
the criteria according to which they--as opposed to antique dealers or observers--define
collecting or collectors. This said, I must emphasize that, while I share many of the
collectors' characteristics, and while this research certainly lacks the supposed
detachment of work done outside of one's geographic, temporal or linguistic experience,
I am not, nor have I been an avid or serious collector; the language and experience of
the collector is not my own. For this reason, I had to resist the assumption that our
experiences were the same--just as, at a fundamental level, it was crucial to recognize
that my cultural assumptions regarding collecting were intrinsic both to my questions and
to my analysis of the resulting data. I therefore analyzed my data with the premise in
mind that all speech acts are jointly constructed. As no vehicle exists to extract the
ethnographer's cultural experience from ethnographic work, any reading of my analysis
must assume this joint construction.

As the interview approach lacked the structure of a questionnaire, the resultant
data was somewhat chaotic. I began the analysis by listing the propositions generated by
the interviews, along with those generated by literature, then reading the interview data.
After a number of readings, order began to emerge in the form of categories and
patterns.
Rather than following a predetermined process, data collection and analysis proceeded in an intuitive and opportunistic manner. Later interviews differed from earlier ones. Although tentative propositions directed the questioning approach and organization other questions grew out of the dynamics and content of the interviews. After transcribing and assembling all of the interview data, I began to sift it for new propositions, patterns and recurring cultural themes. Sometimes an informant's comment suggested an assertion for which substantiating information was unavailable because the topic never recurred during the course of the study. Since such assertions require the support of more data from future interviews, they will belong to a set of propositions.

A review of the data turned up a set of propositions, an examination of which revealed themes or clusters of related statements. Such themes and clusters regarding collecting and the person-object relationship provided the basis of the formal propositions, which in turn, shaped the concluding sections. Where two propositions were contradictory, the data was used to find support for one over the other.

By its very nature, collecting is a phenomenon which cannot adequately be studied through participant observation. The extended interview was the most appropriate research method. Even though a collector may participate continuously in some component of the collecting process (which may include simply "keeping an eye out" for eligible objects), the observable act of acquisition may only occur once in a year or in ten
years. In addition, the presence of an observer would disrupt and distort the nature and character of the collecting process. As a supplement to the interview data, swap meets, hobby shows and flea markets provided an opportunity to observe collectors in action and to gather support material.

The long interview, as set forth by McCracken (1988), facilitates the gathering of information without repeated, prolonged or intimate involvement in the life of the informant. It is "a sharply focused, rapid, highly intensive interview that seeks to diminish indeterminacy and redundancy that attends more unstructured research processes" (McCracken 1988, 7). This study used long interviews of subjects who identified themselves as collectors to capture their shared descriptions and definitions, and to isolate cultural categories. All thirty of this study's interviews took place during a one year period between the spring of 1989 and the spring of 1990. One interview involved a couple; all others involved only one subject and the investigator. All but two of the interviews took place in the location of the collection--most often the collector's home or business. Most of the informants were interviewed on two separate occasions, with the interval varying from two days to several weeks time.

The following description of a questioning strategy is intended to give the reader an idea of the structure, content and anatomy of the interview. Even though the format chosen was open-ended, tentative propositions drawn from the literature and the pilot study aided the development of a questioning strategy. Each tentative proposition was examined and a set of questions drafted to enable respondents to support or refute that proposition. For example, a tentative proposition states, "Collectors both fear and are
diminished by the loss of their collection." From that proposition I asked a range of questions, such as, "What is the best and worst scenario in regard to your collection?" or, "Can you describe your feelings if your collection was lost or destroyed." The questions were asked in a variety of ways to see how different descriptions would trigger different responses or descriptors.

Categories of questions were broad enough to allow new categories to emerge. The first, "How Collecting Begins," examined family and childhood influences, earliest collecting, childhood collecting, and the first object collected. For each interview a series of questions was developed to illuminate each category.

The following questions formed the base repertoire of the interview questions, with others coming into the interview because of informant responses: "When did you begin collecting? How did your collecting begin? Do you remember how your collection started? What is the earliest memory you have of collecting? How did you know you were collecting? What started you collecting? Tell me the story of yourself as a collector from beginning to the projected end. Do you recall the first object you collected? Tell me how the first object was acquired. A series of this type might branch to one of the following: "Did anyone in your family collect? Did you know any collectors when you were a child? Do you remember being attached to objects as a child? What were they?"

Under another category, such as that dealing with the definition of collecting and collecting as a process, the interviewer posed one or more of the following inquiries: "What is collecting? When did you realize you were collecting? When did you begin to
think of yourself as a collector? Do you consider yourself a collector? What kind of collector are you? Are collectors different than others who don’t collect? How are they different? How are you different because you collect? Why do you collect? What does being a collector mean? What is the best part about being a collector? The worst part? How would you characterize collecting? Is collecting good? How long have you collected? Describe that time period and your collecting. Was it consistent? How did it change over time? How many objects do you have? Describe the number at various points over the years. What determines what you select? Why do you collect what you collect? Would you like to collect anything else? How would you title your collection? Where do you keep your collection? Is that your choice? Tell me about the display of the collection. Tell me about this object. Are there categories within the collection? Can you name them? Tell me about how you group them. Could you select three or four to tell me about. Why did you select those?"

To allow the responses to trigger subsequent questions no exact script was used. Also, to avoid influencing or prejudicing responses, I asked only secondary questions when the collector’s initial response suggested them. For example, if I asked, "Tell me about collecting," and the collector responded by listing or describing the components of collecting (finding, acquiring, displaying, cataloging), I would ask what percentage of time each represented, then pursue some questions about each.

Some of the interviews turned out to be more personal in nature, reflecting the concerns, interests and notions of the collector. The collector’s point in the cycle of collecting (to which the study will discuss) influenced interview content considerably.
For example, because Lou was at the end of the collecting process, she was much more reflective than the other collector-informants in regard to collecting and much more concerned about the fate or disposition of the collection. A rigid script or a formal questionnaire would have missed this specificity.

A sheet with "potential" questions was taken to each interview to assure that some "distance" would be covered. Because of time constraints, I was unable to ask the informants all of the questions from every category, which would have resulted in interviews ten or more hours long.

ENTERING THE WORLD OF COLLECTORS AND INFORMANT SELECTION

Collectors are everywhere and nowhere in particular. They cannot be found by looking in the yellow pages of telephone directories; yet they are not difficult to find. Because they appeal to the imagination, they often appear in human interest stories in newspapers and magazines. And when people meet collectors, they tend to remember them. For the purpose of this study, however, it was necessary to do more than simply find them. Further, I wanted to locate collectors who considered themselves collectors, as opposed to those upon whom I or others had imposed that classification. The following section describes my strategies in finding, identifying and connecting with collectors willing to participate in this study.

I located collectors and publicized my interest in interviewing them through the following strategies: by appearing on two radio talk-shows during which I asked collectors
to contact me; by posting notices at swap meets, garage sales, hobby shows, flea markets, and antique shops; by placing newspaper advertisements; by subscribing to specific collecting club newsletters; and by attending collectors' club meetings.

Most of my publicity sources were at the intersection of the public and private spheres of collecting. My over-all intention was to gather as diverse a list of collectors from which I could draw a sample of collector-informants.

I wanted to reach idiosyncratic collectors as well as collectors who belonged to larger social collecting networks or organized systems. My two radio interviews, broadcast over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) reached a more idiosyncratic class of collector, than did notices in antique or second-hand shops. The program consisted of an interview regarding my research, my interest in collectors and my specific goals. I discussed the literary work and what little research had been done on collecting, and told listeners where collectors could contact me if they were interested in being part of the study. My second appearance occurred after I was well into the interview process. It consisted of a brief introduction to my research and then an invitation to collectors to call in for on-air interviews. Several collectors called in from the central and lower mainland area of British Columbia.

I had myself placed on the mailing list of three collectors' clubs and attended meetings of the following: the Postcard Collectors Club of Vancouver, the Lottery Ticket Collectors of North America, and the Minoru Spoon Club, all of Vancouver. Notices in their newsletters brought additional informants into the pool, as did word-of-mouth among club members.
I posted notices at a major Vancouver flea market and in antique and junk shops throughout Vancouver, including the Abbotsford and Steveston areas, and placed the following announcement in the Courier and Western News: "Anthropologist doing research on collectors wishes to locate and interview collectors of all types. If you collect anything and are willing to donate a few hours to be confidentially interviewed please contact R. Kremer, c/o Visual & Performing Arts in Education, 2125 Main Mall, UBC, or call 222-0151."

The selection of thirty collector-informants was based on a partial random selection from the larger pool, knowing only what they collected, their gender, approximate age and proximity to the geographic area. This informant-group represents as diverse a range as possible of ages, gender, and of objects collected. By selecting to achieve a range of object categories, a socio-economic range was also selected, as it turned out that collectors clearly select their objects of collection within their economic means. Because I did not want the data to be influenced by one type of collected object, no two collectors collecting the same object form were used as informants. The selection of a higher proportion of males was due to the selection pool having a ratio of two males to one female.

After the interviews were transcribed from tape to computer text, the same question as answered by the different informants was able to be generated and printed out together. For example, a question such as, how did your collection begin, or did anyone else in your family collect, were each given a "bookmark" and then the responses
from all the informants were generated into separate documents to be analyzed. As well as collating responses, language use and stance of the responses were also examined.

INTRODUCING THIRTY COLLECTORS

All of those interviewed considered themselves to be or to have been "collectors": the activity and its associations had become part of their identities. The term "collector" had become something that they "were" rather than something that they "did".

The amount of biographical information was based on material extracted from the interviews, and so varied from one informant to the next. During the course of the interviews, I asked all informants to describe themselves and to give some brief background. Inquiries such as, "Did anyone else in your family collect?" sometimes brought descriptions of their families' interests and lifestyles.

As a group, the collectors seemed to share a great willingness and desire to talk about their collections. Only one showed evidence of a reclusive personality. The rest led highly social lives and enjoyed a high level of what I would term "vitality." The process of collecting is by its nature active. Despite the age, gender, educational and economic differences, almost every member of this group appeared vital and energetic.

The following is a brief introduction to the thirty collectors interviewed in this study. To allow an overview of each collector and to facilitate comparisons of data a graph is included following the descriptions.
When I first interviewed Harry, who is in his mid-seventies, he had been collecting "exotic travel souvenirs" for 32 years. He is married with no children, and has recently retired from running his own rental business. Harry keeps the majority of his collection in his store which is attached to his home. Elaborately displayed, it covers virtually every inch of his storefront, office and home. It consists of hundreds of travel souvenirs he has acquired during his past thirty-two yearly vacations. In addition to collecting these objects, Harry has curated them by labelling and mounting them. During the course of this research, he has even opened his collection to the public, calling it "The Museum of Exotic & Interesting Objects." As that name implies, rather than building a collection of a particular form of object, Harry collects according to a theme: his objects all fall under the category of inexpensive readily available tourist souvenirs, and vary from bugs to postcards.

Butch, in his mid-forties, collects company hats. He owns and operates his own chainsaw sales and repair shop, where most of his collection is displayed. The hats, which he has been collecting for nine years, numbers over a thousand, and are the only thing he has ever collected. They are very specific to the baseball hat type with company insignias on them.

Robert is in his sixties, is married with grown children, and has recently retired from a long and varied banking career. He collects postcards, Medalta pottery, and bank paraphernalia all of which he houses in his basement recreation room area. The background material he offered is as follows: "I was born in Saskatchewan and went to school in Saskatchewan. Came to British Columbia. I started with the Royal Bank; I
worked with them for 37 years. I worked only in B.C. I opened branches in the Province. I ended up in senior administration. I took early retirement from that and headed up a trust company for 5 or 6 years. Just finished with that so now I can spend more time with my collecting" (Robert, 1). To that end, Robert recently developed a computer program for classifying and cross-referencing his thousands of postcards. He has several collections going at one time, most of which he has been building for a number of years. Others, such as one of Okanagan Fruit Labels, have been liquidated or given away. Robert may be characterized as a serial collector.

Randy, unmarried in his late thirties, earns his living as a musician. He sums up his background: "Born in Nova Scotia, raised in British Columbia since I was five. Tried to leave B.C. many times. Went to High School, public school, went to a music college in Victoria and specialized in musicology in New York. Also took training in another field, in massage therapy in Ontario, in Toronto many years ago. That was an attempt to gain employment and that didn't work. I sort of reached the peak of that field. I became president of the association of B.C. and was the co-founder of the first holistic health center in Canada and there was not much market for it at that time. It was just new. Kept at that for about five years and then I decided if I was going to put all that energy into something I'd put it into my music" (Randy, 1). For Randy, who had gone through many changes, his collecting remained one of the constants in his life. He has collected rare and ethnic musical instruments for eighteen years. His collection numbers over five hundred instruments.
L.M. married with three children is an elementary school teacher. He has been collecting Inuit prints for more than twenty-five years. In the last ten years his wife has been actively collecting with him. He began collecting while a college student, after taking a printmaking class. Most of his collection was acquired when the prices for Inuit prints were quite low. Recently, collecting books and related materials has replaced the collecting of prints. The collection is displayed throughout his and his wife’s home and numbers over one hundred prints and drawings.

J.P. is a linguist, in his mid-forties. With collections of stamps, books, eggbeaters, canning jars, and even languages, his collecting is both multiple and serial in nature. Having collected for most of his life, he considers himself a "born" collector, and has encouraged his wife and children to collect.

Unmarried, in his mid-forties, G.S. grew up on a farm in the prairies. He is a botanist with advanced degrees. An avid outdoor enthusiast, G.S. started collecting butterflies when he was fifteen and attending high school. He has been collecting ever since, for over thirty years. He had collected stamps as a child and considers himself a "born collector."

Ed, male in his mid-fifties, is presently divorced and living with one of his adult sons. He works part time as a clerk. He says of his background, "From Northern Ontario, been out here 12 years" (Ed, 1). He is presently passionate about his lottery ticket collection, of which he has been acknowledged as having the finest in British Columbia and perhaps in Canada. He serves as a consultant to the B.C. Lottery Archives. He previously collected other items but without the commitment or
enthusiasm of this present collection. "Well I used to be into antiques a lot. I've been a collector, I think, it's got to be a good 20 or 25 years. I collected bottles, the sodapops from the 19th century, old Coca Cola bottles" (Ed, 1). His collection of over a hundred thousand tickets nearly fills one room of his apartment.

Chris, aged forty-two, married, with children, grew up in England, where he attended art school before coming to Canada a few years ago. He now owns a small advertising company where he displays his collection of over fifty antique globes, which he has collected for the past four years.

Noah, in his mid-thirties, was raised in Vancouver and lives with his parents. He did not reveal any job or occupation; reluctant to talk about his background, he described himself as "a loner." He has collected a sequence of object classifications since he was ten: comic books, Avon bottles, and now Japanese Dolls. His present collection started about seven years ago.

Norm, in his late fifties, works in extension development at a major University. He has been a school teacher for eight years, where he coached basketball. He has collected a variety of items, and can be described as both a serial and a multiple collector. His collecting, which began in childhood, has stopped and restarted several times. Presently he is at the end of his walking stick collecting, but still actively collects wooden-shafted golf clubs and old sports and children's books. His vintage children's book collection numbers over 2000, most of which are selected for the nature and quality of their illustrations.
Gary, in his mid-thirties did not begin collecting until about four years ago, but grew up with a father who he describes as having a "massive collection of plates." Gary collects antique cheese dishes which are displayed in the family meat market business. Presently at the peak of his collecting he has acquired over a hundred items often taking "collecting" vacations, in which the purpose is to find and acquire more dishes.

Bob P., in his mid-forties, was born and raised in New Zealand. Bob collects tribal art--mostly Oceanic, Maori, and New Guinean. He began collecting on one of his visits home, shortly after emigrating to Canada. Presently teaching law at a major Canadian university, Bob's collecting has sparked his interest in legal interpretations regarding moveable cultural properties.

Alan, in his late forties, has collected outdoor metal advertising signs for the past twenty years. He sees himself as a "passive" collector because most of the objects he collects come to him. The signs "decorate" the walls of the surplus furniture store he owns, and this visibility continually brings him more. He began collecting shortly after opening the business. He keeps some of his oldest and rarest signs at home.

Justin, aged nine, has been collecting, according to his parents, "since he was born." He presently has sizeable collections of bones, rocks, shells, foreign money, bottle caps, and marbles. Neither of his parents collects, nor does his older sister. His parents describe their son's collecting: "As soon as Justin gets one of something, he wants to know if there are others, how many, where can he get them. If he sees a second item that is like one he has, he wants to get it to be with his other one. He is a born collector" (Justin, 1).
Donald, mid-forties makes his living as a music teacher. He collects in many areas, presently his most active is of antique Chinese coins.

Ken, in his early thirties, grew up in a military family which relocated often and had many opportunities to travel. He began collecting model airplanes as a child, phased them out as a teenager, then began collecting them again in his mid-twenties. He assembles the models himself. Currently, work and family constraints leave little time for building, so he is amassing a large collection of kits to build later. Ken has collected both robots and model airplanes for over fifteen years.

Ron L., who describes himself as a "born collector", had an "impressive" comic book collection before entering elementary school. He believes that collection, which later gave way to books and magazines, contributed strongly to his decision to become an illustrator. After receiving a model of the Pilsbury Dough-Boy as a gag wedding gift, Ron and his wife began to collect 1950's advertising and animation objects. This collection, which is still growing after twenty years, centers on collectibles including Disney objects and "collectible" ceramics. Ron and Sandra have no children. Their house decor highlights the hundreds of items in their collection, each of which is carefully cared for and displayed. These two are the only couple in this study who show equal involvement in collecting and similar levels of enthusiasm for their object category.

P.M. who offered very little of his background presently collects photographs of fisherman and their catch—a collection which grew out of an earlier collection of logging and general historic photographs of British Columbia.
Steve, who works as an accountant and in real estate and is an avid baseball fan. He has collected used baseball gloves for almost twenty years. He claims his positive memories of playing the game as a young boy are the catalyst for his collecting.

Pat is in her mid-thirties. Married with two daughters, she works for the Canadian Immigration office. She says of her background, "I was born and raised on Cape Breton Island, on the East Coast of Canada. I went to High School there and to university in Ontario at the University of Waterloo and the University of Ottawa. I graduated in '77 and then started working for the Federal Government and was placed out here in Mission. I am from a poor family but I have always liked collecting things since I was a child" (Pat, 1). "I guess I started collecting bottles when I was about six or seven. Then went to matchboxes at about nine." She has been collecting matchboxes off and on since age nine, nearly thirty six years.

Mary is Pat's eleven-year-old daughter. After my interview with her mother, she told me she was also a collector and offered herself as an informant. She has collected stamps and miniatures for the past three years. When I asked her to describe her collecting and to comment on how she began, she said, "Well, a while ago when I was eight or nine. Like I kind of, when I go into shops I see little miniatures in there really cute and all that....Then I started collecting them when I went into stores and I'd see something that I thought was kind of neat and different I'd just see if I could get it" (Mary, 1).

Jean, a recently-retired secretary, has collected decorated eggs and collectible spoons for over twenty years. She says of herself, "I was born in Hamilton, Ontario and
then when I was quite young we moved to Toronto, so that's where I grew up. I came to Vancouver in 1960, so that's 29 years ago. Loved it and here I am still. I was a single parent--bought my first house in 1962 when women couldn't buy houses; then I moved here [to her present house] in 1968. Which was the best move I ever made, financially, and now I am retired after working 48 years as a secretary. I've always been a volunteer type of person; very involved in Girl Guides in Toronto and I still volunteer, always will as long as I can" (Jean, 1).

Lou is 34 years old, has recently married and has no children. She has collected with the theme of strawberries since a young child. Lou describes her life as follows: "Born in Toronto, Ontario and my mom was teaching and then I got shifted down to a place called Sarnia, on the South western tip of Ontario, so that's where I more or less grew up. A really wonderful family life, my mom is a writer and my dad was a jazz musician. I've been a disc jockey, real estate, sales, my first job was modeling when I was young and stupid and from there into fashion, this is when I was 16, 17 years old. Then I loved traveling, and love the service industry. When I first came to Vancouver I worked as a hostess in Gastown and as soon as I had enough funds to take another trip I was gone. I lived to travel" (Lou, 2).

Trudy, is a graphic designer and photographer in her early thirties. She says she collects "everything," but her main collection is of a particular style and brand of tomato ceramics produced in Japan for western consumption, which she has collected actively for fifteen years. Trudy was born in India and came to Vancouver when she was two. When she was twelve she spent a year at school in France, and has continued to travel as
much as possible. She describes her childhood household as a place where there were always very nice things. She has a strong visual interest in objects and art which she attributes to her childhood influences.

