

Collectors and Collecting

Russell W. Belk, University of Utah
Melanie Wallendorf, University of Arizona
John Sherry, Northwestern University
Morris Holbrook, Columbia University
Scott Roberts, University of Mississippi

Abstract

By one estimate, one out of every three Americans collects something (O'Brien 1981). Collecting is a common, intensely involving form of consumption. Yet it has been the subject of almost no prior work in the field of consumer research. This paper defines collecting and presents some initial findings from qualitative research on collectors. Propositions are derived for further investigation concerning the appeal and nature of collecting in contemporary American society.

Acquiring, Possessing, Hoarding, and Collecting

Distinctions are necessary between collecting and several related, but distinct consumption processes, including accumulation, possession, and hoarding. We reject, for example, the suggestion that collections are necessarily intentional (Durouast 1932) or must involve series-completion (Rigby and Rigby 1949), but accept these as characteristics of some important types of collections. Kron (1983) suggests that collectors are more *selective* (and classificatory) than indiscriminate accumulators. Belk (1982), Kron (1983) and Danet and Katriel (1986) all specify that collecting involves acquiring an *interrelated set* of possessions. Durouast (1932) specifies that objects (or ideas) in a collection must be valued for more than their utilitarian or even their aesthetic qualities. While items collected may have utilitarian or aesthetic appeals, they must have additional significance to the collector due to their *importance in contributing to the "set"* of items that comprise the collection. Although both coin collectors and misers accumulate money, the criterion of selectivity suggests that the miser is not a collector because he/she views money as a commodity (Simmel 1971/orig. 1907). We would further suggest that collected items take on a *non-utilitarian "sacred" status*, as discussed below.

Items in a collection, as we construe it, may be *material objects, ideas, or experiences* (e.g., travel, restaurant, or concert experiences, either with or without tangible manifestations of these experiences). For the sake of brevity we will not focus on the possession-related activities of caring for, cataloging, or displaying a collection. These we label the curatorial aspects of collecting and differ from the acquisitive aspects of collecting per se. This distinguishes the collector from the possessor of a collection assembled by someone else (although the acquirer of several such previously assembled collections would be a collector of these collections). A similar distinction might be drawn between two types of non-collectors: the accumulator (who is acquisitive, but lacks selectivity) and the hoarder (who is possessive, but views the items possessed--e.g., food, toilet paper; McKinnon, Smith, and Hunt 1985--primarily as utilitarian commodities rather than extra-utilitarian sacred items). The acquisitive activities of both collectors and hoarders can become *obsessive and compulsive* (Jensen 1963). Indeed at least some degree

of obsession is required to distinguish the hoarder and the collector from the mere possessor of items.

Methods

Our insights about collecting derive from data collected by the Consumer Behavior Odyssey. Since the data collection and analysis methods from this project have been described elsewhere (Wallendorf and Belk 1987, Wallendorf, Belk, Heisley, and O'Guinn forthcoming, Belk forthcoming), they will not be described here other than to say that the Odyssey was a transcontinental interdisciplinary research project undertaken in the summer of 1986 by a team of researchers from 15 universities in the United States and Canada (Belk 1987a; Holbrook 1987b; Kassarijian 1987; Sherry 1987; Wallendorf 1987). The project employed a naturalistic paradigm (Lincoln and Guba 1985) to explore consumption phenomena in accord with Tucker's (1967) seminal call for open-ended investigation of fundamental consumer behaviors.

It should be noted however, 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 based solely on these data. Therefore, the following discussion describes tentative propositions that are warranted based on these data. The preliminary work both contradicts and elaborates upon the existing literature on collecting.

Propositions About Collecting

1. Collections Seldom Begin Purposefully

Contrary to traditional wisdom, our findings and those of Johnston and Beddow (1986) indicate that collections of a particular type of item often begin with an incidental or accidental start. Rigby and Rigby suggest that "Perhaps the average collector chooses his given subject in much the same way that people find friends and mates among those individuals whom chance has included into their small orbit" (Rigby and Rigby 1949, p. 341). They further recognize that collections can and often do begin without conscious intent (p. 398). For many, a gift (Lee 1984, Leerburger 1986) or a seemingly serendipitous discovery of some item (Schwarz 1984) starts a collection. A survey of 215 collectors also found that for many, fascination with a single item that had been acquired led to a quest to acquire similar items (Treas and Brannen 1976). This desire to find replicable material pleasures is consistent with our interpretation of collecting as a materialistic activity.

