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Publication status: This preprint has been published elsewhere.
DOI of the published preprint: https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120250065x

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https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120250065x

Submitted on: 2026-03-19
Posted on: 2026-03-19 (version 1)
(YYYY-MM-DD)

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Dossier: Identities in the Global South

Identities and identifications in the memories of Brazilian collectors

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Abstract
The aim of this article is to understand what it means to be a collector and how identities and identifications with this activity are constructed based on the memories of Brazilian collectors. Our theoretical framework deals with the alignment between identity, identification, and memories as constituents of being a collector, as well as the collector's practice. We conducted a qualitative study based on the narratives of 29 Brazilian collectors. The data, derived from semi-structured interviews, were triangulated with field notes, non-participant observation, and analyzed through Narrative Analysis. The data demonstrate that the construction of the category "collector" is fundamentally relational and based on the triad of "collector subject," "collected object," and "the other who sees them." We therefore consider that the self-identity perception is never an individual and isolated production in time/space, but interacts with different collective constructions about who the subject collecting is. Finally, we contribute to Organizational Studies by proposing perspectives on lifestyles not evidenced in mainstream Management, as well as the possibility of resignifying being a collector and the dynamic nature of memory, identities, and identifications.
Keywords: identities, identifications, collecting, stories, memories.

Identidades e identificações nas memórias de colecionadores brasileiros
Resumo
O objetivo deste artigo é compreender o que é ser colecionador e como são construídas as identidades e identificações com essa atividade a partir das memórias de colecionadores brasileiros. Partimos de um referencial teórico que trata do alinhamento

Article submitted on April 18, 2025 and accepted for publication on January 24, 2026.
[Original version]
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395120250065x

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entre identidade, identificação e memórias enquanto constituintes do ser colecionador, assim como da prática colecionista para realizarmos um estudo qualitativo a partir das narrativas de 29 colecionadores brasileiros. Os dados, oriundos de entrevistas semiestruturadas, foram triangulados com nossas anotações de caderno de campo, com a observação não-participante e foram analisados a partir da Análise de Narrativas. Os dados demonstram que a construção da categoria "colecionador" é fundamentalmente relacional e pautada na tríade "sujeito colecionador", "objeto colecionado" e "o outro que os vê". Consideramos, portanto, que a percepção identitária de si nunca é uma produção individual e isolada no tempo/espaço, mas interage com diferentes construções coletivas sobre quem é o sujeito que coleciona. Por fim, contribuímos para os Estudos Organizacionais ao propormos olhares para modos de vida não evidenciados no *mainstream* da Administração, assim como, a possibilidade de ressignificação do ser colecionador e do caráter dinâmico da memória, das identidades e das identificações.
Palavras-chave: identidades, identificações, colecionismo, histórias, memórias.

Identidades e identificaciones en las memorias de coleccionistas brasileños

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es comprender qué significa ser coleccionista y cómo se construyen las identidades e identificaciones con esta actividad a partir de las memorias de coleccionistas brasileños. Partimos de un marco teórico que aborda la alineación entre identidad, identificación y memorias como constituyentes del ser coleccionista, así como de la práctica coleccionista, para realizar un estudio cualitativo basado en las narrativas de 29 coleccionistas brasileños. Los datos, obtenidos de entrevistas semiestructuradas, fueron triangulados con nuestras anotaciones de cuaderno de campo, con observación no participante, y se analizaron mediante el Análisis de Narrativas. Los resultados demuestran que la construcción de la categoría "coleccionista" es fundamentalmente relacional y se basa en la tríada "sujeto coleccionista", "objeto coleccionado" y "el otro que los observa". Consideramos, por tanto, que la percepción identitaria de sí mismo nunca es una producción individual y aislada en el tiempo/espacio, sino que interactúa con diferentes construcciones colectivas sobre quién es el sujeto que colecciona. Finalmente, contribuimos a los Estudios Organizacionales al proponer miradas hacia modos de vida no evidenciados en el *mainstream* de la Administración, así como la posibilidad de resignificar el ser coleccionista y el carácter dinámico de la memoria, las identidades y las identificaciones.
Palabras clave: identidades, identificaciones, coleccionismo, historias, memorias.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to understand what it means to be a collector and how identities and identifications with the collecting activity are constructed based on the memories of Brazilian collectors. This work stems from a larger research project aimed at understanding the histories and memories of Brazilian collectors' management, based on the assumption that the act of collecting objects not only creates management challenges in terms of time and space but also shares in the construction of identities and identifications of individuals within the same temporal space.