Fran, formerly from the French part of Canada, had never collected anything until she married a collector and moved out west a few years ago. She decided to collect items with mushrooms on them when her husband was collecting bottles, therefore making more meaningful to her their visits to flea markets and garage sales. Now her collecting has taken on its own momentum.

Maureen, in her mid-forties, began collecting about ten years ago, shortly after starting her career as a travel agent. This occupation afforded her the opportunity to travel to Africa, where she began her collection of small elephant sculptures and items with elephant images. The elephant theme has become a kind of personal logo, associated with her identity: the image of an elephant occurs on her stationary and business cards—even her answering machine message has an elephant trumpeting on it.

Sara, in her late twenties, started to collect fans and sculptures three years ago, after the onset of multiple sclerosis began to confine her increasingly to her home. Her sculptures are mainly modern figures and bird forms.

Ruth is in her late fifties. Her first collection was of bracelet charms because of her involvement with a weight-loss club which gave charms for goals achieved. That collection lasted between six and seven years. After charms, Ruth began collecting bells, her collection of which is still active after twenty years and includes over three hundred.
objects. Her collection includes old working bells, antique bells and bells from many different countries.
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<tr>
<th>Name and Occupation</th>
<th>Present Collection</th>
<th>How Long</th>
<th>Type of Collector</th>
<th>Place in the Collecting Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harry, mid 70s retired</td>
<td>travel souvenirs</td>
<td>32 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butch, mid 40s chainsaw sales and service</td>
<td>company hats</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>winding down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert, mid 60s retired banker</td>
<td>presently postcards and medalta pottery</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>serial/multiple</td>
<td>peak/sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy, mid 30s musician</td>
<td>rare and exotic musical instruments</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>peak/sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.M., mid 40s elementary school teacher</td>
<td>Inuit prints</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>end/winding down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.P. Linguist</td>
<td>eggbeaters, books, stamps</td>
<td>lifetime, collected since childhood</td>
<td>serial/multiple form/avid</td>
<td>winding down, sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.S., early 40's botanist</td>
<td>butterflies, stamps</td>
<td>30 years, collected since childhood</td>
<td>serial, form/focus</td>
<td>end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed, mid 50's part-time clerk</td>
<td>lottery tickets</td>
<td>25 years collecting, 4 years this category</td>
<td>serial</td>
<td>peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris, early 40's, own advertising agency</td>
<td>antique globes</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah, early 40's, not presently employed</td>
<td>Japanese dolls and kimonos</td>
<td>7 years this category</td>
<td>serial</td>
<td>peak in this category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plate 1: Male Collectors charted
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Occupation</th>
<th>Present Collection</th>
<th>How Long</th>
<th>Type of Collector</th>
<th>Place in the Collecting Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norm, early 60's</td>
<td>Walking sticks children's books</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>serial/multiple</td>
<td>winding down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary, mid 30's</td>
<td>antique cheese dishes</td>
<td>4 years or so</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob, mid 40's lawyer</td>
<td>pre-columbian art</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>peak sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan, late 40's runs surplus outlet</td>
<td>metal outdoor signs</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>multiple/serial</td>
<td>sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justin, aged 9</td>
<td>marbles, rocks, shells, foreign money</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>multiple/serial</td>
<td>beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald, early 40's, archivist</td>
<td>chinese coins</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>form, focus</td>
<td>sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken, early 30's computer animation</td>
<td>model airplanes and robots</td>
<td>15 years both collections</td>
<td>form/focus, branching</td>
<td>sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron, mid 40's illustrator</td>
<td>Disney &amp; 50's memorabilia, comics, advertising</td>
<td>lifetime 20 yrs this focus</td>
<td>multiple/serial</td>
<td>peak sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.M.</td>
<td>photographs</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>form focus, branching</td>
<td>sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve, accountant</td>
<td>baseball gloves</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>sustained winding down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plate 2:** Male Collectors charted
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Occupation</th>
<th>Present Collection</th>
<th>How Long</th>
<th>Type of Collector</th>
<th>Place in the Collecting Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pat, mid 40s Canadian Immigration</td>
<td>matchbooks and teapots</td>
<td>lifetime, 36 years</td>
<td>form/focus multiple</td>
<td>sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary, 11</td>
<td>miniatures</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>early phase, beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean, mid 60s retired secretary</td>
<td>decorated eggs and collectible spoons</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>multiple</td>
<td>sustaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou, mid 30s art student</td>
<td>strawberry theme</td>
<td>collected since childhood</td>
<td>theme</td>
<td>end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trudy, mid 30s photographer</td>
<td>tomato ceramics</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>form/focus</td>
<td>sustaining, toward end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran not employed</td>
<td>mushroom theme</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>theme</td>
<td>peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maureen travel agent</td>
<td>elephant theme</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>theme</td>
<td>toward end, winding down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara community worker</td>
<td>sculpture and fans</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>multiple</td>
<td>just starting to collect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth, late 50's</td>
<td>bells</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>form/focus serial</td>
<td>sustained, past peak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra, wife of Ron</td>
<td>50's collectables</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>Multiple/theme</td>
<td>sustained peak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Plate 3:** Female Collectors charted
CHAPTER FOUR
COLLECTING: SELECTED THEMES FROM THE DATA

INTRODUCTION

The following sections explicate the emerging themes and patterns identified within the data, and examine the responses of the collector informants to propositions regarding collecting drawn from the literature review. Not all possible themes are developed. For example, much material was gathered on the social and interactive aspects of collecting—material which could have formed a section in itself. The themes explicated in the following sections all have relevance to collectors' object attachment, to their "sentiment" toward objects, or to the field of museum studies in general.

The first section describes the informants' perceptions of themselves as collectors: it defines collecting from within the collecting culture and describes the cycles within the process of collecting—the ebbs and flow of the process. It also describes how collecting begins, progresses and ends, and categorizes and defines "types" of collectors. Section two focuses on collecting as a verb, on what is implied in "to collect". It describes how collectors play and approach the game of collecting. Section three focuses on aspects of possession and ownership relevant to collecting, and section four on object attachment—the relationship collectors have with their objects—and the affection expressed by collectors toward their objects. Section five examines collectors as curators, with attention to the many ways in which private collectors approach, act out and talk about their curatorial relationship to their objects.
The topics within these sections, are not separate or discrete, but intertwined. Many quotations and comments could have been placed under more than one heading, with the headings interconnected in many complex ways. Due to the linear nature of writing, though, the difficulty in presenting all of the interconnectedness among the themes and areas necessitates that the reader carry some of the strands from one area into another.

COLLECTING AND COLLECTORS

Because the process of collecting is particularly relevant to the relationship collectors have with their objects, this study will begin by examining how and why personal collecting starts and how it develops or changes over time. Next, it will discuss collectors' definitions of collecting, and their perceptions of themselves as collectors. "Types" of collectors are also identified and discussed.

HOW COLLECTING BEGINS

For the thirty collectors studied here, collecting began in many ways. Four began collecting as children, and their collecting has been continuous and uninterrupted since childhood. The topic of children as collectors as a specific focus is outside of the scope of this study, but it would be difficult to discuss the beginning of collecting without dealing with children's collections. Two of this study's informants are children.
The four who began collecting as children refer to themselves as "born collectors," because they see no space between their collecting activities as children and their present collecting. G.S. is typical of this born collector when he says,

I can't tell you the earliest, but I certainly collected as a child. I mean I think when I was large enough to crawl around and do anything I probably started collecting either butterflies or bugs or something...I guess it started when I was very young. I can't really remember the first thing I ever collected, but it was probably a butterfly or a beetle (G.S., 1).

In the case of G.S., even the object category (butterflies) has carried on from childhood. This long term focus, although by no means the rule, did occur in two of the four who have collected since childhood; in the others the object category changed over time. Later in the interview, G.S. places the start of his "serious" collecting at age 15. "It also started out as a 4-H project as a kid on the farm" (G.S., 1). He may state this not so much because the project was a second start, but because it was the place of conscious, purposeful collecting which he perceives as "serious collecting." Chris says, "I guess I collected stamps as a kid, but not in a serious way" (Chris, 6). As with G.S., Chris may associate adult collecting with a deeper, more passionate, or more disciplined involvement with collecting. The data suggests the following proposition: for some collectors, adult collecting grows directly out of childhood collecting practices and that it is not uncommon for collectors to continue collecting the same object from childhood on.

Collections sometimes "happen" with collectors who do not initially set out to create a collection; for others, an urge to collect can begin or be triggered at any time, sometimes beginning with what Belk calls an accidental start (1988, 75). Belk's first
proposition (Proposition No.1, the only one which deals with the beginnings of collecting), states that collections seldom begin purposefully. Specifically, his data suggests that collections of a particular item often begin by accident. He suggests that "many collections are discovered by their creators long after the materials have been gathered" (Belk 1988, 75). In this study, though, only two collectors note accidental beginnings, while an equal number recall making conscious decisions to collect. When asked if they started out to collect a common category, those who have begun accidentally say it's something that has just grown. For some collectors, a conscious inclination toward collecting is evident. Trudy states, "About fifteen years ago, I started off. I saw some in a store on West Fourth, and I bought a couple of teapots and some creamers--just a small core of stuff--and then just added to it over the years" (Trudy,1). Later, she says, "It just evolved, because I had the core of them" (Trudy, 3). It is difficult to say when actual collecting begins: it may begin with the subsequent purchases that set the collecting process in motion, rather than with an initial purchase. The pleasure and attachment the initial items engender after they are purchased may promote the acquisition of related items.

For many collectors, collecting can begin by accident, often through a meaningful first experience or significant object experience. Fascination with or attachment to a single item within the category is by far the largest single catalyst for beginning to collect. Jean's collection is a good example of one begun by a catalyst: "My egg collection began with my son painting me an egg at Easter time and then the next year he painted me another one. And then a little girl, a friend of his, painted me one, and it
started from that. I just happened upon ones I liked. I didn't set out to have an egg collection" (Jean, 1). When asked when she realized she was collecting, she replied, Well when I had five or six I guess" (Jean, 1). Gary warmly describes the first cheese dish which came into his collection, "One day a guy came in and had one of these cheese plates and dad bought it. That was the first one in the whole collection, and I guess that one has the most meaning. The design on the cover of that dish has hand painted pheasants" (Gary, 1).

Topical (theme) collecting constitutes a significant type of collecting. The typical collector collects everything to do with a topic or theme. Often, particularly in the case of male collectors, the collection's theme will relate directly to his or her occupation. Chris who collects advertising memorabilia, works as a graphic designer; Robert, who collects banking objects had a long career in banking; and Butch who collects company hats services a variety of companies. Interests in categories such as sports, events, historic events, periods or images, also tended to spark collections. Norm describes the catalyst for his first collection of anything to do with World War II airplanes:

Because my brother joined up and I was so jealous, he's ten years older than me, so I decided to collect everything I could and used to go on the streets and collect airplane cards out of the cigarette things [packages] and then I collected from Britain a magazine called Airplane Spotter. I still have fifty of them (Norm, 1).

Topical concentration is a common approach to collecting and is sometimes less object centered, that is, the collector is often less concerned with aesthetics or one form of object, collecting instead all material related to the topic or image. The theme
collector can combine theme collecting with an aesthetic dimension, selecting only those things within the theme which he or she sees as neat or attractive, rather than all things falling under that category. Topical collectors comprise the largest category evident among the female collectors, including such themes as strawberries (Lou) or mushrooms (Fran). For some theme collectors their objects serve as props with the involvement being the category. The sheer number of items they collect suggests an attempt to capture the "idea" or essence of their object--a search for the quintessential image or representation which will allow them to capture or satisfy their desire for it, and perhaps somehow to "explain" their fascination. Theme collectors exhibit and express more "fixation" on the subject than on their objects; but it would be wrong to assume that the theme collector is only "using" the objects to get at the image or topic and does not also have a strong attraction and attachment to the objects themselves. The theme collectors interviewed for this study exhibited a powerful attachment toward their objects because of their fascination with the image or topic. Without the physical manifestations there is no image. The objects are not merely on hand to illustrate the theme, but actually have become synonymous with it.

For other collectors, becoming strongly connected to one object from a category serves as a catalyst to collect that category. Noah's description of getting "hooked" on his object category is quite typical: "Well I bought one in a flea market and then got hooked on it. I just looked at the material and the clothes and the expression on the face and started buying more and more and more and more" (Noah, 1).
A small number of collectors make conscious decisions to collect. Three of the thirty collectors made what can be considered conscious decisions to collect. What appears as a cool or detached decision, though, often conceals an already strong or growing attachment for the object category. After this conscious decision, many become "hooked" on the object category. One of the most avid of the collector informants attributes his beginning with the category he presently collects to a conscious decision.

Well, my head told me - stamps is too complicated for new collectors, a lot of them are different colors or preparations and this is bad enough. He [father] told me one time, just feel the tickets, they are made by British-American Banco Co. They are water marked, they are money paper and they are beautiful. I just got hooked on them. I mean I'm nuts about them. It was a conscious decision. I said I am going to collect these and everybody around me thought I was crazy (Ed, 3).

For Chris, already a collector of advertising memorabilia, seeing a magazine photo of a collection of globes sparked his collection of them. Asked how his present collection began, he says; "That started when I saw a magazine. I can't remember the name of the magazine--it was a home and garden type of magazine. Someone had a collection of globes in a hallway. I thought the color was great, they fascinated me" (Chris, 1). Later, seeing and buying a globe in an auction was Chris's first acquisition and the catalyst for starting his present collection. The idea of collecting was already in place; the magazine image generated what was to become the next category. Sometimes the idea to collect something comes before the object selection, sometimes after, and sometimes the two present themselves simultaneously.
Initially it is the affection, the desire for the object that is the catalyst for the process. Later, the process can exert almost an equal pull. Collecting is not a process that can be detached from the relationship the collector has with his or her category of object. Often a single desired object becomes the precursor of the category. All of the collectors interviewed express a belief that an object or object category definitely brought them to collecting, and that they could not make themselves collect something they had no feeling for or interest in.

The process of collecting is inexorably linked to the collector’s own interest, attachment and affection toward the object. Pat describes her first inclination to collect as starting with an interest in one object. She states, "The very first bottle I collected was blue glass and I think I found it in a garbage dump or something. Then I started looking at flavoring bottles in my mother’s cupboard and asked her to start giving them to me when she was finished" (Pat, 1). Pat has continued collecting since childhood, moving on to collect matchbooks.

Two of the collectors studied spoke of collecting itself as only a part of a larger interest and not the focus. L.M., for example, said, "I think the whole interest was wider than collecting. The collecting is part of being interested. The collecting isn’t really the first thing, the interest is in art" (LM, 3). This clearly shows the importance of the object category and the wider interest that sometimes generates collecting. There may be, for example, sports enthusiasts who act out their interest in sports by collecting, and are also involved with a range of other activities such as attending events, playing, coaching, and so on. As a collector of Inuit and Eskimo prints, L.M. appears to be this type of
collector: in addition to collecting Inuit Art, he reads about it and goes to galleries, both activities which he did before he began collecting. He presently collects books on the subject, which developed concurrently with his collecting.

Collecting runs a cycle with the greatest quantity being collected early, peaks, then slows down, stops, or becomes more selective. Collectors are often most aggressive early in the collecting process. This may be attributed to an early desire to form a collection/entity. As Butch states about his hats, "I've got over a thousand really with the ones I've got at home," says Butch. "Got most of them in one year or two when I first started" (Butch, 2). Whether collecting occurs over six months or thirty years a similar pattern emerged over the course of the interviews. Early in the cycle, the desire to "build the collection"--the urge to get a collection in place as an entity is much more of a driving force than later in the cycle. Initially, then, a large number of items are gathered, most often within the first year, then there is a tapering-off in terms of numbers and then either a consistent pattern of acquisition or a falling off accompanied by a greater discrimination and or specialization.\(^6\)

More than half of the collectors in this study, speak of a "peak" in their collecting. G.S. describes his: "My peak was between my Bachelor of Science degree and my Masters. I had five years that I worked and I was really most interested then and I'd move to a new area; so anytime you move, anything natural, of course, is slightly different. So, I collected a lot more then than I ever had" (G.S., 2). He collected half of his over five thousand butterflies during that five year period. During another smaller

\(^6\) See Chapter 5, p. 188 for a discussion of the development of connoisseurship.
peak, he remembers, "I came here to do my Ph.D. and so...because it was a new area, I was doing field work in botany at the time and it was, just everything was new, so there was another smaller peak. Probably I got another quarter of the collection after I moved here" (G.S., 2). During this first quarter of collecting period, G.S. gathered roughly three quarters of his collection.

The tendency of collectors to build their collections very quickly early in the collecting cycle can be partially attributed to the fact that, early in the process, they are less discriminating, and partially to availability factors. When I asked Chris if he was still actively collecting globes, he said, "Not really, no. Because it seems to me now, every time I see one, I virtually have it. I don't collect the modern ones. The older ones--to find one I haven't got. It's pretty hard because I have scouted all over this area" (Chris, 2). Randy further describes the cycles of availability: "The first year I had only about thirty instruments and then it was very slow some years. I would gain another thirty instruments and some years only one or two. It was very, very slow". (Randy, 2).

Some collections stop because the category is exhausted: the collector "famines" the object category, yet doesn't satisfy the desire for the objects. Asked if he still actively collects; Robert responded, "see, once you get to a point in any collection it gets harder to get because you've got it all, or most of the easy stuff. Then you go on to something else that will satisfy your collecting instincts" (Robert, 5).

Collectors often refine their object categories, with a branching effect: they begin to specialize or collect subcategories of their objects. "Once you get 800 pieces it's hard to get something different. You can get into shapes--that's the beginning--then you get
into color shades, different kinds of designs, then the different kinds of paint that they used on the designs" (Robert, 5). Robert, has collected many categories of objects, and is currently most involved in his collection of 15,000 postcards. He began by collecting Canadian postcard images, "then graduated from that to specifically one Canadian artist, Edward Goodall" (Robert, 6). It is telling that Robert uses the term "graduated" thereby suggesting an upward progression as he becomes more discriminating or focused. Such specialization is generally admired within the collecting culture.

The majority of the collectors in the study talked of a peak and then a decline. The decline sometimes signaled the end of their collecting within a given category. There may even be a saturation point where the collection is "finished" for the collector. When asked if he still collected avidly, G.S. replied,

It's definitely peaked and waned to the point where I'm considering getting rid of my butterfly collection because I have five thousand and some, I really haven't done anything on them in years, or not much. Like last year I probably collected ten butterflies. So I am interested from a naturalist standpoint but I'm not doing anything with it and I think it's a valuable scientific collection--it's all labelled and documented. It's crazy for me to have it all at home and not be using it. So, I am actually giving it to the Museum in Victoria, or donating it for tax purposes (G.S., 2).

Even by collecting only ten items in a year, G.S. is still "a collector;" but his attitude that he is not "doing anything with" his collection signals that he is at the end of collecting. Even for the born or lifelong collector, periods occur when they are between objects. Almost always they describe such periods negatively, as a "dry" or "empty" period.
Some collectors liquidate their collections on a regular basis; others stop and
begin collecting again in the same object category. Both Robert and Pat amassed whole
collections, gave them away, then later began "from scratch" to collect the same category.

Yes, I have collected them all through my life, thrown them out, whole
collections out, and started from scratch, giving them away, giving parts of
them away, giving some of them away. Then I would see some again and I
would feel pretty sad and sentimental so I would just start again and promise
myself it would be only one bottle and before you know it, you have a dozen
(Pat, 2).

This process of beginning again may relate to what Belk describes as closure or
the finishing of the collection--something which is sought only abstractly, and whose
actual attainment is not truly desired or satisfying. Beginning to collect again may stem
from the collector's realization of how much collecting contributed to his/her life; or, it
may relate to the addictive quality inherent in the process. "[Despite] The fact that I am
getting rid of my butterflies, I probably will start again and collect a few but I don't think
I'll collect as many as I did" (G.S., 6).

Collecting occurs over time. By definition, collectors collect their objects over
time, either individually or in small numbers, rather than purchasing many objects or
acquiring existing collections. Simply acquiring an existing collection does not make one
a collector--a distinction which arises partly out of one's motivation to acquire, and the
process enacted. Only one collector, Chris, mentioned enjoying going to an antique mall
and coming home with three or four globes. Most acquired their objects one by one.