In a sense, many collections are "discovered" by their creators long after the materials have been gathered. Among our informants, one had amassed a number of paintings, wall hangings and other artifacts representing animals (see Holbrook forthcoming). This "collection" did not register as such in his consciousness, but was rendered apparent upon reflection.

In some instances a collector began with inherited "seed" objects or an intact "starter" collection that

primed the adoption of a collector role. For instance one informant had received such a "starter" set of Christmas plates.

Gifts may act as a seed around which collections accrete. One informant, nicknamed "Bunny," received rabbit replicas as gifts from her friends, and purchased others for herself. Another informant traced his collecting behavior, which developed into a museum and gift shop, to a wedding gift given to him by a relative. Other informants reported receiving "collectibles" as gifts and subsequently embarking on quests to complete the collection.

The origins of hoards, as distinct from collections, were quite different. They existed less as discretely bounded, thematically unified wholes than as caches or eclectic assortments, and typically arose from accumulation by consumers who experienced traumatic deprivations, such as the loss of family networks or the weathering of the Great Depression. In some cases, these hoards were shared with others under the rubric of "good neighborliness." One elderly informant had assembled several garages full of assorted utilitarian objects such as hardware, furniture and the like, which he dispensed to neighbors. Collectors are also unlikely to be as altruistic.

2. Addiction and Compulsive Aspects Pervade Collecting

Collecting is often likened by the collector, and perhaps more frequently by his or her family and friends, to an addiction, while search behavior is frequently described as both an obsession and a compulsion. Both our interviews and others' examinations of collecting have suggested that collecting is addictive (e.g., Kron 1983, Johnston and Beddow 1986, Danet and Katriel 1986, Rigby and Rigby 1949, Olmsted 1987, Meyer 1973, Brady 1975, Holbrook 1987a, Brough 1963). Despite their incidental start, many collections are seen as becoming an addictive activity in which adding items to the collection constitutes a "fix". 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 of inadequacy (Delattre 1986). While it might be debated whether avid collectors can be considered to be clinically addicted, the fact that collectors themselves admit to being addicted is telling, for, as described by Peele (1985), addiction is by no means a positive condition. He suggests that insecurity prompts the addicted individual to seek reassurance through a repeated ritualized activity. While feelings of well-being may increase as a result, the addict's other interests narrow until they focus solely on the external object of the addiction. The fact that many collectors readily admit to being addicted indicates the power of the attraction or of the social sanction bestowed upon compulsive activity when it is legitimized with the label "collecting". Association with other compulsive collectors further supports this feeling of positive addiction (Glasser 1976).

The altered states of consciousness produced through the collector's search and acquisition are commonly described as mood swings resembling the euphoria and depression induced by chemicals. Collectors frequently experience a holistic, autotelic sensation described as "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). The search process is clearly a thrill-seeking experience for many collectors, which may engender distress as well as eustress. Collectors often report feeling both a craving

and a loss of control with respect to their acquisition habits, and occasionally experience negative consequences in other spheres of their personal and social activity as a result of their chronic collecting. The coincidence of collecting and chemical dependency, or the incidence of symptom substitution or displacement (from chemicals to collectibles) is sufficiently high as to warrant extended investigation. While many collectors belong to voluntary associations connected with their particular pattern (e.g., the Midwest Association of License Plate Collectors), many also lament the lack of self-help groups designed to arrest compulsive collecting. Some collectors forestall completing collections for fear of the withdrawal symptoms. As might be expected, "dual or poly dependencies" commonly occur, with a collector diversifying into a number of collectibles. So also is intergenerational transfer of collecting (although perhaps not of the same collectible) a commonplace occurrence.

One informant in particular embodied the interplay of stresses of compulsive collecting. A recovering polydrug abuser, he described his current collecting behavior as an addiction. He has accumulated a large collection of Mickey Mouse memorabilia, and often obtained his "Mickey fix" (an emic term) in lieu of paying rent or meeting other financial obligations. The thrill of collecting and displaying these objects eventually threatened his well being, so he stopped collecting "cold turkey" (again an emic term).

3. Collection Legitimizes Acquisitiveness as Art or Science

For the collector (and perhaps the hoarder to a lesser degree), the recognition of the collection by others as being "worthwhile" legitimizes what is otherwise seen as abnormal acquisitiveness. This can give the collector not only a sense of purpose (e.g., Goldberg and Lewis 1978), but a sense of *noble* purpose in supposedly generating knowledge, preserving fragile art, or providing those who see it with a richer sense of history. Having one's collection accepted into a museum collection or in some instances even having it *become* a museum is the ultimate in legitimization of the activity (e.g., Hughes 1987, Pollay 1987). Having items *like* those that one collects appear in a museum is a less direct means of legitimizing one's collecting activities (Meyer 1979).