We investigate the collecting phenomenon under Certeau (1984) influence on everyday organization: collecting renders visible forms of organizing beyond formal settings, such as acquisition, classification, storage, display, exchange and care. These practical tasks involve time-space management, resource allocation and social relations, thereby

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constituting modes of organizing. We aim to contribute to the debate by relating identification processes to a triad of subject-object-others: who collectors take themselves to be (and are taken to be), the material properties and trajectories of the collected objects, and the audiences and interlocutors who recognise, value or contest those identity claims. In addition, collecting offers a memory-rich terrain in which pasts are curated, silenced or re-signified in the present, linking identity, memory and practice. Finally, Brazilian collectors form a heterogeneous and under-studied population that extends organizational studies beyond mainstream contexts and illuminates how people build personal archives, engage with markets and form communities.

Against this backdrop, we move from the organizing specificities of collecting to the broader premise that lives and identities are socially embedded rather than self-contained. If we were to take an individual as an isolated entity and follow their steps throughout life, we would quickly realize that human trajectories are not limited to themselves (Capitão & Heloani, 2007). In this sense, no person exists in isolation from others, as there are interrelations with people around us at some level. This relationship with other human beings is imposed on us from birth, as the way we live can be understood as an organized social life (Carrieri, 2023; Saraiva, 2023).

Aguiar and Carrieri (2016) and Correia et al. (2024) discuss essentialist views that treat identity as fixed and immutable, a debate that falls outside the scope of this article. However, we immediately present that we consider identities, in the plural, as developed through a historical, social, and cultural process and, therefore, as fluid and dynamic.

We understand identities to be constructions formed within a web of relations in the world, rarely reducible to fixed categories. In this sense, we align with Hall (2022) perspective, which views the creation of cultural identities as a process of forcibly suppressing difference. The formation of identities in the West occurs through violence and exclusion, mechanisms that seek to impose cultural hegemony over colonized cultures (Hall, 2022). For this reason, we are careful not to generalize the notion of the "Global South" or to create stereotypical portrayals of identification processes grounded in lived experiences from the Global South. Instead, we contend that speaking about identities requires an understanding of the narrative threads mobilized by subjects themselves as they seek to make sense of their experiences in the world.

Authors such as Vogt and Lourenço (2017), and Correia et al. (2018) argue that identities can be characterized as dialogical processes expressed through identifications and differentiations, being multiple, dynamic, and capable of influencing social relations. Hence, Vuuren et al. (2012) previously affirmed that identities are mutable, constantly evaluated based on the era in which one lives and the social groups with which individuals interact, and thus are developed through social processes.

Human development is also shaped by the groups with which an individual interacts; in other words, it is through otherness that a person becomes humanized (Faria et al., 2023). Therefore, as previously presented by Zimmerman (1993) and Capitão and Heloani (2007), groups play fundamental roles in the formation of individual identities and can be considered as foundational cells. These groups become means through which individuals acquire needs, values, behaviors, and internalize norms, in a continuous dialectical process capable of constantly metabolizing intersubjectivities that transform into sociocultural elements, constructing both individual and group identities.

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Following Cabana and Ichikawa (2017), identification depends on relationships and their modes of enactment. In practice, this means the situated ways collectors handle, classify and interpret objects - and the interactions these practices sustain - actively reconfigure who they take themselves (and are taken) to be. Thus, by accessing the memories of these individuals, we gain access to their experiences, highlighting their perceptions and the individual feelings connected to the events (Correia et al., 2020).

This is where memory matters. By memory we refer to a social phenomenon that comprises selective and situated practice of remembering, constituted in and through interactions and shared frameworks of meaning rather than a mere repository of facts (Alberti, 2012; Halbwachs, 1990; Pollak, 1992). As such, memories are contingent, contested and oriented by present concerns - what is recalled, silenced or re-signified reflects ongoing negotiations of identity and belonging (Bosi, 2015; Correia et al., 2024; Pollak, 1992). Attending to memory in this way foregrounds temporality and situatedness, which, in turn, anchor how identities are composed and recomposed in everyday practice.