The time dimension varies greatly among collectors, but by far the majority of the
thirty interviewed have collected for over periods measured not in weeks or months, but
in years. The process most often occurs over a significant portion of the life span. Like pieces of furniture carried from one home to the next, a collection's longevity may add an element of continuity to lives where there are other changes. Unlike furniture, though, a collection represents both a set of familiar objects and a recurring activity. With some categories, great time lapses occur between purchases, yet the collector can still be actively collecting, as long as he/she is on the alert for an object. Collectors talk about collecting taking on a momentum of its own, getting out of hand, seemingly growing on its own because of continued small additions. Often, when they realize how many objects, they regard their perseverance with surprise.

Collecting and involvement with a collection may continue over the majority of the lifespan, often from childhood to old age. The long time span claimed by well over half of the thirty collectors suggests that collecting represents a deeper involvement than can be attributed to most activities regarded as hobbies. "This has been going on -- my son is twenty-eight years of age and he was probably eight [when I started collecting]. So twenty years I've been collecting these" (Jean, 1). It is not an exaggeration, then, when some collectors' call collecting their life's work. Sometimes even the initial childhood object category is carried over the lifespan. Randy, well into his thirties, has collected the same category for over eighteen years. Ed states, "I've been a collector--I think it's got to be a good 20 or 25 years" (Ed, 1). Ed's lottery ticket collection began in 1970 and his enthusiasm has grown alongside it. Trudy has been collecting tomato crockery for fifteen years. These time spans are typical.

7 See "Another Collection Lost", 1987, Country Life, October.
It is common for collectors to have multiple collections or to go on to collect other objects they become interested in. Once they have experienced collecting, collectors often say it seems natural to collect whatever they become interested in: collecting becomes a process they apply to other objects or object categories, possibly because they find they have learned skills and strategies they can apply to other kinds of objects. They develop a formula for playing the collecting game.

Among collectors who have changed or added to their original object category, I have identified three types: multiple collectors; serial collectors; and serial-multiple collectors. Half of the collectors interviewed in this study were actively involved in more than one collection, although, for most, one collection remained primary. These collectors I have categorized as multiple collectors. Pat, an example of a multiple collector collected matchbooks and teapots. Robert collected bank memorabilia and Medalta Pottery, but was mainly engaged with his postcard collection, specializing increasingly in the works of a particular artist. This branching effect is common, with collectors becoming more specialized over time. Even Ed, who was passionately involved with lottery tickets, had begun to collect related paraphernalia. I was surprised by the number of collectors whom I initially associated with one item, but who, when asked what they collected, listed two and sometimes three categories.

Noah is typical of the serial collector who only focuses on one object at a time; "Oh, I'm collecting Japanese dolls and kimonos, for about seven years. Before that I collected Avon bottles. Oh, that lasted about five years. I was into comic books, that
was about ten years" (Noah, 1). Here the collector collects avidly one category until a
catalyst occurs for the object category to change.

The serial-multiple collector, both changes object categories and has more than
one collection going at one time. Among other things, J.P. (who was one of only two
collectors of the thirty with more than four active collections) collected eggbeaters,
stamps, canning jars, buttons, baskets, and a particular series of paperback books.
Previously, he had collected Bibles written in different languages. Norm (who was the
other) collected old golf items, canes, art, and children's and old sporting books. As a
child he collected World War I aviation material.

Collectors posit notions of both a "true" and a "born" collector. One category
projected from within the collecting culture is that of the "avid", or "born" collector. This
category generally connotes a combination of longevity as a collector and a very serious
or enthusiastic approach to collecting. Sometimes the term or its equivalent also implies
high levels of skill, passion, enthusiasm and commitment. Collectors suggest that there
are those who take up collecting as a hobby, a minor involvement, and those who "are"
collectors "by nature" and must always collect something. When I asked Ed, who
identified himself as a born collector, if he could remember a time when he didn't collect
anything his immediate response was, "No. No. Always." (Ed, 1). The born collector
projects an image of a person "living to collect", as opposed to the collector who collects
merely because he/she chooses to become involved with an object category or topic.

Asked if he could imagine not being a collector, G.S. responded, "No. I couldn't, I have
to collect. I'm a born collector. I can't imagine not collecting anything. If I was an
invalid and couldn't get out in the field then I would go back to the stamps or
something" (G.S., 6).

Born collectors may be more process--oriented than object--oriented, yet
attachment to and interest in their object category remains a significant focus. They feel
that they like or are attracted to "things." Of the thirty subjects interviewed for this
study, four identified themselves as born collectors. This notion of the existence of the
born collector is also projected by those collectors interviewed who did not place
themselves in this category but considered themselves hobbyists rather than "real"
collectors. This perception, which appears to be accurate, is applied by a variety of
collectors to those few who have collected since childhood, and have often collected
many different categories of objects. Someone who has come late to collecting but has a
"talent" and passion for it is described as an "avid" collector. The "true," avid, or born
collector is the object of considerable admiration in the collecting culture.

One important aspect of collecting is that it is a self-imposed and self-initiated
behavior. Both the decision to collect and the object category grow out of the
individual's personality, interests, motivations and experiences. Collecting is therefore
self-directed. None of the collectors interviewed believe they have been talked into
collecting, or that collecting has been cultivated or taught them by parents or teachers,
and no one has told them what to collect; nor are the majority connected to families in
which their are collectors. Only Chris whose brother collects decanters, Ed, whose father
collected stamps, Pat, Mary (Pat's daughter) and Gary whose father collected plates,
have immediate family members who collect. Of that number only Ed and Gary
attributed their collecting to the influence of their collector fathers. Ed describes his memories when asked if are were other collectors in his family: "No, just my father, as long as I can remember, he was a coin and stamp collector. When he died, he left us 60 albums of stamps" (Ed., 1). There was no indication of an inherited aspect to collecting, or that collecting "runs" in families. Mary, Pat's daughter, was aware of her mother's collecting but describes other children's collections as her motivation to collect. "I knew lots of my friends had collections and I never had one, so I thought that maybe it would be nice to start a collection on miniatures because they are kind of neat" (Mary, 1).

Collecting is an individual, highly personal involvement. Because collecting and the choice of objects are very self-determined and personal, collectors feel that only their own collection reflects their life-experiences and tastes. For this reason, members of this group typically are not museum-goers, and are generally only interested in others' collections if they share their object category. Norm sums up such an attitude with his response when asked to name the most interesting collection he has ever seen. He replies: "mine" (Norm, 9).

Because collecting is so individual and self-selected it is performed independently of siblings or even life-long spouses. Some collectors feel that their mates tolerate their collecting but do not share an interest in the objects even through they have lived with them over a long time period.

The wife of L.M., who collects Inuit prints, is an exception. With an attitude of "why fight him, I'll join him," she has developed an interest in L.M.'s object category and
collected with him for the past ten years. She describes her first realization that she was married to a collector:

We lived in an apartment for the first five years we were married. My husband was in the University for three, so money was quite short. We were saving for a house. The day finally came when we were able to put a down payment down on a little first house and we were in the real estate office. He was asking about our assets and liabilities. We had no liabilities at that point and my husband said, 'well we have several thousand dollars worth of art.' I knew what we had on our apartment walls and I didn't think it added up but he's a very honest and truthful person, so I just didn't say anything the whole time. But when we came out of the office I said, 'How could it add up to that much?' And he said: 'I have a little confession'. We went back to the apartment and under our bed he had a little collection; and along with his student work he also had a little folder of Eskimo prints that all added up. That's the first time that I realized I was married to a collector (L.M., 1).

Several informants feel that their collecting activities are encouraged, some that they are discouraged. Some know other collectors whose collections they remember have captured their interest or admiration; but no obvious connection to significant collectors in their past appears to have influenced their collecting. When asked if anyone else in their family collects, the most common response is an unequivocal, "no, just me" (Noah, 1). Only Fran, who was not brought up with her family, found out later that just about everyone in her family collects. "I left when I was fairly young, but my mom did, everybody collected something...this is my brother who collects mugs, which I didn't know...I just found out actually. One collects candles and the other one bells. They all collect things." (Fran, 6).

When asked if they would try to influence their children to collect, most say they would. Chris says, "I think it's an interesting pastime. My son has recently started to
collect hockey cards. He buys hundreds to find one he hasn't got" (Chris, 6). Ed actively encourages young people to begin lottery ticket collections, believing it is the stamp collecting of the future. "I'd like to see these kids. It's what I do a lot. There's this guy in the states, and he's a cub scout leader, he's got 36 kids, now I'm sending tickets to those kids and they're into it" (Ed, 1). He feels that collecting of any kind was good for kids. Another typical response is, "I have children and they're not a bit interested. They haven't got the instincts at all. Neither has anyone in my family" (Robert, 12).

This concept of "instincts" is a curious one, one which arises in many collectors' descriptions of their "feel" for their object category, or of their hunting prowess. They speak of their "instinct" in terms of a real primal sense, applied to the "sniffing out" of objects. Alternatively, but in the same context, they may speak of a "talent" for collecting. Some of their discourse suggests the existence of a "predisposition" to collecting among some individuals, one which may lie dormant until a particular object or experience triggers it. Robert states, "I got interested because I had the collecting instincts" (Robert, 2). Trudy says, "I'm just an ace at scouting junk stores" (Trudy, 4). Section two presents a more complete discussion of this "instinct" in terms of the sport of collecting.

Collecting can sometimes begins with a lost or withheld object, a proposition suggested by the fictional literature was not supported by the data in this study. The withheld object is a common literary device whereby collecting becomes a symbolic quest for that object or what it represents; but this does not appear to be the case with collector-informants based in this study. Having few possessions or having many
possessions both show only a minor effect upon the collecting drive. No clear pattern similar to that which stimulates hoarding appeared for collectors. Some collectors, such as Pat, who began collecting as a child, suggest that the resistance she met to collecting may have contributed to her lifelong collecting pattern. She describes that resistance: "I had a shelf and then two shelves in my bedroom and I just kept collecting them and my mother kept throwing them out. I just kept adding and she kept depleting" (Pat, 1). Pat has chosen to re-enact this drama on her own, by disposing of whole collections, then starting over. No other informants mentioned resistance of this kind.

Fran says she made a casual, conscious decision to collect things with mushrooms on them for her kitchen: "My mother had a soup bowl, a ceramic one made out of a mushroom, which I wanted, but she went and hid it on me, so I couldn't get that. But that started before I started my collection. So I guess it was already telling me things before I started" (Fran, 7). She makes the connection herself between the withheld object and her choice of collecting category. Fran is the only informant who attributes the start of her collecting to a conscious joint decision made with her husband to each begin collections of their own object category but to collect together.

For the collector, one defining characteristic of collecting is that the utility aspect of the collected object is not an issue. Collectors gather a number of items for which utility can no longer be considered a reasonable justification. Very few of the collector informants use their objects, and none claim utility as a justification for owning them. Only one of the collectors, the collector of musical instruments (who knew how to play all of the instruments in his collection), used the objects of his collection on a regular
basis. This caused him to question whether he was a "true" collector. "I still don't consider myself in some senses fully a collector, in that I'm....my sense is that a collector is a person that will collect the stuff but not necessarily use it, it's not functional. I make a differentiation there in that still the majority of this is functional and I use it for educational purposes" (Randy, 7). Pat, who collects teapots and matchbooks, uses one of her many teapots for tea on different occasions.

Most of the collectors comment on the "uselessness" or extraneous nature of the number of their objects. "It's almost embarrassing if I said I have 200 coffee mugs with strawberries on them. I have to have bus tours to use them" (Lou, 6). Several of the collectors say, they realized they were collecting only when they noticed that they had gathered more objects than they could use--that they had, in effect, already built a collection. Often one of the first pieces of information volunteered after the collecting category is the number of objects in the collection. Ironically, this number is almost always a "ball park" figure rather than a meticulous count; it is rare to find collectors who know exactly the number of objects in their collection. This may be due to the ever-changing numbers involved, or it could indicate that collectors tend to attach greater importance to a general sense of quantity than to knowing the exact number. Yet they often measure their success or accomplishment in terms of the size of their collections. Fran, for example, states, "When I started I couldn't find anything in mushrooms and believe me, I came a long way. I have a lot of them" (Fran, 4). Fran obviously equates acquiring "a lot of them" with "coming a long way. The size of her collection has become the measure of her accomplishment.
Collectors select categories where significant numbers will be attainable. For the collectors involved in this study, having a few objects is not satisfying; in fact no number is really seen as "enough." The object category determines what number is "significant" to its collector. Sometimes, the collector justifies his/her desire for a lot of items as Randy does here:

There are many days when I just walk in the room feeling very stressed or upset by something and I just go from one instrument to another, and I will play probably over a hundred instruments in that one day and I'm very satisfied at the end of that day. So, sure I could do that with one hundred, but there's a lot more freedom in having four hundred. If I had five thousand, it might take me a long time to walk through that room (Randy, 11).

Collecting is significantly different from hoarding. None of the informants appear to have hoarding tendencies: their homes are no more "overloaded" with miscellaneous objects than one would expect of any group. Hoarding is generally linked to early material deprivation, as in the case of people who have grown up during the depression, or those who have lost everything in a fire. Chris clearly states his notion of the difference between a hoarder and a collector: "Hoarders just hoard stuff. Collectors are very discriminating about what they keep and throw away a lot of junk" (Chris, 7). Although two informants came from what they described as poor or deprived childhoods, no pattern emerged in these terms among the thirty collectors. Only one of the collectors, Pat, considers herself a "saver", yet she distinguishes herself from a hoarder: "Well, a hoarder, I think, is maybe more utilitarian or into thinking well, someday, somewhere, someone will need what I have. I think a collector is more into the
aesthetic" (Pat, 11). Pat again makes the non-utility aspect a criterion for being a collector.

Collecting ends when the collector no longer feels engaged in either the process or the object category. Belk's proposition number seven states that post-mortem distribution problems are significant to collectors and their families. Collectors build their collections through a slow process of addition, creating a whole which is the collection. To break up the collection is therefore the direct antithesis of the collector's demonstrated goals. For many, their creation of a collection is analogous to organic growth: "You could compare it (the collection) to a plant that grows and continues to grow and if it should die on you and then if you lost your collection, you'd want to replace it. You still have a feeling for it" (Pat, 13). Because this study focuses on individuals presently collecting, it contains little information as to the final fate of the informants' collections. It does, however, record each collector's wishes regarding the disposition of his/her collection.

By far the majority of the collectors share the ideal of their collection going to a place like a museum--a place where it will be shown, where they will be identified with it. The collector's primary interest is in keeping the collection together, preserving not only the individual objects but the collection as an entity, as a vision.

I'd like to see some of it go into a public collection and I'd like to see the kids get a little of it. I don't feel strongly that it all needs to stay together but I'd like some of it to. It would be really nice for some of the Eskimo and the Inuit to stay together as a collection--even if it became part of a larger collection. I'd like to see that (L.M., 3).
As can be seen in Lou's response to a question regarding the worst part of collecting; the disposition of the collection becomes a problem for the collector:

What in the hell am I going to do with them? It's a burden, I can't take this with me and it seems like, you can only collect so much. It's become a burden. Even now I'm thinking, what is this? It's out of my control now. The thing that worries me, for the heart, is what is this for? Do I go through now and just take my very favorites and get rid of the rest? How do you stop it once it's in place? It's frightening almost (Lou, 11).

PLAYING THE GAME: COLLECTING THE VERB

Collecting is an action executed by collectors, who commonly describe it in terms of hunting, as a sport, or as a game. The following section describes this aspect of collecting, an aspect strongly connected to the process of seeking, finding, identifying and ultimately "capturing" objects for a collection. Collectors describe the process of collecting using implicitly masculine metaphors of sport, hunting, or a game. They use such terms such as "searching," "stalking," and "winning," and describe the object as a form of "prey" or a "goal" in a game. In Stewart's analysis the labour of the consumer is "a labour of total magic...thus in contrast to the souvenir, the collection presents a metaphor of production not as the earned but as the captured" (Stewart 1984, 165).

Defining collecting, the language used by collectors is one of urges, passions, strategies, coups, alliances, luck, scoring, searching, hunting, stalking and winning. Finding and acquiring is perceived as winning the event; putting together a "fine" or superior collection is winning the game--a game in which collectors either set their own
rules and play solitarily or one in which they compete against one another. The fun and the addiction of collecting are attributed to this game or sport aspect of collecting.

Collectors actively seek their objects. They are active consumers, plotting strategies for finding and securing objects they collect. Two collectors describe their strategies:

[I locate my objects] through newspapers—ads in newspapers. I’ve placed ads as well as answering ads, going through junk stores. Being a composer and a concert artist I get a lot of media attention, so people will contact me. I have pretty much collected the majority of things that were freely circulating, seems to be a certain percentage or a certain amount of things are moving around somehow that you can get. Because there was a period that I could go and see instruments all over the place. Now there’s none to be found. I know every place that you would ever find an instrument, in any possible manner, they’re just not there now (Randy, 2).

The first thing I do when I go to a conference is go to the Salvation Army. I sit in the hotel room and write down where the thrift stores are and I try to find someone who can tell me where they are or take me around (Norm, 5).

Of the many terms that are used by collectors in regard to their instinct or talent for the sport of collecting most can be reduced to a concept of shrewdness. As Wiseman states about the collectors world:

These artifacts enter the lower echelons of the antiques trade, the little-studied world of the junk shop, garage sale, and flea market, where objects on their way down the spiral of value sit on the shelf next to those on their way up. In this lusty world, you’re on your own; there are no tastemakers or critics, only the dictates of taste and shrewdness (Wiseman 1987).

Shrewdness, an adjective once synonymous with doggedness and maliciousness, has come to signify an envied quality associated with quick wit and keen vision,
especially in practical matters. For the collector, shrewdness describes a perceptive, discerning aspect relating to finding and acquiring.

Collectors project a notion of talent, skill, or instincts for their game. This is similar to what the garage sale patron feels when he or she recognizes the object of quality or the expensive brand-name item that they can purchase for less than it's worth because the seller doesn't know its value. For many collectors, winning at the game involves getting an object at a lower price than it is worth. This shrewdness has to do with a one-upmanship or beating the system: "it's the search, we all love treasures, something for nothing, ah, we all love bargains. I don't care if it's five cents less. Most people play the game and it's half the fun" (Norm, 8).

The collector does not portray this shrewdness as though it were at anyone else's expense, but simply as his/her advantage: he/she deserves a good deal because he/she knows the object's worth and feels passionately about it. The collector's expert knowledge gives his/her an edge in playing and winning the game. Without an "eye" (specialized knowledge), shrewdness cannot be "activated." This translates into cleverness in finding, identifying, and acquiring, which together provide both sport and narrative.

In many ways the narrative of acquisition released by the souvenir aspect of the collection is self-congratulatory or self-promoting, self-stroking, even regarding gifts. Sometimes the narrative emphasizes the fate aspect (the collector was meant to have the object) or the ironic or symbolic aspect of the find. These aspects help make collecting
meaningful as well as fun. As Belk states, "Only continual acquisition reinforces the sense of mastery and prowess" (1988, 31). As one collector relates,

To buy something that you really like and pay very little - for sure. That's part of the game. I'll give you a couple of examples. I bought a little Inuit print for $75.00. Then I had things evaluated. I went to the dealer and that seventy-five dollar print ended up being worth a couple thousand bucks and the dealer told me she hated me and that was kind of neat (L.M., 2).

It is important to emphasize that the collector does not acquire expert knowledge, then begin collecting. The knowledge is acquired along with or after collecting has begun--collecting serving as a catalyst to learn about the objects and to participate more fully in the challenge, game or sport of collecting.

One aspect of expert knowledge is the knowledge of the specifics of a category's seriality. Faberge' Eggs, for example, are famous because only a certain number were made in each category. Collectors of each category would know that number. This knowledge of the possible range within a category enhances the game for the collector far more than the prospect of seeking out the unknown.

I think there is an excitement about knowing that something exists, it's the same sort of excitement as finding an arrowhead. You know it is there, but you don't know where it is, and you find it and pick it up and that's very exciting...you can't explain it, if there's a series, like pottery and there are so many pieces you want to get it all. If Goodall did, I don't know how many he did, if he did four hundred, I'd like to get them all (Robert, 5).

G.S., who collected butterflies, also mentioned an aspect of filling in a figurative bingo card. He suggests that butterfly collectors instantly know if they have found a common or a rare species:
Well, I guess, as most collectors do, I was always trying to find, get every species that occurs in any one area. And the goal of a North American butterfly collector is that you could theoretically collect every butterfly in North America. There are a few that are extinct now and a few that are very rare, but it would be a possible goal. There is only five hundred species, it isn’t a huge number. You have to travel to every state and every province to get them, so it’s just amassed from that (G.S., 3).