The distinction between art and science in collecting seems to appear in the two (pure) types of collectors detected by Danet and Katriel (1986). Their "Type A" collector employs affective criteria to choose items for the collection. Such collectors try to improve their collections, but have no sense of a series needing completion. The "Type B" collector uses cognitive criteria to choose items that add to a series and help improve their knowledge rather than the beauty of the collection. We agree that these two types, while sometimes mixed, represent the two distinct approaches of art and science as ways of legitimizing a collection (Belk 1986). In either case, a halo effect of sorts occurs, such that search and acquisition are ennobled through association with the collection itself. In turn, the effort invested in search and acquisition further legitimizes the collection. This effort raises these activities in the eyes of the collector to the level of art, if not science. Collecting is not mere stockpiling or warehousing, mere acquisition, or sheer accumulation. Collectors exhibit a variant of the "commercial libido" that Malinowski

attributed to Zapotec merchants (Malinowski and Fuente 1982). The ardor and passion driving search behavior is nurtured by a sense of purpose and worth.

4. Profane to Sacred Conversions Occur When an Item Enters a Collection

This legitimization and sanctioning of acquisitiveness is related to another phenomenon that occurs in collecting—the transformation of ordinary profane commodities into sacred icons. The terms sacred and profane are not used here in a vernacular religious sense. Instead profane is taken to mean mundane, ordinary, and common, while sacred is taken to be extraordinary, special, and capable of generating reverence (see Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1987). Collectors "singularize" (Kopytoff 1986) items enshrined in collections when they remove an item from the secular, profane, undifferentiated realm of the commodity, and ritually transform it into a personally and socially significant object. The sacralized item becomes a vehicle of transcendent experience which exceeds its utilitarian and aesthetic endowment.

Sacred conversions are accomplished in a number of ways. The sheer bringing together of items under the rubric of "collection" is the most basic transformation. By metonymic association, the sacrality of each item is enhanced. The container (whether it be envelope, box, or room) chosen to house the collection defines a sacred space. Conventions for handling the collection and schedules for interacting with it provide the ritual grounding for maintaining its sacredness. As Kopytoff (1986) notes, the function of the collection in sacralizing formerly ordinary objects is aided by these objects being removed from the sphere of commodity exchange and also from their ordinary utilitarian roles. Thus collected automobiles or furniture must be sufficiently old that they are not merely seen as "used" rather than rare antiques. Informants who were collectors of automobiles, if they drove these cars at all, drove them sparingly and for special occasions because they were regarded as primarily non-utilitarian icons. Coins that are no longer circulated gain some rarity by this status, but also make it clear that they lack utilitarian properties. Hoarding items merely for their investment value is not collecting because it invokes a utilitarian reason for the accumulation.

Another means of sacralizing a collectible object is by its having been "contaminated" (in a positive sense) by contact with prominent persons. One antique collecting informant treasured a music box that had once belonged to Winston Churchill. Other objects were seen by their collectors as contaminated with sacredness by connection to actors or to the collector's ancestors. An item can also gain sacred significance by having been a part of a famous collector's collection. Thus collectors may refer to a Walferdin Boucher, a Weil-Picard Fragonard, or a Gangnat Renoir (Rheims 1961). For this reason, an auction house such as Sotheby Parke Bernet or Christie's carefully explains the price-inflating provenance of an item for sale when it has a famous history. This contamination of property is also why collections are devalued and desacralized by the discovery of a forged work (Belk 1987c). If the utilitarian or aesthetic qualities of the item were paramount, the forgery would not matter. But because a collection depends instead upon other qualities for its sacredness, the forgery loses its value for the collection upon

discovery (unless it enters a new type of collection where it is esteemed for its curiosity value).

Informants provided the strongest evidence of the sacredness of their collectibles when asked about the salability of the items. Except to upgrade, there was no consideration of this possibility. The Mickey Mouse collector, an elephant figure collector, and an antique bronze collector all had businesses in their areas of specialization. Nevertheless, once an item entered their private collections, it would never be considered saleable. They said this would be unthinkable and would clearly be "wrong".