Situated in a specific time-space, groups reproduce distinct ways of being and existing, which depending on their formation, may be more susceptible to changes over time or not (Capitão & Heloani, 2007). The authors argue that if we were to study each group in its specificity, this process would be unfinished. However, even if we take a single group, completing the study would render that group static, creating a social contradiction described by the continuous dialectic in the previous paragraph. In our study, we treat collecting, collector groups, their identities, and identifications as fluid and dynamic reference points (Correia et al., 2020; Woodward, 2009), which moreover, cannot be generalized or unified.

In the collecting context, Arantes (2010) explores the potential of collections as systems of social and symbolic exchange between different social groups, asserting that the collection is influenced and transformed by a diversity of cultural and social practices, encompassing meetings, information exchange, historical contextualization of life, acquisition and preservation of objects, as well as the formation and expression of identity. For the author, the act of collecting is a process of identity construction, a celebration of the self through the collection and the role of preserving memory.

Woodward (2007) and Oliveira (2017) assert that objects and collections maintain their relevance in people's lives, influencing the construction of their personal identities as they reflect their thoughts and opinions. Melo (2018) adds that collections aid in the process of constructing identities and purposes through a process in which the object is not only affected by the collector but also affects them.

Practically, reflecting on the real world should not be limited to a cause-effect relationship or be accompanied by a beginning, middle, and end, but rather by multiple means, multiple beginnings, and some ends that originate other means, and simultaneously, contemplate new beginnings that are also ends at the same time. The investigative process of collecting, in Benjamin (2009) view, should be accompanied by the understanding of a specific time and space, contributing to our perspective of dialogical, everyday management, and above all, incomplete. Collections, as incomplete as they are (Fontdevila, 2017), help us understand management itself in its incompleteness: a circle that does not close and is not completed through mainstream studies, even if there is

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insistence on pointing out that phenomena can be studied within a delimited order of beginning, middle, and end.

This work is justified in seeking to broaden the discussions on the plurality of identities and identifications of being a collector in the context of management. Being a collector can be understood in the relationship between individual and society and individual and object. Collecting, as a "work in process" (Cordova, 2017), demands constant management of everyday objects, which, when acquired, become part of individuals' identities and the ways they relate to society. Collectors are distinctive for sustaining long-term, affective relationships with objects that re-order space, time and social ties, making visible organising practices often overlooked in mainstream management theory. Studying this group therefore offers a privileged lens on how identity, memory and everyday organising are co-produced.

This article is divided into six parts, including this introduction. In the second part, we develop reference points on identities, identifications, and memories when associated with them. Next, we review considerations about collecting. Following that, we present the methodological course of the research. In the fifth part, we advance in the analysis and discussions on the identities and identifications of collectors. Finally, we provide some reflections that conclude our work.

IDENTITIES, IDENTIFICATIONS, AND MEMORIAL DISCOURSES

We start from constructivist perspectives that attest to the procedural, dynamic, and non-deterministic nature of identities (Figueredo & Cavazotte, 2023; Menezes, 2014; Silva & Santos, 2023; Villar et al., 2020). Rather than being an inherent human essence, identities should be considered as the result of historical, social, and cultural processes. In other words, the formation of identities occurs in the relationships between the "self" and society. In this sense, notions of identities and identifications are central to the constitution of the subject in the face of a series of elements (both material and symbolic) that they encounter daily. Identifying with something or someone is part of a broader process of social recognition, through which we are rewarded (and/or sanctioned) based on the signs inscribed on our bodies. Thus, identification involves being compelled to align with elements of a symbolic order that precedes us but which constitutes the pathways for recognizing the subject (Souza, 2017).

Grimell (2023) discusses the possibility of understanding identities through the narrative of "who I am," noting that this can encompass a multitude of identities such as father, mother, collector, spouse, among others. In this context, considering the "self" involves seeing the person as a host of narrative identity claims, and consequently, the self remains present throughout the narrative of identities, which may contrast with each other. According to the author, this conception facilitates understanding identities from an empirical and methodological standpoint.

Identities are permeated by unconscious dimensions but also intersubjective ones, meaning there are socially shared meanings individually appropriated through primary and secondary socialization processes (Berger & Luckmann, 2002). Therefore, it is important to remember that identities are never entirely authentic or instrumental productions (Souza & Carrieri, 2012), as subjects negotiate with culturally circulating symbolic elements. In this regard, Faria et al. (2023) assert that understanding the

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phenomenon of socialization is crucial for identity formation since cultural, economic traits, and traditions of the society in which individuals are embedded are assimilated and reproduced uncritically.