Notice that G.S. uses the phrase "you could theoretically collect every butterfly," when he is referring to a representative sample. Here, as Stewart has suggested, the collection "banishes repetition and achieves authority" (Stewart 1984, 152): the object exemplifies the category. Symbolically, the infinite world becomes finite, able to be known, circled, contained, owned and captured. The result is usually a closely-ordered, hierarchical world, where one seeks to fill in empty spaces. But only a certain number of objects exist to fill those spaces, the game necessarily involves an element of percentages. Collectors playing this kind of game therefore seek to beat the odds.

Part of what creates the value of the object and the sport of collecting is the object’s resistance to acquisition. The rare and the unusual are both recognized and discovered. Collectors create their own rarity (scarcity) as this establishes resistance and contributes to the challenge of the game. This resistance cannot be separated from the value placed on the object. As Simmel suggests: "We call those things valuable that resist our desire to possess them" (1978, 67). Specific rules set up by the collector, availability and seriality all contribute to this resistance.

Categories within the collection or rules regarding acquisition enhance the game. J.P. states, "I collect canning jars from before the days of screw-ones (the Mason screw on cap), before 1868. One day I found one with a misspelling and I started collecting
canning jars that had misspellings. I haven't found many" (J.P., 3). Ed describes these rare finds as his favorite items: "Then you get into the stuff that I really treasure, stuff like this. Here's one that came off the press without the bonus. Mistakes, it's like the coins and stamps. Because of their rarity" (Ed, 4).

Since material objects have always served to objectify our sense of personal or collective histories, there is an intimate connection between almost all collecting and time (the past). Miller comments on this connection: "The historical associations of the object of art noted by Benjamin (1973) pertain almost inevitably to any object which can be said to have passed through the hands of the ancestors, and are often a pivot around which social identity is constructed" (Miller 1987, 124). If this is also true of personal identity, it has particular bearing on the study of collecting, since, in many categories collectors seek to attain the oldest pieces. This can be accounted for by their connection with the past (or distance of any kind) and also with rarity, since, in many categories the older the object, the greater it's rarity.

It appears that most collectors set their own rules within the larger rule-governing domain in which goods circulate and are not consumed either by the process or by the objects. Rather than being simply addictive and obsessive, collecting is highly directed, goal-oriented, and disciplined. Many of the collectors interviewed set and abided by their own criteria for the objects they collected. This included establishing clear limits as to the amount they were willing to spend. Many of the collectors bemoaned the fact that there were objects they wanted but which they considered too expensive.
Some I pass by. I look first of all to see if the price is out of my price range. If it doesn't fit in my budget...the price would be whether it is out of the picture or not. If it's really expensive. There is this line of really beautiful, expensive dishes. I have one piece that was a gift. No. I never buy them. If money was no object, then I'd have the whole set because it's beautiful (Lou, 9).

Collectors seem to have a sense of the range in which they can collect. Randy describes his limitations: "I kept my eyes peeled and was buying anything. At that time I had very little money so I would only buy things that were more or less than thirty-five dollars, anything. I saw many beautiful instruments that were high priced. I just couldn't afford them. Typical is Randy's declaration, "If I have funds for it, I will not buy an instrument if it's ten times the price it should be, no matter what the rarity is. It's against my principles " (Randy, 5).

Norm, who had collected many objects over most of his life, was "between" collections. After being sure there was a source for the object he made a conscious choice as to what he was going to collect: "I said to myself two very important things--inexpensive and there is no one that I know that collects walking sticks" (Norm,3). This defines his game and sets up specific criteria. Randy describes his personal criteria, the rules of his collecting "game"--one worth playing for him--along with his larger "mission" to save instruments from extinction:

I collect specifically musical instruments from around the world. I try to limit the collection, to instruments that are not popular Western instruments and even more specifically try and collect instruments that are in danger of disappearing. The more unusual the instrument is, the smaller locality of construct, then I'm interested in it, just so it's considered rare in any sense (Randy, 2).
Randy's collecting is a personal game rather than one in which he participates according to someone else's rules, even though his rules interface with the large spheres within which his objects circulate. This is a different game from that played by the baseball card or stamp collector.

Belk's proposition number two states: Addiction and compulsive aspects pervade collecting. Belk states: "Both our interviews and others' examinations of collecting suggested that collecting is addictive. As with other addictions, the object of the addiction is relatively unimportant; it could be almost anything and acts only as the focus of release from other fears or feelings" (Belk, 76). My findings do not support Belk's proposition. Collecting does exhibit some addiction-like behaviors as well as compulsive and obsessive traits, but that label in itself presents an incomplete picture. For example, as collecting progresses, the collector usually becomes more and more selective. The collectors in this study collect within their means, and have selected categories well-matched to their economic means. None describe his/her collecting as out of control. In fact, their collecting appears highly rule-governed and disciplined, which to some degree contradicts the addictive and compulsive label. For the most part my interviews took place in homes or offices, none of which showed signs of hoarding or uncontrolled collecting.

However, collectors do use the language of addiction and obsession to describe their intense involvement. "Almost like a religious fervor, like you went to church every Sunday...I don't know, it is an obsession" (Pat, 13). "It's a disease, well, just like any
disease you're afflicted with it, you can't get rid of it, there's no cure. You have the obsession" (Robert, 8). "It is kind of an obsession and if you're not careful you can spend more money than you should on it, you could spend more time than you should on it. You can get the time out of proportion to the other things that are important in your life" (Robert, 9). "I think collecting is like an urge or a fever and you're just empty and you have to have something" (Pat, 2). "These cheese plates have sure gotten me going. It's kind of like an obsession now" (Gary, 2).

Clearly, collectors are hooked on collecting. In spite of the fact that many collectors mention that spouses resent the time and resources spent on collecting, it has not, for the most part, had a negative effect upon other aspects of their lives. Almost all of the collectors expressed restraint in terms of objects that "were out of my price range," and most set goals and categories that were within their economic means. None mention debts or financial problems due to collecting; in fact, many refer to self-imposed restraints in terms of what they "would" and "could" purchase.

Rather than controlling the lives of the collectors, collecting seems to structure them. They seem to organize their movements to maximize the possibility of finding and acquiring that which they collect, and are self-regulating in terms of price limit and category sought, even though they express anxiety or discomfort over these limitations. Ed, who collects lottery tickets, says the worst part of collecting is "not having a certain ticket--especially if you have a series. It bothers me. Then if I find out I can get a hold of it, then I'm O.K. The longing, the anxiety, I guess. When I have them, then I settle down. But they have to be in mint condition" (Ed, 6).
Belk bases his analysis of this addictive behavior on the language used by collectors. This may be more an analogy for the activity, than a literal description of it; or, as Ed says, "Oh yeah, it's an addiction. It's a healthy addiction, because there is no end to it" (Ed, 10). Here, collectors reveal that they consider their "addiction" a positive one, which is reinforced by the larger society. Even while they use the language of addiction and obsession, they also emphasize the "joy" and fun of collecting and the positive aspects of it, which they assert are more significant than the negative. This conflict forms part of the ambivalence collectors express toward their collection and collecting.

OWNERSHIP, POSSESSION AND ACQUISITION

"... or inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii, which have seen to it that from a collector - and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be - ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to an object" (Benjamin 1969, 67).

Collecting is inseparable from ownership, acquisition and possessiveness. The act of acquisition may be defined as the intention or action which establishes a proprietary relationship with tangible or intangible things. It is the desire to attach the pronoun "mine" to certain objects, to take possession of and claim the object as one's own. To acquire something is to assume the role of owner with all its legal, emotional and social implications. Acquisitiveness is the desire to possess the object and includes the act of making it one's own, possessiveness is not letting it go once acquired. Such acts change both the object and the person, each assuming meaning from the other. Collection
through acquisition represents the recontextualization of the object with a collapse of its original use value. Through collection, then, even specimens from the natural world, such as shells or rocks, are transformed into commodities. Collection transforms the object into a commodity through acquisition. Appadurai states, "This enhancement of value through the diversion of commodities from their customary circuits underlies the plunder of enemy valuables in warfare, the purchase and display of 'primitive' utilitarian objects, the framing of found objects, the making of a collection of any sort" (1986, 28).

The acquisition of objects is a defining characteristic of collecting. For the collector, the particular context of acquisition and the act of taking possession is of particular significance.

Well--so you may say--after exploring all these byways we should finally reach the wide highway of book acquisition, namely, the purchase of books. This is indeed a wide highway, but not a comfortable one. The purchasing done by a book collector has very little in common with that done in a bookshop by a student getting a textbook, a man of the world buying a present for his lady, or a businessman intending to while away his next train journey. I have made my most memorable purchases on trips, as a transient. Property and possession belong to the tactical instinct; their experience teaches them that when they capture a strange city, the smallest antique shop can be a fortress, the most remote stationery store a key position" (Benjamin 1969, 63).

There is for the collector a prerequisite of ownership as opposed to rental or loan. Collectors exhibit evidence of possessiveness in regard to their collections.

Possessiveness is an attachment to one's possessions--"the inclination and tendency to retain control or ownership of one's possessions" (Belk, 1983, 514). "Having something
means to be in a relationship to it, a relationship mediated by all those experiences that have conditioned the possessor and the thing possessed, and that forms the medium between person and thing” (Rochberg-Halton 1986, 169).

Possession rituals occur to formalize the incorporation of a new object into the collection. This is the ritual claiming of possession which is different from merely possessing.

As McCracken asserts, "This claiming process is not a simple assertion of territoriality through ownership. It is the desire to claim the symbolic properties that can only be bestowed by the larger world of goods" (1986, 79). For the collector, objects of collection are personal possessions, those which are singled out and are identified with the self. "The term possession means both the relationship of ownership and the thing owned" (Rochberg-Halton 1986, 172). To use the term in a third sense, as meaning the condition of "being possessed" suggests the ambivalence inherent in the concept. Consumer culture is surely a culture of consumption—the passion to possess everything. In this sense, possession is connected to control.

But ownership and possession may extend beyond acquisition to symbolic absorption. As Noble, writing on doll and toy collecting, states: "Possessiveness, a less worthy factor, cannot be ignored in these lofty musings, but it becomes less base when we realize that by possessing the intriguing object, we hope to encompass it—- to take it to ourselves" (1987, 14). Rochberg-Halton asserts that even for Marx the possession of things was not to be viewed as "one-sided gratification, not merely in the service of possessing, of having, but as the appropriation of the total essence in its wholeness, that
is the full realization of the inherent qualities of the thing or relation" (1986, 213).

Collectors project a sense of personal ownership and possessiveness over their objects as opposed to joint, family, or collective ownership. Collectors feel compelled to own the desired object in order to receive the full "power" or effect of the object. Collections are highly personal possessions endowed by the collector with special meaning. Ownership allows for constant access, personal identification and intimacy with objects. Alongside ownership, it is a culture-bound historical concept central to a discussion of collecting. When collectors are asked what it means that their collections belong to them, the most frequently-mentioned factor is the right to control who touches it or uses it and the right to have it to look at all the time. Part of the privilege of ownership manifests itself in the collectors' unconditional access to their objects. Fran says, "I was putting them away and then I thought, why not have it out. So now it is out everywhere. I get to see it all the time. If it's out I get to see it all the time. If it's packed away, you don't see it. You forget what you have" (Fran, 5). Most express the desire to have their collections visible, but they rarely specify that their collections should also be visible to others. Like Fran, they want their collections on display for themselves. The special privilege associated with ownership, the ability to control what happens to the object, can be seen in Randy's statement:

In this box, which as you see is totally closed, a case that is very expensive, is my glass harmonica, which is the one I was telling you about from the turn of the century. And that's very valuable. It is very beautiful, no one touches that instrument but me. No one can put their hands on it. I'm the only person allowed to handle it (Randy, 8).
Collectors have a need to own or possess the object to have a full appreciation of it. For collectors the ownership and its resultant access make possible some activity which the collector finds enjoyable or meaningful. Certainly objects which have been kept over long time spans would be embedded deeper in the psyche of the individual where ownership over time goes beyond a custodial relationship. Some collectors interviewed say that, because they care about an object they should possess it, a state which would allow them to care for, protect and preserve it.

Some collectors connect possession so strongly with ownership that they assume the latter necessarily to follow the former. When I asked Robert if it was the finding or the "getting" that was the most exciting, he replied, "They're the same aren't they?" (Robert,9). Indeed, for many categories of collected objects such as matchbooks or butterflies, the two are virtually inseparable.

Even the aesthetic response is not detached from the desire for ownership and possession. The connection between ownership and intense appreciation or admiration of particular objects has not been fully explored, but is usually associated negatively with jealousy and possessiveness rather than with a natural inclination toward those things which give us pleasure. For the collector, ownership becomes the assurance that the pleasurable experience of looking will be readily available. As Danto, an art critic states regarding ownership of art works:

... the history of taste and the history of acquisitiveness run pretty much together, and men are pleased enough to claim ownership of the beauties of the world. Indeed, attempting to possess may be one form of aesthetic response, as laughter is of the sense of humor (1981, 98).
When asked how he feels about seeing another collection of the item he collects, Noah responds, "Oh I appreciate them. I ask if they are for sale" (Noah, 3).

Fundamental to owning an object are both the condition of appreciating it (Furby 1978), and the sense that ownership of it represents accomplishment. Collections are extensions of the individual and help define individuality. As Henry James (1890) states, "It is clear that between what a man calls me and what he simply calls mine, the line is difficult to draw. We feel and act about certain things that are ours very much as we feel and act about ourselves" (James in Furby 1978, 318).

You cannot talk about or interview collectors for very long without confronting desire, the motive which inspires most human consumption. How and to what degree this desire is expressed are culturally specific. Collectors often express their desire as a "need" or 'longing" for the object, one which fuels their search and prompts their acquisition. A collection can neither be built nor sustained without the continuous repetition of the cycle of desire and fulfilment. To be a collector, then, one must be willing to live in a state of desiring over long periods of time: I want, therefore I am. This all depends upon how much energy can be amassed and channelled into the service of desire.

Desire must be considered a significant prerequisite to possession, ownership and "sentiment" toward the collected object. It is part of collectors' attachment to the objects of their collection, and can be described as a deep affection, even a love for the objects, but is also expressed in terms of a belief in them.
Writing on collecting, Stewart applied the term "longing" to the collector's desire for objects, and connected it to the "social disease of nostalgia" (Stewart 1984, ix). For me to use the term longing for the collecting drive places the focus of the collection on the past. I feel this implication is misguided and posit instead that collecting is also about the present and future. It is about the future because that is where the next object is to be found. The process is always projected ahead, even though it incorporates the past in its narratives. Always present is that which the collector hopes to find: the collection and the potential to increase it exists in the present life of the collector. As a goal-oriented process, collecting looks toward a desired, attainable future state. Longing suggests a distant past, something that was once experienced which is now missed. For collectors, there is no single lost object, but the continuous potential to find a desired object, and also the promise or potential to attain it.

Collectors express a sense of desire for those pinnacle objects they long to acquire, those that represent winning. Many collectors, continually hope to make the "find of all finds": "My dream, what I dream about. Finding an old trunk full of them. Olympics and the first lottery tickets-and the first lottery tickets that Mayor Babeau Reole brought out in the seventies. He had a two dollar and fifty cent one. He's the one that started this" (Ed, 5). Collectors anticipate the pleasure associated with the acquisition of those objects which are sought: there is an attachment and yearning:

A Faberge', that would be completely... oh no. I could tell you something that would be within my pocketbook is a plique-a-jour. It's like a stained glass, it has borders of metal within the glass, poured in between. I just love those. I would love to own one and one of these days I am going to. Oh I would just
be overjoyed. I really would be delighted if I found one. Oh I would talk about it for weeks. Oh yeah I would be so delighted (Jean, 4).

Collectors establish a relationship not only with the collected objects but also with those not yet acquired. The period of time collectors feel the acquisition of this coveted object would satisfy them is surprising, though. Most indicate a relatively short period, and none say, a particular item would satisfy their desire to collect altogether. "Make my day for sure, oh yeah, I'd talk about it a while. It would wear off but it would make my week" (Ed, 5). This is after Ed describes his dream of finding a trunk full of vintage, lottery tickets in mint condition! Trudy desires a cookie jar in the tomato pattern of ceramics she collects. Asked how long it would please her if she acquired it she answers, "It would make my month, my six months, but not my year" (Trudy, 6).

Affinity, animosity and ambivalence may occur between collectors of the same category of object. "When I find someone else that collects what I collect, I feel diminished. When I found out someone else had eggbeaters I really felt diminished. I didn't want to see them. Somehow I thought I was the only one" (J.P.,3). Chris responds in a similar way: "I thought I was one of the only individuals that collect them, until I picked up on that designer magazine" (Chris, 7). Trudy expresses a "real comraderie" for another tomato ceramic collector she has met, even though he has an item she covets (Trudy, 5).

Collecting provides a different ground or means of achieving status--one that can compensate for economic disadvantages. Among collectors, neither education, wealth, nor profession determines superiority. Collectors use their collections to equalize social
relations or to compete. Ed, who collects lottery tickets, claims that when collectors
meet their relative status, or the status they share as collectors overrides all other
indicators of prestige. If the collector is the best collector, they will find respect and
status no matter what their income or background. "You're on the same level. I've met
people like this fellow, he is a doctor of science. I work part-time and drive a truck to
make some money to live. But when we meet, we are on the same level" (Ed, 7).

Gifts form a significant portion of many collectors' collections. The acquisition
process is significant and must be considered in any discussion of the meaning of
ownership and possession. For collectors, how they acquire their objects is an important
consideration. "I prefer to collect it myself because half the fun is being out of doors.
Just getting a box of dried butterflies in the mail is not terribly exciting to me" (G.S.,3).

Taking the quest away takes away the gratification of the fulfilled quest. The
percentages received as gift, even though small, are frequently mentioned by collectors as
a source of ambivalence. Depending on the nature and type of collection and the
collector's aesthetic, the affection the giver demonstrates by the gift may balance the loss
of quest and personal selection. For some, gifts are problematic because they feel
nothing for the given object even though it is within their collecting category. Gifts
remove the quest, the hunt, even the narrative. Asked to describe how he feels upon
receiving his collected object as a gift Norm said, "Not as good as when I find it. My
wife has given me canes for Christmas and one was Sir Henry Waters'. It's wonderful,
it's one I use in my lectures. Wildebeest horn. It's a gorgeous cane but I didn't get as
excited about that Christmas present as I should have. I never admitted it. But I kept

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wondering why" (Norm, 9). Despite knowing this, after the thirty interviews, I had to resist an urge I too experienced to acquire objects in the informants' collecting categories --objects I saw and thought they would like--as gifts. With the Inuit and tribal collector, the cost of the objects eliminates gifts.

This problem arises often enough to suggest that collectors desire not only to add to their collections, but to act out a particular (personal) vision or aesthetic. The method of acquisition therefore appears to alter the meaning conferred by ownership and possession. Any gift carries an association of affection and caring as well as various other implications regarding interpersonal relationships. But collectors express differing responses toward gifts of their collected objects. Many resent that others are doing the selecting, so that, even though gifts contribute significantly to many collections, objects received as gifts may have less meaning for the collector than those the collector personally acquires. Attitudes toward gifts seem to fall into two distinct orientations, one in which the gift compromises the collector's aesthetic, therefore presenting a problem for the collector; and, second, one in which the collector promotes the identification with the object category and welcomes gifts. In the second case, aesthetic considerations are often not as strong a part of the collecting category. For example, Pat, who collects matchbooks, considers gifts a symbol of affection. The associated objects provide a vehicle for anyone who wishes to express affection. The strawberry lady suggests that the connection is so strong that her friends can't see a strawberry or anything with

8 A more comprehensive discussion of gift giving is out of the scope of this study, see Mauss (1924) or Hyde (1983).
strawberries on it without thinking about her. As a result, people’s desire to please her often takes the form of strawberry-related gifts.

Donations and gifts can also reinforce a certain inertia to collecting. Such gifts may rob the collector of some control over the size of the collection. Gifts can cause the numbers of collected items to get out of hand, with items the collector is not particularly fond of. In Lou's case, gifts have continued to come in long after she has ceased collecting.