5. Collections Serve as Extensions of Self

Our self definition is often highly dependent upon our possessions (Belk 1987b). The collection is especially implicated in the extended self because it is often visible and undeniably represents the collector's judgments and taste (Stewart 1984). In addition, the time and effort spent in assembling a collection means that the collector has literally put a part of self into the collection. Sometimes collections involve a particular theme that is symbolic of one's occupation, family heritage, or appearance (e.g., Fusco 1984, Lee 1984). Data from which this proposition is drawn include a grocery store owner's collection of antique consumer product packages, an advertising historian's collection of advertising artifacts, an amateur musician's collection of the recordings of musicians he admires, an engineer's collection of pocketwatches, and even the efforts of our research team in spending the summer travelling across country to amass our collection of data.

Because collections are seen as extensions of self, to lose one's collection is to experience a diminished sense of self. Because of this connection to self definition, collections have been seen as aiding in children's development (e.g., Witty 1931, Tooley 1978). In the sense that nations are also collectors of art and artifacts, concern with loss of national pride results in efforts to repatriate such objects when they are in the hands of other nations and to prevent further loss of national heritage in this way (Venables 1984). The deep sense of loss experienced when a collection is accidentally destroyed was highlighted by the destruction of one informant's lifelong record album collection in a flood. He too, felt destroyed by the flood, as if it had taken a part of him.

The notion that collections represent one's extended self accounts for many of the self-enhancing motives given for collecting, such as seeking power, knowledge, reminders of one's childhood, prestige, mastery, and control. Data on a wealthy female informant's collection of monogrammed silver spoons inherited from her husband's mother indicates that it served as a mnemonic device conveying the importance of family name (through the monogram), wealth, and social position. Several informants who saw themselves as cosmopolitan collected intangible travel experiences which some tangibilized with collections of t-shirts or glassware from each place visited.

Collections are used not only to express aspects of one's direct experiences; they are also used to express fantasies about the self. This proposition is based on data illustrated by a baseball card collector (himself a middle aged man) who thinks middle aged men collect baseball cards "to keep alive their fantasies of being ball players." Since these fantasy aspects of the self aren't lived on an everyday basis, they are experienced through

the collection, as was true for a fire buff (he enjoys watching fires and firefighting) who collects fire department items. The collector of Mickey Mouse items collects them because he is "an overgrown kid." The housewife nicknamed Bunny collects bunny replicas partly because she thinks her teeth make her look like a bunny and partly because, as she half-jokingly mused, people think she looks like a "Playboy" bunny.

Other collectors expressed even grander fantasies which are poignant in their underlying expression of self-doubt. The collector of elephant replicas, a man fond of showmanship, fantasized about adding a live elephant to the collection to attract the publicity he craves. Similarly, an overweight 8 year old boy with a prominent scar indicated that he collects swords in order to "make me equal to the other kids" when they play duel with each other. A 6 year old girl entered in a beauty pageant wanted to collect pins from pageants to put on her sash because they would make her feel pretty.

Organized groups of collectors, such as the networks of elephant replica and Mickey Mouse collectors, support their mutual identity not only by trading with each other, but also delighting in showing their new acquisitions to each other. Only in such groups does a collector find knowledgeable others with sufficient understanding to feel appreciative and envious of the collector's acquisitions.

Just as a personal collection serves to shape the self-definition of a collector, so do museum collections serve to define the identity of a region or historical period. As with personal collections, a part of this identity is grounded in reality, and a part in fantasy and myth. This extension of the proposition was derived from instances like a museum of pioneer farm life in the midwest which attempted to create a regional identity by displaying such household items as Limoges china, ornate parlor tables, pianos, and sideboards, china cupboards with leaded glass fronts, and lace dresses. Such items may have been found in the town banker's house, but are certainly not representative of the area lifestyle at the turn of the century. Yet, through the collection, a nostalgic image of life is constructed as the identity of the region's past.

6. Collections Tend Toward Specialization

While collections may begin broadly, there has been a trend toward specialization in the West since the eighteenth century (Defert 1982, von Holst 1967, Wittlin 1970, Impey and Macgregor 1985, Praz 1964, Hodgen 1964). This has helped the collector define a more manageable collecting task and narrow the competition so one's chances of being unique are improved (Rochberg-Halton 1986).