A collector’s notion of value is not of immediate value. The value is in the entity, not in the individual object, or in what it might be worth in the future. None of the collector informants used in this study said they were collecting for monetary gain, even in the future, though many believed that their collections would be worth something later. Most insisted that collecting had little or nothing to do with investment for them. "Sometimes I’ve paid as much as 30 or 40 dollars for a camera. But it never seemed like much money, I never think of them as how much they’re worth. It strikes me as perfectly normal that someone would want to store these away after I’m done collecting them. But I don’t see them as valuable" (J.P., 2). The collectors interviewed showed very little interest in converting their collections into commodities; their interest was in keeping the objects. Only two mentioned or discussed the investment aspect of their collection. Most were not interested in turning their collection over for profit. Their highest goal was to build the best possible collection with the long-term goal to see their collection displayed in something like or in an actual museum, not for them to be worth millions.
Ownership connects to time, to the ability to carry the object over an indefinite or self-controlled time frame. Ownership serves as a protection for the attachment. "If I went to another country I could play them there but--the instruments are part of my expression of my creative self and I find that sometimes certain instruments definitely have a voice for a certain part of me. Nice to be able to have this voice here and be able to express it" (Randy, 7). "Even if it means nothing to anyone else, to me it is pretty or nice, attractive. I want to see it time and time again" (Pat, 11). "There are a number of instruments here on loan, except it is very painful when they leave. In some sense I prefer to own them because then I know what's going to happen to their future. I'm assured of how they will be taken care of and that they can be properly restored if they need it or maintained" (Randy, 7).

The act of collecting and its objects serve memory, thereby creating a strong relationship between the collector and the collected objects. Collections are intimately connected to "recollection", a calling back to mind, a gathering again of that which has been scattered, and therefore represent a symbolic recovery or unification. They also serve memory in their ability to release a narrative, thereby acting as a souvenir. Ames describes this function of the object to release a narrative: "A Northwest Coast Indian artist once described museum collections as stored up information waiting to be released. When the elders see the objects, he said, their memories are stimulated and they remember the past" (Ames, 1983, 100). Those privileged in this way with objects are generally the makers or those with a long history of use or involvement. Collectors use the point of acquisition as life experience markers. The collection therefore records the
collector's movement through time and marks growth through the increase in the size of the collection. The physical growth of the collection may serve as evidence of personal growth of the collector: collectors can measure progress and achievement through sheer numbers. As Fran remarked looking at her collection, "I came a long way" (Fran, 4).

As the particular context of acquisition is of special significance to the collector, the narrative most often released in regard to the collected objects is the narrative of acquisition. The narrative released by a collected object is different from that released by other souvenirs. The souvenir's narrative relates to the "authentic" experience, event or place of travel. In collection, the object's authenticity is a given: it is the narrative of acquisition or the story of the purchase which is most often released by the collected object, validating the right of ownership and serving as the authentic experience. Consumption therefore is meaningful for the collector in a way very different from that of buying a shirt or groceries.

There are a lot of things I can go back to among probably 4500 of the 5000 (butterflies). You can show me this insect and look at the label and it takes me back to that day in July in Florida or wherever. It's wonderful to read on a label, Longboat Key, April 23, 1964 or something and I can visualize what it looks like. I can see the gravel, I can see the coral on the beach. These butterflies flying through the swamps in Southern Florida. It's wonderful to be able to do that....I often look through and just read the labels on things on my butterfly collection and that takes me back to all these places (G.S., 12).

Garage sale, North Carolina, Raleigh, when I was on sabbatical. See I wrote it in here where I got it (Norm, 11).

Collectors often acquire objects for their collections specifically for souvenir aspects, and commonly collect on trips.
"The most fun one that I got, when I was traveling across the U.S., when I was in Virginia City, Nevada. In the middle of nowhere. I went in an old store, it's a double bowl piece, a piece I'd never seen before. That was pretty wild" (Trudy, 4).

"It's almost a hunter-gatherer thing. I tend to get a lot of pleasure out of acquiring things on a trip in a way that I don't get when it's brought to me or if I stumble onto it in a shop where I live. One a trip it's a grand tour aspect--I came back to New Zealand with Pre-columbian material from the Americas--they were also momentos as much as anything thought out" (Bob, 3).

"I guess I enjoy the sense that when I go away on a big trip, say to Europe or somewhere else, that I don't know what I might find. It's provided a sort of structure to traveling. I tend to go to Europe when the auctions are on on" (Bob, 5).

Collectors project or take on a sense of ownership over the objects which transcends the maker or culture of origin; therefore, collecting is very much about the power of the possessor. Collectors project a sense of personal ownership over their objects, as opposed to joint, family or collective ownership. Collectors must own their objects as opposed to renting them or having them on loan. When asked how collectors would feel if they had a desired addition to their collection on loan rather than owning it, a common response was that they would not take it, or want it, if they couldn't own it. "I don't see any point in it, "or "it would only make me three quarters happy, not one hundred percent" (Trudy, 5). Collectors view ownership as one of the goals of collecting.

Collectors do not feel that they just find or seek objects, they project a notion of fate or destiny in that object coming to them. Stewart describes part of the "fate" of the collection:

We go to the souvenir, but the collection comes to us. The collection says that the world is given; we are inheritors, not producers, of value here. We "luck"
into the collection; it might attach itself to particular scenes of acquisition, but the integrity of those scenes is subsumed to the transcendent and a historical context of the collection itself (1984, 165).

As Randy suggests, collectors feel that as much as they seek out and find the object, the objects also come to them: "I figure at some point I will get that instrument--if it is deemed I will get it" (Randy, 5). As Stewart suggests, "The souvenir magically transports us to the scene of origin, but the collection is magically transported to the scene of acquisition, it's proper destination" (Stewart 1984, 165). Collectors substantiate this notion of their ownership being the "destiny" of that object. Often the narrative of acquisition is one which encompasses the acquisition of the object as part of it's destiny, and places the collector as a key player in the social and economic drama of that particular object.

Collectors not only possess strategies and skills for finding their objects but describe an intuition in knowing where they are "hiding." This intuition suggests a "fate" or aspect of destiny in the object coming to them. Randy recounts this intuitive "finding":

I arrived at Expo and within, oh three weeks, I had already bought about four of these instruments. People would come over to where I was staying and see these instruments and say; Where did you get these? I told them and they'd say, we've been here for three months and haven't seen anything like this--musicians who were really into this stuff. So obviously I had the sense of where to go. There's almost a sixth sense sometimes. In Australia, it was very much like that. I would walk down a street. I could feel if I went that way, there is probably a store over there. I could buy an instrument in. Sure enough there would be. I've been driving down the highway on tour many times, driving through a small town, passing by a junk store, just hit the brakes hard, back up into the junk store, buy an instrument. Just walking, walk to the corner where it is, pick it up. Give the guy thirty dollars, put it in the car and
drive off again without even thinking about what it was that I was doing. I just knew it was there. I could feel it. I bought it and there it was and off I'd go. It would take five minutes (Randy, 10).

This intuition connects to an enhanced awareness of the objects. The collecting process triggers or cultivates an observational sensitivity to the collected object's form or image. As Lou states, "I've been with people--it amazes them, that I will pass by, and you know how, two seconds you walk by a store, I'll say there is a strawberry in there. They'll say, How did you see that? I think the color again. If it's red and green I pick it up. But yeah I see them. The same thing if I am near a second-hand store" (Lou, 9).

Often the narrative presents the collector as worthy or deserving often because of their knowledge or respect for the object:

I found another instrument in an ad in the back of a music magazine that was six months old. I answered the ad. I was the only person to call and it was an instrument that dates back to the turn of the century, made of glass. It's a beautiful instrument, definitely a collectors' item, even for a non-musician, and the woman sold it to me at a phenomenally low price because she was getting old, no one in her family wanted it. She loved the instrument so much she wanted to pass it on to somebody that respected it. So now it's one of my main instruments (Randy, 3).

Ames states of early anthropological collecting that "what was important was to select objects that would stimulate admiration and wonder and which would reflect upon the daring exploits, special knowledge, or privileged status of the collector" (96). The personal collection generates similar responses, the type of object collected determines the quality or qualities reflected. For example, special knowledge is often the source of status:
A friend of mine called me up and said, There's an instrument in the newspaper described as a bamboo percussion instrument and they want a lot of money for it. I thought maybe you'd be interested. I went to visit these people, answered the ad. They had an instrument known as an onkalong, which is actually becoming more popular now here in North America. It's that big set of rattles, five feet long, six feet high or five feet high, six feet long. It's a very rare instrument, a full set. They wanted a very small amount of money for it, and I was the only person who walked in and knew what it was. They had one other person who had answered the ad who was a drummer and he didn't know what it was. I walked in and I knew what it was. I named it and they said, "Well the other guy has first choice, but we are going to give it to you because you know what it is. So that was great" (Randy, 3).

Many stories, narratives told by collectors are of their prowess in identifying or exploits in acquiring.

Last summer I was out collecting with three friends who are all botanists but one of them was a student taking an entomology course so we were walking along on this mountain trail near Chilliwack somewhere and this little wasp-like thing flew by which anybody else would have said, Oh, it's a little bee or something, and it's actually a moth that mimics wasps. And it was the moth, so I said get it, that's something wonderful and rare. So she did and now has it for her collection....One of the rarest things I ever caught, I caught with my fingers. You know butterfly collectors are always running around with nets but I didn't have a net and it was sitting on the mud and I just picked it up with my fingers and it turned out to be an extremely rare thing, one of the rarest Eastern North American Butterflies (G.S., 4).

Simply having this butterfly or purchasing it does not provide a narrative which is rewarding to the collector. Having a story which points to fate, prowess or shrewdness is significant in the pleasure derived from acquisition and to the quality or affect of the narrative.
Collecting can be separated from consumerism. Purchase may not be the only factor in the behavior. For many collectors, not buying the objects is part of the self-imposed game rule.

Well, a guy would come in and see them and then give me his hat to hang up or I would trade them or ask them. I decided not to buy any. No, I've never bought one. Just like a month ago I saw a hat in the back seat of a car parked out there right by the shop. When the guy came back I asked him about the hat and showed him the hats and he said he'd sell it to me. I said no thanks, then he just gave it to me to hang up. What's the point if you are going to buy them. It's no fun then. Anybody can do that (Butch, 1).

Other collectors, such as Pat, who collects matchbooks, and G.S., who collects butterflies, have chosen object categories in which purchase is not an issue.

As stated earlier, buying an existing collection eliminates the game of collecting and does not substitute for the collecting process. Still, collectors do occasionally buy existing collections to add to theirs.

OBJECT ATTACHMENT, AFFECTION AND SENTIMENT:
COLLECTORS RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR OBJECTS

Collectors describe two inseparable yet distinguishable relationships with their objects: one involves the association of the collected objects and the pleasure of the process of collecting; the other concerns collectors' attraction or love of the collecting category or of the objects collected. Without an attachment to and a desire for their object categories collectors would not collect. This primary focus on the object is evident
even in collectors reactions to being interviewed. By far the majority of the collectors interviewed wanted me to show particular interest in their objects, rather than in collecting in general. Some even expressed frustration that I was not specifically interested in being shown their collection. Several insisted that I come back and spend more time "with the collection." They were neither narcissistic nor self-centred. They were more interested in discussing "their objects" than either the collecting process or themselves. "You know that for a collector to talk about his collection, they love to talk about their collection. Absolutely, you know that" (Norm, 9). Like proud parents, collectors want to make the observer a believer, to show what they see in the objects, and to have you share in the world of that object. They are excellent tour guides, extolling the merits of this piece and that, pointing out similarities and differences.

The affection and fascination collectors express towards their objects of collection are proportional to the phase of collecting they are in. Collectors express joy, pleasure and fun in regard to the collecting process and their collected objects. For them, the simple experience of viewing their collections is pleasurable, and they commonly express emotions or feelings toward individual objects and toward the object category. It may sound trite or dramatic, but in the language of collectors, they "love" their objects.

The intensity of collectors' language regarding their objects is strongest near the "peak" of collecting--a peak which may last years. Expressions of affection take many forms. Asked what she thinks she has in common with collectors of different categories, Pat replies, "I think the fever is the same and the affection for the collection, which is kind of crazy, but there is an affection for collections. I think that is the same" (Pat, 18).
Alongside what collectors describe as "passion" and the "love" of their collected objects they also express a more subtle emotion—that of sentiment toward the collected objects. This is generally expressed in familial tones. Regarding his doll collection Noah states, "I don't really want to part with any of them as I would miss them" (Noah, 5). This language implies a long association, an intimate relationship, rather than what consumer studies calls "product enthusiasm". Sentiment is expressed in a way that suggests that the objects have been internalized to become part of the collector's life.

My enthusiasm for a collector's object category generated a much more intimate connection than interest in other aspects of his/her life. Amongst collectors, intimacy can exist because of the enthusiasm and involvement in the same category:

The girl from the states, her car was broken into and all her tickets were stolen and everything else. I called her up on the phone and I said, 'If there is anything you need—you're welcome to it.' I'd just give it to her. Because to meet somebody who loves to collect the same thing that you are collecting, you go out of your way for them—you have to (Ed, 8).

The collectors interviewed comment upon the intimacy they feel with those who share their aesthetic, and upon the connection that a shared aesthetic forges between them. As a primary connection between people, the dimension of a shared aesthetic has not been fully explored. For many collectors, though, it appears to cross over age, gender and economic boundaries.

For other collectors, the opposite is true: they felt diminished or threatened by finding out there were others collecting in their categories. Several expressed outright animosity toward others collecting in the same category. The distinction here may be
between the social collector, who collects as part of a larger collecting network, and the idiosyncratic collector, who sets out to collect something no one else has, thereby using the collection as a statement of his/her individuality.

Collectors express and demonstrate an intensely ambivalent relationship with their collections. "We can't take it with us and what do we do with it? I'm not saying it is absurd, but it has hit me. What am I doing? It's become a burden. I really don't want to part with them. I couldn't use all of these in a lifetime. I think that part has hit me (Lou, 6). When asked if she has ever been tempted to start any other collection, Lou replies "Never. In fact what I've been tempted to do is to understand how I got this far in this and where do you call it quits" (Lou, 8).

When other people come over and get such a kick out of going over them and that I have a story for each and every single berry that's the only time that I can truly say, 'Gee, I love this.' But then other times I think what am I going to do with all of these strawberries and that is the truth (Lou, 10).

The process of collection creates a personal relationship between the collector and the object; even mass-produced objects develop singularity. The collector already feels a special relationship or connection to his/her entire target category. Inclusion into the collection adopts the object into a familial relationship. Traders and dealers in the collected objects are not considered collectors because they have no feelings for their objects therefore trade and sell them. As Fran describes, "I'm a good collector, but I won't give them out. I'm not a good trader" (Fran, 3). For the majority by far, taking an object into their collection is for the most part a permanent inclusion—a commitment for the life of the collection. Belk's fourth proposition states that sacred conversions occur
when an item enters a collection (1988, 77). Such assimilation transforms worthless or unvalued objects. This dynamic involves the social world of the object, and what happens to the object as a result of assimilation.

Mass production has the effect of making objects anonymous. With its advent, objects which formerly bore the distinct and unique traces of their makers have become impersonal and untouched. Objects with an individual identity have become less secure. One result of this lack of object attachment is alienation. To collect an object is to make it singular again. Just as constant use makes a tool or object personal, taking an impersonal object into one's collection makes it personal. For a collection the act of acquisition is one of severance, of an object from one context and inclusion into another-an initiation of sorts. One thing which age and history do to an object is to make it singular. For collectors, Kopytoff refers to this principle as "singularization" or a yearning to imbue mass-produced items with unique or singular qualities. One of the ways that this occurs is through the association of the object (e.g. Elvis' hankie). It can also occur through a personal relationship with an object, so that the longevity of the owner-object relationship assimilates or bonds the objects to their owner. (Kopytoff in Appadurai, 1986, 80-81). Collecting alters the pattern of obsolescence, returning or revaluing items which have become worthless, thereby giving them an organic quality of renewal.

Object attachment often relates to both the category and specific objects within that category, and is expressed similarly in either case. Theme collectors, who may collect everything relating to "golf" or "strawberries", speak of loving the theme of their
collections rather than particular objects, even though certain objects are favored because they most closely "capture" the category.

COLLECTORS AS CURATORS

Collectors describe and participate in a curatorial relationship with their objects. A significant part of the process of collecting appears to be the maintenance, documentation, research and display of the collection, with as much as 40% of the time spent on collecting attributed to these curatorial concerns. For some collectors these activities become as significant an involvement as finding and acquiring new additions to their collection. "I spend an average of 4-5 hours a day. Average, making sets up to send out, sorting, corresponding--everything has to be looked at very carefully. Anything that's no good goes in there. Those I give to kids" (Ed, 4). For Robert the cataloging of his collection, and the categories he wished to identify within it led him to develop his own computer system.

If you get into a collection and it starts to expand, you have to have a way of controlling it, knowing a number of things about it. When did you get it, how much did you pay for it? What is it? What variations are there? So that now leads into computerization. So I've had the fun of developing a computer program which will accommodate my collection and allow me to keep track of the kinds of things I have (Robert, 7).

Underlying principles of classification and organization are apparent in collecting and in the mind of the collector. So-called scientific collections appear to be the most
classified. Below, a collector expresses a desire to complete the series implicit in his collections:

I don’t know, there’s something inside that just says you have to fill the spaces, you have to fill in the gaps, however, I don’t know how I want to say this. I like to pigeon-hole things. I like for things to be neat and orderly. I like to say, ‘O.K., there’s three of these things that are blank and I’d like to be able to fill in the blanks.’ Maybe that’s the reason I like to collect stamps. There’s a blank on the page (G.S., 10).

The collector reflects the meaningful relationships he/she establishes within the collection in her classifications and display. These relationships reflect a curatorial relationship with the objects. Collectors’ methods of displaying their collections and their discourses of categorization reveal something about their perceptions of reality. Writing on children’s collections, Cameron describes this phenomenon:

Mother, perhaps while tidying up, takes the childish array and reorganizes it in a neat row along the window’s ledge. The child is distressed not because his objects, his prize possessions have been damaged, but because the meaningful relationships he was establishing among them have been destroyed (Cameron 1972, 14).

An analysis of the full symbolic and aesthetic qualities inherent in "collections" of any sort is beyond the scope of this thesis, yet these symbolic domains and the structuring of reality are apparent in the displays of the collectors interviewed. Collection may present the partial as the complete, the chaotic as coherent, the obsolete or redundant as permanent or valued, the past as the present. For Harry, the travel souvenir collector, his diverse object forms are unified by place. Their world is ordered by geography, united by continent and unified by their common quality of being "exotic."
Butch lays out his hats in an egalitarian fashion, row upon row, none privileged in terms of display or arrangement, the only exception being that he keeps some of his favorite hats at home. The principles of organization may be a model of the collector's view of the world or one he projects on it. For some, this is a scientific world, ordered and rational. Underlying principles of classification emerge, sometimes visual, sometimes material, sometimes conceptual, as is apparent in the display of the collection and the discourse of the collector.

Yes, there are categories of canes, uses for everything. Weapons, you know about sword canes, one gun cane, called a poacher's cane...Then there are canes that are interesting because of the dedication on them. On the silver band, for the person. That's a group of canes because they are actually dated. So you've got weapons, and cosmetics, name anything that a woman carries and one time she carried it in her cane. Oh and sports and tools. I have a beautiful fly rod of bamboo which comes out of a cane. It's gorgeous. Oh and what have I got in the tools line? Oh, a beautiful saw (Norm, 13).

Butch keeps about 150 of nearly 1000 company hats (what he called his elite collection), at his home, with the rest at his business office. This sub-category consists mostly of hats with embroidered emblems, which he considers the most beautiful, the nicest. Their economic value is irrelevant, as Butch has never purchased a hat for his collection.

Butch's categories are all structural or material. For example, summer hats with an airy mesh instead of cloth form one category. Sometimes these especially valued sub-groups within the collection will branch into new, more narrowly-focused collecting categories. When Ruth was asked to describe the categories she divided her bells into she replied; "I guess the way I would categorize them is, my working old bells, the gift bells, there are lots of those and the travel bells. One's I've got and picked up traveling" (Ruth, 4).
Here two of Ruth's categories relate to acquisition rather than any inherent characteristics of the bells.

Collectors develop and possess expert or specialized knowledge about the objects they collect. This expert knowledge can almost be considered a by-product of the collecting process. As Robert says, "I get excitement out of the collection, I get the knowledge. To be a good collector is to learn as much as you can about that item. I don't care much about the showing of it" (Robert, 10).

Of the thirty collectors, only Pat and Chris claim to know nothing specialized about their object category. Of these two, though, interviews reveal only Pat's claim to be accurate. All of the rest, including Chris, can pass on some facts, information or observations not commonly known about their categories or object types. Lou's discourse is typical:

I looked up the history and found out that the strawberry is actually a member of the rose family, any tidbits, writings. I've got all of these sayings from different notable writers, just little things and it's a joke and they've mentioned it. Strawberries simply fascinate me. There is this book that I had called Lovers and Art, it's all these oil paintings and the reason that I bought the entire book is because there is a plate with the strawberry being handed as an offering (Lou, 5).