One informant was proud that she had all of the "retired" (no longer in production) Precious Moments figurines, but would not consider purchasing any of the current figurines. Such increasing specialization was commonly mentioned, as with the elephant replica collector. He indicated that at that time he was seeking only the rare advertising pieces; he had recently purchased an entire collection of 500 elephant replicas in order to obtain the 20 in which he was interested. A jazz collector said he likes the music of only about 20 musicians, and has mainly their albums. The collector of Mickey Mouse items focused only on replicas produced during a certain time period. He indicated that he knows some collectors who specialize only in either authorized or non-authorized Disney toys. Such specialization

produces expert consumers with greater knowledge than sellers, an unusual market phenomenon. It is perhaps appropriate to note that the researchers, as data collectors, evinced a similar tendency. As emergent design unfolds, the specification of appropriate sampling units becomes more focused in order to challenge developing ideas.

7. Post-Mortem Distribution Problems are Significant to Collectors and Their Families

If collections are extensions of self, keeping one's collection intact may be a way to gain a sort of immortality (Rigby and Rigby 1949). Having lived to such a degree through the collection (e.g. definition of self, fulfillment of fantasy, development of a sense of mastery, construction of meaning and purpose in life), the collector's desire for immortality through the collection is not surprising. Another reason that collectors are concerned with the fate of their collection involves its perceived sacred status. They fear that it might fall into the hands of someone who would profane it by failing to appreciate it and care for it properly (Rheims 1961, Johnston and Beddow 1986, von Holst 1967). Some collectors have disinherited their children, finding them to be unworthy of their collections (Cabanne 1961).

In the data there is a tendency with age for both the collector and his or her family to begin to be concerned with post-mortem disposition. However, as with death, it is difficult for them to talk with each other about these concerns. Cultivating an heir is one solution, but quite often other family members are not interested (Olmsted 1987). Where a family member has some interest, there may be a substantial "education" that must be imparted so the inheritor can fully appreciate the meaning of items in the collection (McCracken 1987). Again, the analysis turns to the collector of elephant replicas who said he plans to leave the entire collection to his granddaughter, although she was only a year old. He has already given her several elephant toys (he says he is making a point of it) as well as an elephant print dress. He will not leave the collection to his daughter or to his wife because he doesn't think they would continue it. He wants to believe that the collection is historically important and that people will someday appreciate what he has accomplished. This type of inheritance pattern requires further research to determine its structure and consequences.

In contrast, a 79-year-old man who had accumulated three garages of functional materials to share with neighbors (properly a hoard rather than a collection) indicated that his children wanted him to get rid of all of it. He resisted until he was put in the position of serving as the executor of an even older neighbor's estate. When we visited him in follow-up interviews, he had in fact begun clearing things out of the garages. Although the strategies differ, both informants are making some efforts to resolve the dilemma posed by their life-long pattern of acquisitiveness.

8. There is a Simultaneous Desire for and Fear of Completing a Collection

The desire to complete a collection has been cited as a feature that distinguishes human collecting from more innate hoarding tendencies in certain animal species (Rowed 1920). Desire for completing a collection has also been taken as evidence of

compulsiveness among collectors (Wiseman 1974). Given notions of extended self, what is being completed is really the collector (see Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982), at least to the "Type B" collectors (Danet and Katriel 1986). At the same time there seems to be a paradoxical fear of completing a collection (e.g., Dannefer 1980, Olmsted 1987). For if one is a collector and there is nothing left to collect, who is one then? This fear also emphasizes the commonly heard justification that the fun is in the hunt and acquisition rather than in the possession of a collection. Only continual acquisition reinforces the sense of mastery and prowess. A common strategy to avoid completion is to redefine or add new collecting interests as completion nears. A different sort of problem occurs when financial means, time, or space prohibit enlarging one's collection, as with car collecting for those with moderate means. Two strategies are possible. One is to improve one's collection continually, either by modifying the items owned or by trading-up. The other strategy is to develop a "serial collection" in which the items in the collection are owned sequentially rather than simultaneously.

The desire for closure is seen in a baseball card collector who wanted to have one card for each major league player in a particular year, and a man who had travelled to all but one continent and would like to go to Antarctica just to complete the set. At the same time the fear of completion is shown in such strategies as developing higher standards as a way of insuring that the collection is never complete. A collector of baseball cards can try to trade up to have a collection that is in "mint" condition. Commercial sources often aid in expanding even highly specialized categories. Just as new Precious Moments figurines are constantly introduced into the marketplace, previous models are constantly removed from production, thereby increasing the set of "retired" figurines that a collector can seek. Similarly, there are now several companies that issue series of baseball cards, so a collector can start a second company's series if one nears completion. And collectors also expand to prevent completion by beginning to collect peripheral items. A jazz record collector also collects magazines about jazz. An antique collector with a house filled with furniture said she was now looking for accessories.

Conclusion

Because no comprehensive integrated model of collecting exists in the social science literature, we have advanced a number of propositions toward such an end. Our data suggest that collections may be fruitfully classified on at least three dimensions or distinctions: conscious/unconscious, vertical/horizontal, and structured/unstructured. We shall discuss each of these distinctions briefly, as an illustration of the utility of thick description to effective model building. A deep understanding of collecting, based on additional field data and etic constructs is forged in a subsequent treatment.

The *conscious/unconscious* dimension refers to the extent to which a recurrent theme is intentional, purposive, recognized, and/or formally instituted as opposed to unintended, haphazard, below the level of awareness, and/or informally organized. Collections high or low on all four of these attributes lie at the extremes of this dimension; mixed cases fall toward the middle range. A prototypical example is the collection of advertising artifacts which was found to be a goal-

oriented, organized activity that intentionally provides a clearly recognized focus for the collector's life's work and hobbies to the point where he has officially instituted an archive and designated himself as its curator. By contrast, careful observation and photographic documentation uncovered an unconscious theme in another informant's collection of art objects in which a recurring animal motif lay below the level of conscious awareness (see Holbrook forthcoming).

The *vertical/horizontal* dimension reflects the degree to which a collection is housed in one centrally located array (often literally "vertical" in its position on the wall or on shelves) as opposed to being spread or scattered throughout a space (so that visiting the entire collection requires "horizontal" movement). An illustrative example from the data is a collection of figurines, statuettes, and small porcelain objects that occupied two glass-enclosed display cases on both sides of the fireplace of one informant's living room; in a sense, if an object were removed from these vertical arrays, it would no longer belong to the collection. In vivid contrast, another informant's vast collection of hearts, ducks, geese, apples, and strawberries has expanded horizontally throughout her house; these objects pervade her space and appear in the most unsuspected places, which turned our photographic exploration of her home into a hunting expedition for hearts and geese.

Finally, the *structured/unstructured* dimension relates to how strongly the collection evinces aspects of order, balance, and symmetry as opposed to entropy, collative properties, and disarray. A structured collection is illustrated by a collection of silver spoons that hangs in a well-ordered, carefully balanced, highly symmetric display in an informant's dining room. Indeed, its structured regularity may reflect a tendency on her part toward the pursuit of symmetry whose visual manifestations reach their apotheosis in the meticulously matching patterns of the bedspreads, wallpapers, and curtains in her newly constructed master bedroom and recently redecorated guestroom. At the other extreme, another family's collection of stuffed animals lies around the house with no particular indication of organization or planning. Similar evidence of the ability to tolerate or even to prefer asymmetric arrangements appears in the flawed pattern of knobs on this family's kitchen cabinets, in the violated gestalt or negative synergy that characterizes one corner of the master bedroom, and in the comparatively lopsided positioning of the objects in and around the master bed. This latter arrangement contrasts vividly with the exaggerated symmetry of the master bedrooms in the other houses we visited in the same town.

Combining the conscious/unconscious, vertical/horizontal, and structured/unstructured dimensions into one three-dimensional space and treating each as a simple dichotomy or trichotomy produces an eight- or twenty-seven-celled typology of collections that sets forth the conceptual possibilities in this particular classification scheme. Empirically, some combinations appear more likely than others; in other words, in actual fact, the dimensions or distinctions are related. Conscious-vertical-structured and unconscious-horizontal-unstructured collections appear more probable than others, as in the spoon and Hummel figure collections as contrasted with the animal artwork and stuffed animal collections. These two types were most evident in the household collections documented by Ruesch and Kees

(1956). We also expect that the former is more related to Danet and Katriel's (1986) Type B collector, while the later should be more typical of Type A collectors. However, other combinations also occur and, conceptually, still others are possible. The hearts and geese were conscious-horizontal-unstructured; a pesticide collection was unconscious-vertical-semistructured (Holbrook: forthcoming).

These dimensions, as well as a number of other structural and processual features, are essential to capturing the complexity of collecting behavior. As our naturalistic inquiry into collecting proceeds, these eight propositions will be further refined or recast, and the phenomenon more thoroughly interpreted through the prism of consumer research.

[DUE TO SPACE CONSTRAINTS, REFERENCES ARE OMITTED. THEY MAY BE OBTAINED FROM RUSSELL BELK, GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF UTAH, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84112]

Copyright of Advances in Consumer Research is the property of Association for Consumer Research. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.