Gary through his cheese dish collecting had also "collected" a comprehensive history of cheese making and serving along with specialized knowledge of ceramics,

The cheese was made in rounds, with some two feet across. Slices of cheese were taken from those rounds and stored in the cheese dishes at home. The covering for the dishes had at least one hole, where gas could escape. The more used dishes have a brown coloring, indicating a certain amount of oil from the cheese being absorbed into the dish. Older dishes have these small
cracks in the finish called crazing, and have stamps or ink marks made by the manufacturer (Gary, 3).

This absorption makes the object a window, a medium through which connections are forged. For many collectors, their objects have served to draw them into larger inquiry. "Not only do I collect them, I also learn how to play them. So it's not just the instrument that I am interested in but the culture itself. So I learn the culture, I learn the music and I learn the instruments. I visit the people" (Randy, 2).

This expanded specialized knowledge allows the theme collector to "live in the world" of the collected object, to feel even more surrounded by it. Ed says, "Oh I read everything I can get my hands on--everything, even a joke, as long as it's lottery related" (Ed, 7). This intimate knowledge of the topic or theme creates more intimacy between the collector and the object category and promotes a sense of ownership or exclusiveness in regard to the category.

Collectors often consider that the quality of the collection represents greater knowledge of the collected category. The two are projected together. The connection between the knowing about, and the possessing and owning of material goods has not been fully explored within the study of things. I have, therefore I know!

Part of the goal of collecting is to become an expert on the collecting category. "A collector, one of the things that is fun about it, is that you try, most collectors do, to learn everything you can possibly learn about that thing and that part of it is quite intriguing, become the (his emphasis) expert on Medalta pottery, to know more than anybody else" (Robert, 5).
Collectors acquire support materials which connect to their object category. These often exist in the form of books, magazines, short articles or anecdotes.

I've just recently made a very large purchase, something that I'd never do before, that I spent five hundred dollars on a three volume dictionary of musical instruments, where normally I'd spend that five hundred dollars on an instrument. But I realized that I was using this dictionary so much. I was spending five hundred dollars a year running to UBC to go to the music library and read it. So it's cheaper to buy it and that it's an excellent source as well and I have been reading it from cover to cover (Randy, 6).

As well as information, collectors gather material which connects to their objects. Typically, collectors collect some amount of support material that is not within their collecting category, but which they consider supports it. Chris, who collects globes, is getting interested in old atlases as well. Jean describes this branching phenomenon:, "So then of course, you get into eggs and then you have to collect egg cups--you have to have something to display them in" (Jean, 2).

Collectors express pre-established goals for their collection: they hope to become more selective, and to build a collection which is both bigger and better. The quality, size, uniqueness or notoriety of a collection is a source of attention and pride for the collector. Goals expressed appear to differ depending upon the point the collector has reached in the collecting cycle. As has already been mentioned, there is an early push to create the collection, during which increasing the collection's size figures most prominently. The longer collectors have collected, the more often they tend to mention a "better" collection as a goal. This suggests that the process develops a notion of connoisseurship and discrimination. Many long-term collectors link the terms "bigger"
and "better" as a unified goal. "My goal is to be the biggest collector of lottery tickets in North America and have the best. Biggest by number and have the best quality" (Ed, 4). For Ed, the concept of quality is clear: the nearer tickets are to "mint" condition, the better their quality, although he considers other factors as well. Lou's goal is diversity: "The most diverse. I wish I could see it in other areas. I find it frustrating that I can't have strawberries everywhere. It seems more so in the kitchen and that sort of troubles me" (Lou, 10).

There is definitely a competitive aspect to the "better and bigger" aspect, since collectors commonly measure their collections against those of other collectors. Those playing the collective, social game of collecting, define winning partially in terms of the competition with other collectors. Yet, for some collectors, the game is singular, played against oneself and the environment or against "fate." "I started up here and then found out about this Mr. Lottery in New Jersey, that's what they call him. We have to meet. Because I figure I've got the biggest collection up this way. He's got the biggest down there. I've got the most in terms of bulk. But this Doctor, he's close, we're vying. We're working good together" (Ed, 8).

The competitive aspect of collecting comes into play in aspiring not only toward having the biggest and the best, but also toward being known for the biggest and the best. In this respect, the collection is a tool in the service of self esteem and prestige. "In Malaysia, there's a club, they want me for a life partner. They are sending me everything they are bringing out. Stuff like that, it's great. I'm not kidding ya" (Ed, 8). Often individual collectors become part of a larger social system or subculture, where
their prestige is recognized. Robert describes the intricate and structured form of social
drama that can accompany collecting: "If there was an Edward Goodall card that came
on the market, anywhere on the North American coast I would probably know about it.
Somebody would write me or phone me and say, there's an Edward Goodall here, do
you want it?" (Robert, 7). Here, Robert's notoriety brings him not only status but more
objects. He goes on to describe the communication: "So once you become sort of an
expert, or it becomes known that you're collecting, you develop an enormous network.
Collectors are terribly networky, you know that" (Robert, 7).

The social connections and the admiration of other collectors of one's category is
particularly significant to some of the collectors. Of the thirty interviewed, several were
active in networking, both individually and through sophisticated international systems of
clubs and newsletters--Robert with postcard collectors, Jean with the Minoru Spoon
Club, and Ed with the North American Lottery Club:

I just love it, I write so many people--I've written all over the world. I just
wrote 67 letters all over the world. In the states there are these new members
I've got to write. I get all kinds of great letters....What is fun about it is
communicating with different people....The most fun part is communicating
with the people, different collectors. It's really great. What they send and the
fun of sending them something that I know they haven't got--knowing they will
love it and getting the answer back (Ed, 2, 3, 5).

Newsletters such as the lottery club's (1989) consist of a list of items wanted,
introductions of new members and stories about other collectors. This publication of the
lottery collector's society is not a tool of a commercial enterprise, promoting
ticket-collecting, but started and conducted by the collectors themselves; it consists of
several hundred members who subscribe to it and also write the articles.

Communication between members of a collecting group is an important social connection for some collectors. Others have no connection with any other collectors of their object and express no interest in the social world of collecting, even though organizations exist for the objects they collect.

Unlike the institutional or fine art collector, the majority of the collectors in this study are not preoccupied with notions of authenticity. Only the collectors of tribal art mentioned authenticity or used language which suggested this was a serious concern. What the rest did project was a common quest for unique, different or rare objects. With butterflies, matchbooks, or company hats, authenticity is assured--any butterfly or matchbook is authentic. This concept may be much more of a category-oriented, or elitist preoccupation. I find this interesting because my readings on collectors of art, for example, show authenticity to be a most consuming obsession, sometimes verging on paranoia.

Contrastingly, the majority of collectors in this study are not interested in documentation: authenticity is not an issue but an assumed quality of their objects. In many respects these collectors have set their own criteria of authenticity. Harry, for example, feels that if he acquires an item in the country on his journey, then it is "authentic".

Collectors view collecting as a serious involvement, and sometimes consider it their "real" life's work. When asked about the investment of time devoted to their collecting activities, the responses vary greatly, from "hardly any," to "enormous."
least half of the collectors interviewed said that they had spent a great deal of time at some point in the collecting cycle on their collections: "I've never tried to figure it out. It would be years, literally years. Because many summers when I was in school I would spend a few hours every day collecting" (G.S., 8).

Ed, who does not profess to have a "career," considers collecting to be his important work. "I spend an average of four to six hours a day--average--making sets up to send out. Sorting, corresponding, everything has to be looked at carefully" (Ed, 4). It is important to remember that the activities associated with collecting, such as the acquisition of knowledge, the development of networks and the formulation of strategies are all part of an extremely complex process, of which the act of purchase or selection is but one component. Some collectors develop greater involvement in the area of curatorial activities (displaying, labelling, storing etc.) than in finding, acquiring or purchasing.

When asked if they have documented or catalogued their collections in any way, several, such as Pat, answer that they have:

I have with previous collections but not with this one because it's the smallest. I would make lists of colors, I would make lists of ones with scenes as compared to ones that just have writing or blank ones. I would categorize them from country, from city, from restaurants as opposed to somewhere else. Just fun things. Then one time I had them all in scrapbooks, it was a terrible fire hazard. I had them all categorized when I had about fifteen different scrapbooks. My blue ones are here, my restaurant ones are here (Pat, 17).

Regarding her motivation for such cataloguing, Pat says, "I think I just wanted to get deeper into something I enjoyed" (Pat, 17). For several collectors, as much as 40%
of their time was spent in the maintenance, documentation, research and display of the collection. Robert, for example, describes this documentation aspect as a by-product of the collecting process—an aspect he finds both essential and enjoyable:

If you get into a collection and it starts to expand, you have to have a way of controlling it, knowing a number of things about it. When did you get it, how much did you pay for it? What is it? What variations are there? So that now leads into computerization. So I've had the fun of developing a computer program which will accommodate my collection and allow me to keep track of the kinds of things I have (Robert, 7).

Collectors place their collections before themselves and become the person behind the collection, so to speak. This presentation of the collection is reflected in the discourse of collectors and in the display of the collection. No discussion of the collection and its meaning is complete without a discussion of display. For some collectors, display is an important aspect to collecting:

I do try and make it interesting, you know, so it wasn't like a hodge podge, just stuck along here to there. I've lots of time, this time of year, there's very little business. Gives you the time to work these things out. I always try, if a little display doesn't stack up as good as I'd like it, I replace it with something else. Like maybe too many pictures of one particular area, but never too much (Harry, 4).

Harry has not only mounted and arranged elaborate displays of his tourist memorabilia but has placed typed captions and labels on most of the items. "So that people can read it and realize what it's about. It's quite educational. People don't realize that some of the temples in Burma are so big as they are" (Harry, 9).

Display of the collection allows for comparison, reflection, and discussion. The display is most often located to associate it clearly with the domain of the collector.
When Ruth was asked if all of her bells were hanging up she replied; "Yes. They are all displayed in the windows—just in the kitchen, the breakfast nook and the pantry" (Ruth, 2). The projection of a discrete space where the collection can be autonomous and uncontaminated, and can be presented as a whole is evident in many collectors' displays of their collections. All are displayed as entities and in some physical way detached from their surroundings through shelves, areas, special furniture. In some cases, such as Randy's display of instruments, the provision of an entire room may be necessary to accomplish this separation. "What I would like to have is a nice cabinet and put everything in. But that will come in the future, no rush on it" (Fran, 5). Even Mary at age eleven assumes she will collect the same object into adulthood, and describes her notion of an ideal display for her collection:

I would collect them and when I grow up, I want to be a scientist, but I want to have a little room in my house or a little place so I can put all my miniatures in a separate place so when I have my friends over or company, I can show them and maybe they'd like to start collecting (Mary, 3).

Display allows the collection to be presented as a personal possession identified with the self. It is hard to determine the outside forces which influence the placement of the collection. For example, when I asked Robert if I could see his collection he replied, "Certainly, my wife insists that I keep everything downstairs" (Robert, 13). McCracken claims this separation of the collection is "not a simple assertion of territoriality through ownership. Claiming is also an attempt to draw from the object the qualities that it has been given by the marketing forces of the world of goods" (McCracken, 1986, 79).
would add that display is also an attempt to claim the vision and labor of assembly, and the object's perceived inherent or symbolic properties.

Many collectors express an interest in achieving distinction through the quality, quantity, and type of their collections. Distinction is a specific form of prestige or status. It is based not solely on the collector being able to attain the collection economically, but concerns the personal achievement of creating the collection. The collector's implication is that, "I built it piece by piece. I saw them, recognized them, selected them and was able to secure them. I did it out of my cultivated vision." To distinguish denotes an ability to differentiate between or among things. The collector's goal of achieving distinction encompasses a desire to be set apart, to be recognized for special qualities, as are the objects of collection. The collection acts as a metaphor for and as a vehicle in the display of the collector's individual qualities, particularly their vision, passion, determination, knowledge and shrewdness.

By being recognized as having the ability to make fine or subtle distinctions regarding their object category, the collector commonly finds a justification for his/her own superiority. The root of the term distinguish actually means to separate and to classify, two essential aspects of collecting. The ability to make finer and finer distinctions is one of the important by-products of the knowledge and experience of collecting. As Miller, a material culture anthropologist, states, "The artifact may be used to promote fine distinctions through its relations to extremely sophisticated mechanisms of perceptual discrimination which tend to remain outside of consciousness" (Miller 1987, 107). Both connoisseurship and elaborate systems of categorization grow out of these
fine distinctions. Connoisseurship is seen to exist for the collector of baseball caps as well as it does for the collector of Inuit prints as long as quality is defined and perceived and evaluated. Butch kept his "best" hats at home.

Many collectors express a sense of stewardship toward objects they collect - a responsibility to save, preserve, promote and defend their perceived value and importance. Often, they demonstrate a strong sense of time and history in their desire to save the objects from neglect--to preserve them for the future, for the larger community. Many express a sense of personal responsibility, to see that the objects they believe in are not only saved but valued. "In some sense I prefer to own them because then I know what's going to happen to their future. I'm assured of how they will be taken care of and that they can be properly restored, if they need it, or maintained" (Randy, 7). This quality of what Erickson calls "generativity" (Erickson, 1950) has been described as one important to a sense of community and directed toward developing something of worth to pass on to future generations, within either the collector's family or the larger society. This goal is a concern mentioned primarily by the older collectors. Even though the collectors interviewed show a strong sense of personal ownership toward their objects, part of this sense may result from a sense of mission regarding the objects. Robert states, "I saw the importance of it at that time, that these things were disappearing so rapidly that it seemed important to me that they were collected" (Robert, 4). Randy states clearly that one of his primary interests in collecting was to collect "those instruments that are in danger of disappearing" (Randy, 2).
This stewardship aspect disputes Belk’s claim that collectors are not as altruistic as hoarders (Belk believes that hoarders save things that they feel people may need and that they derive pleasure from being the one to provide them) (Belk 1988, 76). Along with collectors’ concern for the fate of their objects, their belief in the cultural value of those objects may also be considered altruistic. J.P. once donated a collection of seven hundred Bibles of differing languages, to a library, and later accidentally discovered them on a cart about to be discarded. He recalls his reaction in defense of the collection:

I just happened to notice them on a cart. I said, so you are finally going to catalog these. They said, no, we are getting rid of them. We have no place for them. I said, you’ve got to be kidding. They were unique. Most of them in small editions in languages no one had written in before. Finally they left them in the special archives because I talked them into it. That they were intrinsically worthwhile (J.P., 3).

Collectors’ dreams and long term-goals reflect a desire "to do justice" to the objects they have acquired—to present them in such a way that they may be fully appreciated.

Well, I’d like it to grow phenomenally. I would like to, my interest is using this as a basis for a museum collection, but not to just put this into a museum to be kept in the basement for years. I have a very active interest to the point that I’m actually following it, in creating a musical instrument museum that will actually try to contain every instrument in existence. An audio and visual archives, so that you can go and look at an instrument and push a button and see a video of someone playing it and maybe have demonstrations and also have an outreach program (Randy, 4).

Such long range goals, and the dreams of collectors, however, are often totally unrealizable, therefore suggesting their symbolic or metaphoric significance.
As an activity, collecting is both creative and expressive, with each collector, to varying degrees, placing his/her mark on her collection. The collection is an expression of the social, cultural and personal life of the individual collector. As there are no two creations exactly alike, collecting reinforces a notion of individual creative energy. Collectors recognize and appreciate the amount of psychic energy required to build a collection. Because collectors often create their own criteria for inclusion, their collections reflect their personal biases, interests, aesthetics and goals. Speaking about a fellow postcard collector, Robert describes the creative aspect of his colleague’s collecting:

The other thing about it, it's an opportunity to be creative or artistic I suppose. I look at a fellow who is, does, I don't mean this in any demeaning way but he's always done labouring work, he's an outdoor laborer. He collects cards and when you see them all together, in the kind of things that he likes, it shows great sensitivity and a great artistic ability to determine what is beautiful in his eyes. So it is an opportunity for people who are not able to play the piano or paint, or sing or build things to display an artistry by collecting other people's things (Robert, 10).

Collectors perceive collecting as a serious, purposeful involvement, the goals of which sometimes become their "life's work," occurring over the majority of their life span. Collections are objects that have been invested with meaning and relate to the life goals of collectors, this investment can be viewed as one of the political dimensions of collecting. "The freedom to create culture--that is, the freedom to invest objects with meanings related to life's goals--is something that those in authority can never completely control" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 65). Brighton and Bourdieu's work also supports the notion that, "the capacity to endow one's possessions with the
status of art—with all the implications of cultivation and superiority that the concept of 'art' has come to imply—is a significant political power" (Painter 1982, 1-9).

Collectors use collecting and their relationship to their objects to create meaningful worlds for themselves. Collectors articulate immediate, short term, specific and general goals for their collections. Many of the collectors' dreams and fantasies regarding their collections "consume," dominate, or are central to those collectors' lives. For others, their collection goals do not involve fantasies, but are real and achievable.

Collectors perceive that both their collecting and their goals for their collections give their lives meaning and purpose, often in ways surpassing careers or other work. Randy, for example, established his dream for his collection early in his childhood. Rather than diminishing that dream though, he actually increased it over time. He states, "...my dream as a young child, which is interesting, was to have a warehouse full of instruments. My dream still holds, much larger than what it is" (Randy, 11). For Lou, her collection and the object category are central to her life’s dreams. She states,

I had written to a show. It was called Thrill of a Lifetime. It was a Canadian show. You wrote in your little dream. What you’d like to do and they would bring you on the show, and I remember telling my Dad that I had written, that I wanted Toller Cranston to design me a strawberry dress and I wanted to be a strawberry queen for a day and eat strawberries and this was my fantasy (Lou, 7).

Lou acted out this dream partially for her wedding, becoming a strawberry "Queen" for a day.

When we got married I wore a strawberry gown, red with green. A little girl said to her dad, 'Is that strawberry shortcake?' 'Yes, that’s the real strawberry
shortcake.' This was at Jericho Beach in May. I had strawberry in my bouquet. My bouquet was all wild strawberries with everything strawberries. When I saw that little girl, I was handing out; I had a little basket with a strawberry on it, that one on the top shelf. I handed out to all the people standing around; fresh strawberries. That little girls face, she really believed that (Lou, 7).

Collecting is a highly visual process. The collector bases selections largely on how they please him or her visually. The aesthetic dimension plays a significant role in both the selection of the collecting category and the specific objects which are selected to go into the collection. Collections are the primary device or vehicle through which collectors express their aesthetic values; therefore, collectors reveal their aesthetic values and dispositions through their choice of objects and object category. For example, when asked about collectors going to other exhibits and of what they thought about art, a typical response was, "It's static, there is no personality involved. It's not exciting to me. Now if it was airplanes of the second world War, then. But it's not my object ...and Greek Society, they aren't my objects, that's not my thing" (Norm, 8). Their category of object is approached as "art" for the collector.

When collectors talk about their objects they readily describe definite notions of what is more desirable or attractive to them: "They are watermarked, they are money paper and they are beautiful" (Ed, 3). "There might be something symbolic in the colors, they are my favorite colors" (Lou, 6). When I questioned Lou as to whether blueberries would be equally satisfying she responded, "The color doesn't do a thing for me. My favorite colors are red and emerald green, same thing, jewel color. I just think they are beautiful colors. A blueberry is depressing to me. I don't mind eating them" (Lou, 7).
Pursuing the aesthetic and symbolic specificity of Lou’s selection, I inquired as to the dictates of inclusion. Below, Lou describes quite specific aesthetic criteria for the kind of "strawberry" she considers collectable:

The ones that have the most beautiful berries to me, the ones that are the most visually delightful. See that one up there was a gift but I can honestly say I'd pass that by because it's not a strawberry to me. The bigger the berry. If the object is the shape of a berry or if the shirt has a berry over one whole chunk of it, yes much more then. It's not the number of them. It's the quality of the actual strawberry that makes it fascinating for me (Lou, 9).

Even though a theme collector Lou clearly describes her aesthetic criterion. She even speaks of rejecting many strawberry items which do not match the above aesthetic requirements.

Two criteria dominate the aesthetic dimension of the collection. One, the choice of what object category to collect, is often based on an object form or type that is visually appealing, ("art-like") to the prospective collector. The second, for some collectors, is that each object selected must meet their personal aesthetic criteria.

Of the collectors interviewed, one group made it clear that, for them, their personal visual aesthetic is the single most important selection criterion. For the most part, these collectors do not deal with "serial" or scientific collecting categories. Pat, for example says,"I think a collector is more into the aesthetic. Even if it doesn't mean nothing to anyone else, to me it is pretty or nice, attractive" (Pat, 11). For Norm, who has multiple collections, the aesthetic dimension is his prime selection criteria in determining what children's books he will add to his collection:
My first Halling Clancy Halling, I had no idea what I had. I just knew it was a lovely book and I ...the lady almost didn't let me out with it because she was mad as hell that her husband put it in the garage sale. I just fell in love with the illustrations. The marginalia all done by his wife. She does all the factual marginalia to explain what are the things in the story and then does the full page illustrations. 1928, Buzza Publishing, Minneapolis. Again, I didn't realize I had that. I just looked at it and said, 'Gee, I like that' (Norm, 6).

When asked to describe the favorite objects in her matchbook collection Pat replied, "It's a personal thing. It's a color I have never seen before, or from a place I have never been before, a shape that is intriguing. The same thing goes for teapots, something just really catches my eye, I can't say no" (Pat, 8).

Of the several kinds of object attachment collectors express, aesthetic attachment, especially to particular forms appears to be one of the most resilient. Even after many years collectors still find their object categories "aesthetic" or visually pleasing.

Collections transform diverse individual objects into a unified whole and valueless objects into a valued entity. Such transformations are part of the creative act of collecting. Collecting recontextualizes or recreates value in objects that often no longer have conventional use value by incorporating them into new meaning systems. As an invented activity, collecting could be termed a kind of innovation to recreate both value and meaning in objects. The collector has a vested interest in making the objects he or she collects meaningful to others. Who hasn't experienced walking through an antique shop or museum, then returned home to look through the attic or basement to see whether any old or discarded items are those which were observed to be valuable. The fact that someone is collecting an object category is evidence to the collector of its value and importance. This principle has been exploited commercially through the creation of
objects produced solely for collection. The collectors in this study do not consider the
pursuers of such commodities to be "true" collectors.

The language used by collector informants suggests that the collection is thought
of more as an entity, than as separate pieces. The term "collection" connotes unity,
linking separate objects into an entity. Collectors refer to their grouping of objects as
"the" collection rather than "a" collection, suggesting that it has taken on some measure
of autonomy. Such autonomy is evident in how the collections are displayed. Most of
the collected objects are displayed together, even when spreading them out would make
for a more attractive display. This desire to keep the collection visibly together appears
to be an important consideration for the collector, as it is a post-mortem concern as well.
This suggests a strong desire on the part of the collector to preserve the creative aspect
of assembly.

As collecting becomes more discriminating, connoisseurship develops in regard to
the object category. This developing of connoisseurship appears to have a time element
to it, often described by the collector-informants as a by-product of the long time
dimension of their collecting.

"At first I liked all bells, earrings, a ring with bells around it--everything bells
was fine with me. Now I am very fussy about looking for old bells and they
are hard to come by" (Ruth, 5).

This collection that I have now, I started about three or four years ago. There
were maybe a half dozen collections before that. When I start, to get myself
into it, I would just pick up whatever, in the restaurant, in a club, anything just
to get myself started, gas station. Then after I get so many of those, maybe
two dozen, then I'll start to become selective and look more on colors and
shapes and sizes (Pat, 7).
The development of a knowledge base in some of the collecting areas clearly influences the collectors notions of quality. Bob describes;

"I think what I buy now is different that what I bought ten years ago. In the early days I was attracted to the dramatic impact of tribal art....my tastes have become more refined because I have read more about it, traveled more, seen more--it's become more cerebral. It's still aesthetic but the big dramatic pied doesn't interest me as a piece I'd acquire" (Bob, 3).

When asked about changes that have occurred in his collecting habits over time Bob describes how connoisseurship developed;

"I think the knowledge tended to come after early on, now it comes before the purchase. Now I know more than some of the dealers. It puts me off certain material that seems to be readily available or that I consider late or tourist--there is a sort of refinement going on. I think I am not as easily impressed by the novelty of the pieces anymore because I think I am more aware of what is there through accumulating a pretty good library and looking at a lot of museum collections and private collections" (Bob, 4)

As quality becomes more of an issue, the need for quantity diminishes. Bob relates:

"Well, I'm middle aged now, so I think I have another twenty earning years ahead of me. I've though about it more recently. I might slow down and buy better quality. My idea would be to buy maybe a dozen of really good quality" (Bob, 9).

Collectors clearly define their notions of "quality" in regard to their objects. For theme collectors, the image that most closely resembles the quintessential object is often clearly laid out. Their own notions of the "perfect" object, sometimes expressed in terms such as "mint" reflect this quest for the perfectly crafted object. "I have winning tickets, sealed, that nobody can have, never been opened. A lot of people don't understand that.
I love sealed tickets. I wouldn’t open them for the simple reason, that ticket is mint. Because it isn’t opened and to a true collector, he wants the best” (Ed, 3).

The drama or process of collecting creates the powerful bond between collector and objects, almost instantly creating an intimacy usually reserved for long and deep involvement. The objects and their acquisition serve as markers of time, of events, and of the vitality or fullness of the collector’s life. Objects of the collection remind collectors of special moments or events. The object serves as a catalyst for locating, defining, preserving and retrieving an experience now past, and provides a concrete reminder of that experience. Some collections (this seems to be more true of male collectors) suggest a narrative surrounding the sequence of their objects’ acquisition and relating to the collector’s life, often on a theme involving part of their work-lives or occupations. For example, Robert, who mainly collects postcards, also collects historic banking memorabilia, a category related to his many years in the banking business. One section of his postcard collection, one of his favorites, is of old bank buildings. Chris, who is in the advertising business, collects advertising memorabilia; Randy, a musician, collects instruments. Sometimes the interest in the category comes before the collecting, but most frequently the interest develops with or after beginning to collect. No female collector-informants collect occupationally-related material even though several have what would conventionally be termed “careers”.

Theme collectors have a relationship with their object categories which appears highly iconographic and symbolic. The percentage of "theme" collectors that exists is not
known but this study documents three: Lou (strawberries), Fran (mushrooms) and Maureen (elephants).

The three theme collectors often express a desire in their dreams and fantasies to be surrounded or engulfed by their object--a fantasy only made possible by the existence of the objects. Sometimes these dreams or goals focus on the category, the entire collection or particular objects within the collection. Below is a description of the collectors’ use of their objects as abstract symbols which they use as role models to promote certain qualities within themselves.

As collectors set criteria for creating and improving their collections, they also cultivate certain aspects of themselves to achieve those goals. Lou describes her dream, which is also a scenario for the final placement of her collection. She mentioned that maybe Knott’s Berry farm or a similar place would take the collection intact. She describes the scene:

_Everyone has their own little fantasy. I see this tiny cottage, it doesn’t matter if it’s on the east or west coast. I always have this thing with water. I have to be near water. I see this as literally a little strawberry cottage where everything inside is a strawberry. Because children seem to love them as well, would come in and could have their strawberry tea, strawberry cookies, strawberry toys, everything was strawberry (Lou, 7)._ 

This theme collector’s interest is not in the objects themselves, but in what they represent, how they contribute to an overall effect or atmosphere. The objects bring the collector closer to that which he/she admires, covets, craves and desires; yet the "real thing" can’t be owned or preserved or fully understood. Through the capture of the objects, the idea or image is also contained, surrounded or absorbed.
The collection and the specific qualities of the collected objects serve as a personal metaphors or symbols to some collectors. The collection can come to represent the self-discipline and tenacity of the collector or provide a sense of continuity and belonging, transforming their house into a home.

"It does tie you down physically. It represents a self-created constraint on your freedom. But, it also has provided me with a sense of place and of being settled--of nesting, much like other people might have children or animals" (Bob, 5).

The collection and its display to self and others provide an important part of the self-image of the collector and both objects and themes become closely associated with the identity of the person. It becomes appropriate to call the collector, "the tomato lady" or "the strawberry lady." Ed mentions a lottery collector called "Mr. Lottery." Collectors promote this type of identification by placing the item on their personal cards and logos. The identification of the self with the object category is apparent in this story of Butch’s: "I had them all at home then, because I had the shop at my house. Then my wife threw me out, hats and all" (Butch, 7).

Ed relates the following proudly: "This girl wrote a letter in one of the newspapers about how she’d met me. She says, 'you won’t believe this guy, he must eat and sleep lottery tickets" (Ed, 7). The identification with the collection is a significant symbol, metaphor and motivator. Ed describes packing up all of his collection when he moved to a different apartment. He was feeling tense, uneasy after the move and was not aware of what was wrong. "I finally figured it out. It is that I wasn’t around my stuff, and I had to start butting stuff up. Once it’s up, then I settled in" (Ed, 9).
Collectors recognize and utilize the symbolic properties of the objects they collect, and often invest them with special personal meaning. Asking "What do these objects mean to you?" evokes philosophical responses from many of the collectors. Ed says of lottery tickets, "I think they stand for a dream for the ordinary person that they might be struck and it gives, especially older people, poor people, a chance" (Ed, 8). Lou says of strawberries, "Love" (Lou, 5), and further describes them as a symbol: "There is the talisman that's out of England. The reason that I like the name--the reason they call it that is because it's such a hearty berry, no matter what happens, it just keeps going, it's so tough" (Lou, 11). The symbolism exists not solely in qualities of the object but also in the form of the collection itself. As Ruth describes; "I like the fact that every bell has a different voice. They are all individual--they all have a different voice" (Ruth, 3). Behind the theme collection stands the topic or image; behind that stands the symbol. Lou says "I think of them [strawberries] as magical. Something magical that anybody has access to. You don't have to be rich. Wild strawberries are attainable" (Lou, 7). Randy describes the symbolic meaning his objects hold for him:

I think that these, like many things that people make, that these are testimonials to people's creativity and versatility and imagination. What is wonderful about these is that, not only is there a story about each one but they also play--they also tell their own stories, you can listen to them (Randy, 4).
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter contains four sections, each of which summarizes a specific area within the study. The first section summarizes the findings of the study in relation to Belk, Danet and Katriel's propositions. The second section summarizes the material which deals with the collecting process, its cycle and its types. Collectors express a complex "deep sentiment" or a feeling of personal attachment toward their collected objects in a variety of strands cited throughout Chapter Four. The third section summarizes the curatorial relationship collectors have with their objects or collectors as curators--material which forms the main body of this study. It also discusses the complex relationship of the personal collector to the institutional collector, the collector's status as curators possessing a particular type of authority on the process of collecting, and on his/her collection category. Finally, it lays out the implications for museum studies in light of the findings of this study. Section three describes the need for further research on this topic and the direction and scope of that research.

PROPOSITIONS SUMMARIZED

The following section summarizes some of the material continued in sections one, two and three of Chapter Four by reviewing the propositions laid out by Belk, Danet and
Katriel in light of my data. In addition, it reviews a set of propositions generated by this study.

Belk's proposition number one states that collections seldom begin deliberately. The present study demonstrates the range of starts described by thirty informants whose selection was blind in terms of the beginning scenarios of their collecting. According to my data a tentative proposition would contend that collecting appears to have several common starting scenarios: an accidental start, because of attachment to a particular object (which develops into the object category); a conscious decision to collect; or a continuation and development of childhood collecting. Belk's research suggests that the desire to recreate the pleasures associated with an early acquisition motivates further acquisition. In the present study, a number of collector-informants substantiate this suggestion, along with the notion of a seed or starter group of objects (as in the case of Trudy's tomato ceramics).

Belk's second proposition states that addictive and compulsive behaviors pervade collecting. Certainly collection is a passionate, pervasive activity, but to label it compulsive and addictive would be to ignore its highly disciplined and rule-governed aspects. This study's thirty collectors show evidence of an ability to "control" the economic aspects of their collecting, and thereby to keep their pursuits within the bounds of a passionate and self-perpetuating activity. By their collection of large numbers of objects, and their common metaphor of collecting as a disease, collectors may give the impression that collecting is a disorder; however, even in calling it a disease, collectors often specify that it is a "wonderful disease" a term which would not be out of place in a
discourse on love. Belk develops his proposition regarding the addictive aspects of collecting, citing collectors' own admission of "addiction." I find that collectors use the language of addiction and compulsion only metaphorically to describe their passion for the process. Their language stressed "urges", or the "hooked" aspect to collecting. More often, collectors describe collecting as positive and fun. It is reasonable to continue to do that which gives us pleasure. The negative aspects that the collector-informants mention were mainly associated with limited space, and a lack of resources but expressed neither a desire to stop nor a feeling of an inability to stop. The fact that most believed collecting to be life-enhancing enough that they would encourage their children to collect causes me to question the assumption of addictive behavior.

Belk goes on to suggest, "As with other addictions, the object of the addiction is relatively unimportant" (1988, 76). This claim is not supported by the data in this study, which finds collectors continually emphasizing the importance of the object--only theme collectors and then it is a matter of degree give priority to the category over the qualities of the object.

Belk suggests that: "Association with other compulsive collectors further supports this feeling of positive addiction" (1988, 76). It is equally likely that the intimacy and camaraderie engendered among those who share an interest and an aesthetic are more significant factors in these collecting networks than the supposed sharing of the collecting addiction.

Belk's third proposition is that: Collecting legitimizes acquisition as art or science. Collectors have many ways of legitimizing or rationalizing their collecting, art and
science being but two. They also legitimized collecting in terms of historical significance, inherent value, and sentimental value. Most feel collecting is a meaningful activity which serves as its own justification—but acknowledge that collections are neither profitable nor pragmatic as investments of time or money.

Belk focuses on the social response as the collection’s primary legitimizing factor, the ultimate positive expression of which is incorporation into a museum. Belk’s observation that collectors’ desire for their collections to go to a museum is certainly borne out by the responses of the collector-informants in this study. Such recognition could be viewed as being motivated by the drive for status of the collection and brings the collector "distinction"; but the collectors also expressed belief that their mission to "save" and promote their objects legitimized what they did even if their appreciation for their collections was not shared. Several felt that "history" would show them to be ahead of their time. For example, Ed was sure that lottery ticket collecting would be the hobby of the future, and that he was one of its pioneers.

Belk’s fourth proposition states that, profane to sacred conversions occur when an item enters a collection. None of the informants’ comments supports this proposition, which more concerns a projection onto the collection than observable actions or expression. Anonymous, impersonal objects are certainly adopted into the collection as personal and meaningful. The acts of finding, securing and placing the object into the collection are three steps toward its conversion to the personal domain of the collector. As with many commodities, purchase and ownership produce an instant bond with the collected object.
Belk's fifth proposition states that collections serve as extensions of the self. My data describes several ways by which collections come to serve such a function. Of the mechanisms Belk describes which promote the connection between the collection and the self, one is the time dimension. As I have mentioned above, through an enormous investment of time, "the collector has literally put part of himself into the collection" (1988, 77). The present evidence suggests that the individual's taste and judgment in selecting both the category and the objects for collection contribute to personal identification with the collection. Part of the identification of the self with the category arises from the fact that others associate the object category with its collector, and often choose gifts which correspond to the collecting category.

Belk's sixth proposition states that collections tend toward specialization. My data supports this proposition for some collectors, as it pertains to what I describe as the branching effect; but this phenomenon was not evident in the majority of my collector-informants. Serial and multiple collecting were more common than the branching phenomenon. The same number of collectors move from collecting in one category to another which is unrelated as those who specialize in a particular object within their category.

My findings suggest that serial and multiple collecting are the most common collecting patterns, with life-long or sustained object categories regularly occurring, as well as the phenomenon of stopping a collection, disposing of it, and beginning to collect the same category again.
Belk's seventh proposition states that the problem of the post-mortem or post-collecting distribution of the collection is a significant concern of collectors. Data to support or refute this proposition could only be drawn from a whole group of collectors at the end of the collecting cycle. Among the thirty collectors studied here several describe plans for the eventual placement of their collections. Of those at the end of their collecting cycle, only Lou says that the disposition of her collection is a problem. Further data collection which focuses on those collectors at Lou's stage of the collecting cycle or former collectors would have to be examined to determine how typical her concerns are and, therefore, to support or alter Belk's proposition.

Belk's eighth proposition states that there is a simultaneous desire for and fear of completing a collection. None of the collectors studied expressed any such feelings. Most have selected categories and criteria which allow virtually endless possibilities for expansion. Some worry that as their target items become more popular collectibles they will no longer be able to afford them, others that they have exhausted their categories; but none express either a desire for or a fear of completing their collection. Asked their goal for their collections, most respond that they would like to make their collection bigger and better or more specifically, to make it the best possible--the "most complete." Trudy is the only collector who describes a close proximity to completion: "Once I get the cookie jar, it's pretty much complete" (Trudy, 4). She describes this as an accomplishment, though, and anticipates satisfaction rather than fear.

In contradiction to Belk, I would propose that collecting is infinite rather than finite, even when what is attempted is the filling in of a serial system of objects. The
majority of collectors are collecting in what Kubler (1962, 53) describes as open-ended sequences, such as postcards or matchbooks or themes that could continue over an entire life span. Closed series, such as stamps or coins, are still so large in number that it is unlikely that a collector would ever complete more than a few sections within the series. To select obtainable complete groupings would defeat the game of collecting, whose object is to satisfy desire only partially, not to satiate it; therefore collectors select collecting categories in which completion is unlikely to occur.

Danet and Katriel propose two distinct types of collectors, which they term type A and type B. Type A’s selection criteria are aesthetic, while type B’s are based on a desire to increase knowledge of a particular field by collecting within a related series. My data does not lend support to these two distinctions. Serial collecting can still incorporate highly aesthetic choices. Many collectors seek novelty and variation as well within an aesthetic dimension. Within their categories, for series collecting, a representative sample is selected. The following appear typical of collector’s selection is criteria, with minor variations based on the type of collection involved: a butterfly collector’s selection is based on whether a specimen is a representative sample, for its rarity and its individual quality; some theme collectors select almost any item included in their category, while others base selection on explicit aesthetic criteria.

Apart from selection differences influenced by the diversity of object categories, the data supports the generalizability of collecting regardless of what is collected. Differences do occur: collectors fall into various categories, with differing personalities, life styles and collecting patterns; but their discourse reveals a similar tone and
description. They speak a common language to describe their collecting, especially regarding the game of it. The main points which all of the collectors hold in common are that the objects collected are aesthetically pleasing to them. The data suggest that it would be inconceivable to hear a collector state, "I just hate them, how they look, but I just have to collect them!" The decision to collect and the choice of object category are self-initiated and purely personal. Ownership is desired (for most it is essential to inclusion in the collection); regardless of object category, the collections begin with a considerable number of acquisitions and then slow down. All of the collector-informants, regardless of what they collect, display their collections as a unit which is separate from other personal or owned items.

As an activity, collecting appears to be socially connecting rather than isolating. Rather than being primarily an internal process, it places the collector in a community. Collectors express a connected-ness to the world. Collecting and involvement with collected objects connect the collector in a variety of ways to the past, present, and future. Collections provide an agenda for action and channels for attention, and help attach meaning to other life experiences.

THE PROCESS SUMMARIZED

Collecting has a multiplicity of beginnings, the full range of which is too great to be accommodated by a single proposition. The entire cycle can take place in a few months or occur over a lifetime. It appears to have a life cycle with a beginning, a peak
and an ending and to pass through a predictable sequence of phases. Initially, the collector amasses a large number of objects. Next, the collector reaches a peak, which may last a few months or several years. Eventually the collector slows down, becoming more focused or discriminating in what is collected. Over time connoisseurship and a narrowing of the collecting focus (the branching effect), appear typical.

Collectors seem to fall into distinct groups or types, such as "born," theme, serial or multiple or combinations thereof. The multiple collector, a type which appears to be quite common, has more than one collection going at a time. The serial collector goes from collecting one kind of object to another. The theme collector collects a variety of objects with an image or theme connection. The born collector lives to collect and has collected as long as he/she can remember.

An examination of collecting reveals it to be a much larger and more involved process than simply purchasing things and placing them together. An expanded notion of what constitutes "collecting" is necessary to include all of the various curatorial activities which appear to be associated with the collecting process. Although I have yet to hear anyone refer to individual personal collectors as non-professional curators, that term may be a more accurate indicator of what some collectors do. To call them "collectors" may subtly diminish the activities of some collectors. Rarely are curators called "collectors."

This study sought to examine object attachment, especially what I have defined as "deep sentiment"—the complex combination of feelings and perceptions held by collectors toward their objects. Sentiment is often defined as opinion colored by emotion. For collectors, it appears that their opinions regarding their object categories are informed by
emotion. Among the thirty collectors studied, I found both object attachment and "sentiment" toward objects, attitudes, and emotions expressed in a variety of ways and to a variety of degrees. Some collectors, rather than bonding to objects, formed attachments to ideas, symbols or images, which their objects could only suggest, represent, or approximate.

Sentiment toward objects is generally reserved for lived relationships--one’s keepsakes and heirlooms. Collectors arrive at their sentiment toward their objects through admiring them (a kind of respect), through viewing them and through associating them with certain qualities. The objects are personal, in that the individual selects the category, each individual object, its placement and display, and builds the collection over time in a way which integrates the acts of acquisition into daily life. The time span over which collectors collect, continuity, familiarity and often the fact that the category itself has strong personal associations of family, place, or occupation, all contribute toward "sentiment."

Collectors reflect a notion of ownership which goes beyond any legalistic definition to include intimacy created by knowledge of the world of the object. Part of this intimacy is actually in place before the object is even found. The collector is "close to" and infatuated with the category, form or image of the collection. As an example, imagine loving ice cream and discovering another wonderful flavor. The object is a member of an admired grouping even before it is seen. For many categories, the unseen and the undiscovered are matters of great curiosity. This privileging of mystery is a significant and rarely-mentioned aspect of collecting.
Collectors aspire to determine what is possible within their collecting categories—to determine their limits. This often results in collectors seeking the discovery of new species. By eliminating the "exotic" and the "unusual" from our academic discourse we have also eliminated any discussion of curiosity, a concept intimately linked with the history of western collecting. Curiosity as a motivation is still apparent in present day collecting.

As in Proust's (Deleuze, 1972, 39) writing, "Madeline objects,"--those of intense sentiment--are ones in which meaning is compressed. Souvenirs exhibit this quality to some degree, as they are often objects charged and invested with emotion.

There would be little point in collecting, preserving and displaying things were it not for the human capacity to invest objects with meaning. And the more meaning we have condensed and channelled through an object, the greater its symbolic value, the greater our sentiment for it. Sentiment is nothing more than an attitude, thought or judgment prompted by feeling. And when this feeling attaches to objects, perception comes into play; so do concepts, because concepts organize sensory impressions. The results can be informed, feelingful perception, a personal interpretation of the meaning of something. In a wonderful stroke of phrasemaking Harry Broudy has called this orientation to things "enlightened cherishing." Surely this is the kind of response we hope to cultivate through the museum experience (Chapman 1982, 48).

For others, collecting constitutes an activity which goes far beyond the acquiring of objects, but one wherein the objects remain central, pivotal. Like Nabokov (1966), scientific or fill-in-the-blank collectors speak as passionately and as often as any other type of collector about the aesthetics of their objects. Objects assumed to be "artful" are not the only objects capable of eliciting deep emotional attachment or the development of sentiment.
IMPLICATIONS FOR
ART AND MUSEUM EDUCATION

This study's main implications for the fields of art and museum education concern: the highly curatorial relationship informants expressed toward their collected objects; the common long-term development of connoisseurship which appears to be a by-product of collecting; the fact that a wide range of object types and forms may perform several primary aesthetic, symbolic and metaphoric ("art-like") functions for collectors; and collectors' apparent use both of their objects and of the process of collecting as vehicles for self-cultivation.

I set out to study collectors and discovered curators: every interview reflected some aspect of the collector's "curatorial" relationship with his or her collection. In fact, while most mentioned having "fun," and despite the fact that many also collected items which the mainstream museum community might consider frivolous, the majority of these "amateurs" showed an unexpectedly "serious" or "professional" attitude and involvement with their collecting. Many had developed complex strategies for acquiring objects, amassing related knowledge, and maintained, catalogued and documented their collections.

When researchers such as McCracken assert that the "curatorial" relationship—encompassing responsibility, respect and admiration for objects and what they represent, as well as providing "comforts, continuities and securities" (McCracken 1990, 44)—has virtually disappeared in the modern world, they overlook collectors as a group.
With their strong sense of mission, their concern for time and their belief in the intrinsic value of their objects, my informants exemplified just such a relationship. They preserved their objects, expounded the value of their collecting categories and projected themselves as the objects' rescuers. Although acquisition and possession are pivotal to the collecting process, the collectors studied here showed a much more profound involvement with their objects than simple acquisitiveness or possessiveness would engender. Having included their objects in collections, they also curated them to reflect personal perspectives.

Examination of the curatorial nature of the collector-object relationship leads me to question the distinction between the "professional" and the "amateur." Although at one time the two terms connoted similar status, broad disparities have arisen regarding role, training and motivation. Today the use of the descriptor "amateur" to describe any non-professional collector reinforces the sharp division which has been forged between the (institutional) curator-collector and the (private) collector-curatör. Although this study's informants were not professional collectors, many described collecting as their "life's work," and showed none of the lack of skill or seriousness of intent such a term as "amateur" may connote. They were non-professional without being unprofessional.

Historically, one of the dominant qualities attributed to the amateur was curiosity, a factor often cited by this study's private collectors as a key motivator for collecting. Pomian (1990) describes how curiosity was both respected and admired in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but how that respect began to wane with the
advent of the age of reason. Writing about early collectors nearly a century ago, Hudson described the curious individual (in the past tense) as,

...careful, scrupulous, attentive to detail, anxious to produce first-class workmanship, eager to learn and to acquire information and likely, by its quality or novelty, to excite interest. Curiosity was 'painstaking application,' it was strangeness, it was 'connoisseurship' (Hudson 1897, 21).

When "cabinets of curiosities" were in vogue, their collections were meticulous and accurate, and their collectors quested after knowledge as well as objects. Today, though, the stimulation of "curiosity" as a seed of object collection and attachment is the subject of little discussion or research in art or museum education.

Another topic to which few researchers in museum and art education have devoted significant study is the ability of a wide range of objects to serve as "art." The data from this study would suggest that the wide range of objects which collectors choose to collect serve as significant symbolic, metaphoric and aesthetic foci, even though many fall outside traditional or disciplinary definitions of art. Objects relevant to individuals, those reflecting their values and ideals, appeared to serve them best. Such a correlation highlights the importance of attending seriously to the ways in which objects acquire meaning in the lives of people outside of fine art circles or art and museum education. As Colin Painter suggests, the "specialness" attributed to art "has to be examined critically in relation to a wider cultural terrain" (Painter, 1982: 2).

For many of the informants, their collected objects had taken on deep enough personal meanings to make the process of collecting a primary vehicle for self-cultivation. As Gell states: "When the merely utilitarian aspect of consumption
goods are transcended they become something more like works of art--charged with personal expression" (Gell in Appadurai p. 114). These charged objects, though not generally defined as "art," function for the collector as significant sources of aesthetic pleasure, as vehicles for the development of connoisseurship, and as personal metaphors.

Each of the collections which physically stood behind this study's interviews possessed its own apparent unity and rationale, and the internal logic and aesthetic of each selection made it a clear expression of its collector's personality and interests. Lifestyles, occupations, economic standing and geographic location were all on display. And to varying degrees, object and category selection criteria both reflected and defined the personality of the individual collector.

The collections involved served as media for communication both through their aesthetic dimension and through their function as a record of their collectors' motives and methods of acquisition and display. Often, collectors had imbued their objects with perceived qualities which they then strove to emulate, thereby making the objects both symbols and role models. Collections are both action-oriented and contemplative: collecting makes of the static object both something one possesses and a material reminder of something he or she does.

The data regarding this study's collectors suggest they consider their collections valuable not as "investment" commodities but as aesthetic objects or specimens. A commodity is, after all, appreciated far more as a means to an end (such as increased wealth) than as an end in itself, and its appeal is rarely visual or aesthetic. To the collector, the value of an object relates to direct, immediate experience. Gombrich's
observation regarding collections of jewels and gold in the past is also true for the majority of collectors in this study: "There was a time--and it is not so very far back--when riches, economic wealth, could thus feast the eye, when the miser could enjoy the sparkle of his hoard, instead of having to admire balance sheets" (Gombrich 15: 1963). The majority of the collectors in this study regarded their objects as "treasures", their "investment value" as secondary. They attributed the pleasure they derived from their personal objects to the fact that they could actually look at and interact with them. Owning them and having them in their presence produced what might be termed the pleasure of the gaze.

Like brokers of commodities, academic circles consider the projection of sentiment or attachment as a negator of judgment--especially of aesthetic judgment. The supposed hallmark of the curator is, after all, objectivity. In contrast, the collectors interviewed in this study expressed a belief that collections have life precisely because they are rooted in personal passions. All expressed a need and desire to have their objects available and visible as part of their daily life. Their interactions have been documented and described within this study.

This study's data also suggest that collectors' long-term physical and emotional involvement with objects--their continual comparison, evaluation, selection, curation and admiration--leads to the development of connoisseurship. Museum and art educators struggle to determine how to understand and facilitate such development, usually pre-determining the objects upon which the facility will be applied and conveying
messages of what to think about objects rather than viewing them from a collector's perspective and offering strategies of how to learn from them.

Stephen Weil's comment on when the museum object "works" for the museum visitor appears to occur for the majority of the collector-informants in this study:

Works work when, by stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising visual intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts, and marking off neglected significant kinds, they participate in the organization of experience, in the making and remaking of our (italics mine) worlds" (Weil 1990, 54).

This statement may be understood as a description of the goals of the museum educator; but for the collector, it is not someone else's world that is made meaningful but his or her own.

Educators often attempt to cultivate connoisseurship quickly, using a wide range of objects with which the student may have no personal involvement. The very long average time span over which the collectors in this study have developed their abilities calls into question whether this facility can be expected via a brief and artificial involvement, whereby the student has little or no say in the selection of objects, and even less direct physical interaction with them.

This study shows evidence of a wide range of continued and pervasive contemporary involvement in material things. As Cameron states:

Those who question the efficacy of the real thing as a medium of communication need only consider man's apparent universal and pervasive compulsion to collect and the importance which individuals attach to their collections regardless of their intrinsic value and their lack of meaning to others (Cameron 1968, 34).
The construction and use of objects is the major method whereby individuals imprint their practices on the world. Their traces constitute material culture. But other practices leave traces in material culture as well. In the case of collections, it is not the marks of individual objects which are most significant but those of assemblies which occur through the placement of those objects. Selection, assembly and arrangement are the evidence of purposeful action—the labor of collection—and its traces are indeed fragile. Like temporary exhibits, most individual collections are transitory, built up though they may be over a large portion of an individual's life: of the multitude of collectors, only a few achieve a measure of immortality through their collections. Although the desire to do so may still underlie some collecting, it is more likely that through the act of gathering things, then grouping and preserving their objects, collectors attempt to link the present, past and future. Rather than attempting to achieve immortality through association, they accomplish it through the preservation of material less fugitive than living matter.

The professionalism of informants' discourses did not vary significantly according to their object categories: art, antiquities or natural history specimens have no monopoly on earnest pursuit by individuals or segments of the population. Considerable seriousness is projected toward such categories as lottery tickets or matchbooks—a seriousness not necessarily shared, rewarded or recognized by the larger society. Yet people continue to collect and cherish these objects, to transform and embrace surprisingly common, mass-produced objects and to incorporate them as meaningful into their life. In addition to its introspective processes and effects, collecting emphasizes the
collector’s relationship with the world, providing connections to the past, present, and future, to places and to events, to other people and to topics and ideas. Collections provide agenda for action and channels for attention. They help make meaningful other life experiences.

The more our society leans toward the use and disposal not only of "consumable" goods but of natural species, plants and animals, the more transitory our relationship with our world becomes, and the greater the desire to collect, cherish and value objects; collectors and museums proliferate. As an example, of the toys collected in 1983 by the Philadelphia Museum, thirty percent are no longer on the market. Collecting is a way to slow down, cope with and create meaningful experiences out of the rapid and impersonal changes in commodities and cycles of consumption. Hinsley concurs that collecting is associated with "an antimodern impulse...one which expresses a desire for stasis in the face of change and modernization (Hinsely, 1991, 10).

NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following section describes areas of potential research which arise from the data analysis but which have not been fully developed within this study. It begins by discussing the partially-analyzed themes which surfaced within the data and goes on to discuss research directions suggested by the tentative propositions.

The themes presented in this report do not exhaust the potential of the interview data. Within the thirty interviews a large amount of material has surfaced on the
interactive aspects of collecting. This material could be analyzed and tentative propositions in the area of collecting and communication formulated. Further analysis of the existing data could be useful in the formulation of such propositions.

There is a need to establish some demographic and statistical information on collecting. A comprehensive study of current collecting demographics of one place is needed to understand present collecting patterns. Excellent studies exist which carry out this analysis for particular historic moments. Pomian’s (1990) study of private collectors in Paris and Venice details demographic information for a historic time frame, and carefully calculates the exact number of collectors of each object category. Private collections were fully known and described and detailed lists made of their contents. Today, though, little interest exists in documenting private collectors, including those comprised of elite or prestigious objects. Individual curators know of significant private collections in their areas of interest; but to my knowledge, North American private collections of such categories as Inuit or Northwest Coast Native material remain undocumented and in many dimensions unstudied. Fear of theft and notoriety certainly affects the visibility of these collections, but a comprehensive study would contribute greatly to our knowledge of collecting at the present time.

O’Brien’s (1981) oft-quoted reckoning that "one in three" people collect is speculative, as little is documented of what people collect, for how long they continue, or whether there is an age or gender orientation across a wide span of the population. Coupled with the qualitative material presented in this study, such material would allow researchers a fuller understanding of the phenomenon in popular culture. Demographic
studies might determine if, for example, more males collect than females, if females tend to favor theme-oriented collections, both of which conclusions are suggested by this study.

A comprehensive study of children as collectors would be very useful in developing an understanding of the adult collector. Collectors themselves suggest that an inherent difference exists between children's collecting and adult collecting. They project a belief that children at a particular age collect "naturally" and that adult collecting is both more serious and less common than that among children of particular ages. The whole topic of children as collectors and the emergence of adult collecting are two in need of much further research. What appears to be an extremely common inclination toward childhood collecting could be investigated to discover what factors determine which children develop into adult collectors. An inclination of which objects people collect in each age group could reveal particular orientations toward objects at different developmental stages. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) have executed a parallel study and established that cherished or personally-valued objects are indeed related to points in the life span. The effect of age or gender or place on the collecting process is not known.

The apparent relationships between collecting characteristics and place have not been fully explored, although geography and occupation appear to be strong influences on collecting categories. Part of the apparent correlation can be attributed to availability: it is difficult to collect French subway tickets in Wisconsin. When two of the collectors in this study changed locales, their move affected their object category. For
example, Robert had collected fruit box labels when he lived in the fruit-producing area of British Columbia. By necessity, then, he changed his collecting category in his new locale where they were no longer accessible. The relationship of place and personal history to the selection of a collecting category is a topic in need of further research.

Distinct orientations are apparent only with regard to very broad areas of what is collected. The first and most obvious is to collect the known or the familiar—objects that grow out of occupations, locales, homelands, ethnicity or familial activities. In contrast, the second major orientation is toward the distant, in terms of either time, place or culture. These two impulses both grow out of a desire to get closer to or to contain that which is collected. One affirms continuity and connectedness; the other focuses on the exotic, the unfamiliar. A comparison of collectors falling within these two orientations could prove fruitful. Among the study's informants a number can be identified as collecting within each of these broad divisions. Without analyzing their interview material specifically as it relates to this orientation, I can only suggest that the topic warrants further investigation. The sentiment associated with the familiar and a more "passionate" attachment seems linked to the "distant" collecting categories.

Because so few comprehensive studies of collecting have been performed prior to this study, it has not been possible for this work to be applied to a cross cultural comparison of collecting behavior. Given the present study's breadth, though, enough material would now be available to compare Vancouver collectors with those from other geographic and cultural settings. Danet and Katriel's (1987) study took place in Israel; private and institutional collecting are growing phenomenally in Japan. Differences
between collectors might reveal a great deal about social and material conditions and changing attitudes toward object acquisition. The culturally specific aspects of collecting provide a potentially rich area for cross-cultural comparison.

Changes in aesthetic development, and particularly the development of connoisseurship could be explored by studying long-term collectors and mapping changes in acquisition preferences.

This study examined neither non-collectors' responses to collections nor the aesthetic inherent in a collection--we need to explore and describe the latter, including interview data from people at an exhibit designed specifically to present the aesthetics of a collection. Reactions to collections and people's attitudes regarding collectors both warrant further research. It would be worthwhile to compare specific types of collecting to determine subtle variations. For example, interviewing twenty stamp collectors might allow researchers to focus both on category unity and on subtle differences among collecting categories.

An investigation of various museums' relations with private collectors would be useful. The investigator would examine institutional curators' attitudes toward private collectors with whom they have worked at the time of donation. A logical sequel to this type of study would be a direct comparison of the collecting "strategies" and practices of museums with those of private collectors.

Another potential area of study would concern the interface between the museum and the private collector, and might characterize, to some extent, the different relationships held between private collectors and various kinds of museums. How does
the art museum's relationship to the private collector differ from that of the natural history or modern history museum? Curator-collectors--curators who appear to have strong personal attachment to whole collections or groupings within a larger collection--have not been studied to determine the overlap of the private and institutional collector.

A comprehensive study of the autobiographies of collectors could foster a fuller understanding of the effects of collecting and self-cultivation, and be useful data in the study of the symbolic and self developing aspects of object attachment.

Since this study discovers differences in collectors' concerns and attitudes which correspond to the point they have reached in the collecting cycle, it would be logical to conduct research which compares attitudes toward collected objects at the different points in the collecting cycle. For example, one could compare the attitudes of collectors at the "peak" of collecting with those no longer collecting. Is the affection for the collected object usually fickle? Even after the collector is no longer collecting, does an affinity typically remain for the collecting category, as the data suggest? An attempt to examine former collectors would reveal a very different attitude toward the process from that of active participants in the process.

CONCLUSIONS

The preceding study describes the attitudes, practices and patterns of thirty collectors participating individually in collecting culture, and establishes the generalizability of the collecting process among a variety of object categories. In many
ways, informants' accounts of their habits, attitudes and sentiments toward their collections differ significantly from projected stereotypes of collectors. As summarized below by Pomian, though, the stereotypes also represent partial truths. To him, the collector is popularly depicted as:

a harmless eccentric, who spends his days sorting out stamps, impaling butterflies on pins or revelling in erotic engravings. Or, quite the reverse, a wily speculator who buys up works of art for next to nothing, only to sell them for fabulous sums, all the while claiming to be an art lover. Or, again, a man of good family who has inherited, along with a stately home and antique furniture, a collection of pictures, the finest of which he allows to be admired on the glossy pages of chic magazines (Pomian 1990, 1).

Such characterizations are accurate only insofar as they hint at the shrewdness inherent in collecting prowess, the metaphor of the game or hunt, and the collector's attachment to and identification with his collected objects. As stereotypes, they arise both from the literary use of collectors and collecting as metaphoric vehicles, and from the journalistic fascination with the eccentric and the extreme. In both fiction and non-fiction, then, the avid or passionate collector emerges as a being somehow unbalanced by an insatiable desire for objects. In this study, though, while many of the collectors studied demonstrate a passion for their pursuit, they are also often playful and project a sense of mission or advocacy. As individuals, they are actually widely diverse in personality; yet the introverted, eccentric collector--a figure drawn more from the imaginations of novelists than from observation of current practice among a wide range of collectors--has become the popular model for collectors in general.
Even in available scholarly works, particularly those of Clifford (1988), Stewart (1984) and Baudrillard (1968) references to personal collecting are based mainly upon the same literary/metaphoric "collector." Such works attempt to uphold and elaborate the marxian notion of fetishization rather than to describe the phenomenon of personal collecting. In addition, they make no reference to the self-cultivating aspects of collecting or materialism, opting instead to apply their discussion of collecting broadly to both institutional and personal practice. Although my study asserts a considerable overlap of collector and curator, it also shows that the personal mission of the collector and the institutional mandate of the museum are fundamentally different.

Scholarly literature is notably deficient in other areas as well. The discussion of, for example, institutional collecting and its role either in nation building or in defining high and low culture generally dismisses personal collecting as a force for defining the self. Such an assumption has not been informed by ethnographic observation or the investigation of a fair sampling of actual collectors, and the writers involved most commonly attempt to define collecting as a tool whose primary purpose is cultural critique. By illustrating that personal collecting fulfils a wide range of needs for the collector, this study affirms the need for further ethnographic exploration of the area.

Further, before beginning this study, I was unaware of the existence of a collecting "life cycle," much less of how strongly the individual collectors' places in that cycle would influence their discourses and dialogues. It has become obvious that research drawing predominantly on collectors at the peak of their collecting would produce a somewhat stilted view of collecting culture.
For most of the thirty collectors in this study, collecting contributes significantly to making life "meaningful" and purposeful, their objects often providing personal metaphors as well as symbols after which they may pattern their lives. Collectors demonstrate clearly that their involvement with collecting and with the objects of their collections is a self-cultivating process. By studying its practitioners directly, I have attempted to expand the understanding of personal collecting, and so to provide a more stable basis for future explication of the cultural and personal meanings of objects.


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