Souza and Carrieri (2012) emphasize that identities are continuous productions, not merely descriptive elements. Additionally, the processes of identity construction produce social and psychological effects that shape the conception of oneself and life projects (Menezes, 2014). Cabana and Ichikawa (2017) associate identities with discursive and image theories of a fragmented and transient nature, connected to everyday life, power relations, history, and memory. Hence, we do not assume them as fixed labels for the subject but as notions of belonging that are rigid, from which the conditions for action are delineated, either to reinforce or to break with social identities (Correia et al., 2018).

According to Zhong et al. (2023), identity development also encompasses a person's expectations regarding a specific activity. These expectations are based on goals, beliefs, and standards, so that when certain things happen, the person's evaluation of the event and the people involved determines their emotional response and, consequently, their attribution to their own identity. Through this process, identity is continuously developed through activities.

When addressing the procedural dimension of identities, we delve into what is understood as identifications. Silva and Santos (2023, p. 8) associate this with the idea of affinity, attraction, and "recognizing oneself." Identifying with a person, group, or object involves the capacity for intimate connection, whereby the "self" can assume the reality of the "other" as its own (Silva & Santos, 2023, p. 8). Dewi and Fajri (2023) explain that individuals' ability to see themselves can influence the identity they are negotiating. To avoid essentialist traditions of the concept of identification, we turn to sociological views that address the phenomenon from a multiple perspective. Thus, it is necessary to understand that identities are constituted within the multiple possibilities of relationships between the self and the other.

This dynamic of identification processes is embedded in networks of social inclusion and exclusion (Menezes, 2014), as identities establish what one is and, concomitantly, what one is not. As previously noted by Souza and Carrieri (2012), even for constructionist and interpretivist views, it is essential to recognize that identity belonging is not merely a form of classification but a social practice (Souza & Carrieri, 2012) responsible for assigning unequal positions to certain subjects. Thus, identities are not naively understood as individual markers but as ways of relating in the world that mobilize the subject in their historical becoming. In other words, identities are both products and producers of the subject's materiality, continuous creation, and recreation immersed in symbolic and discursive systems (Correia et al., 2020; Monteiro et al., 2017), as are memories, as previously indicated by Pollak (1992) and later developed by Bosi (2015) and Bom Meihy and Seawright (2020).

For Pollak (1992, p. 5), "memory is a constituent element of the feeling of identity, both individual and collective, as it is also an extremely important factor in the sense of continuity and coherence of a person or a group in their self-reconstruction." Halbwachs (1990) and Alberti (2012) argue that memories should be understood and analyzed as a collective and social phenomenon, constructed collectively and subject to constant fluctuations, transformations, and changes. In other words, individuals' memories do not

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arise from chance but from social interactions, encompassing collective agencies (Araújo & Santos, 2007).

In the memorialistic conception, it is essential to delineate that recalling the past is not the result of a linear and causal relationship but of a diversity of perspectives, experiences, social contacts, tensions, conflicts, disputes, affinities, imitations, and conformities with social groups. Therefore, these authors understand that the reconstruction of the past through memories is not a static, natural, and involuntary process, just as the identity construction process is not.

Memory is a social and selective construction. "What individual memory records, represses, excludes, remembers, is evidently the result of a true organizational work" (Pollak, 1992, p. 5). Furthermore, by accessing memories and, consequently, individual experiences and feelings regarding events, we highlight the subjects in the face of a dominant history and identify the different objectives imprinted in the act of remembering in each era (Bosi, 2015).

For Correia et al. (2020), memories involving identities work with a past that comes to the present and meets the interests of this time. Therefore, the past will never be remembered in the same way, as it is possible to silence, retell, and alter stories. This fluidity makes working with memories important, as it allows the re-signification of time, something beyond the reach of documents and grand narratives, affirming and reaffirming memories as crucial sources for knowledge construction.

COLLECTING, COLLECTIONS, AND COLLECTORS

As Benjamin (2009) points out, a fundamental aspect of collecting consists of understanding objects beyond their functionalities; it lies in the subversive capacity to give them meaning and to relate to them. Thus, Almeida (2012) adds, the collector is the one who can invent their collection beyond mere accumulation of objects. For Cravo (2017, p. 3), collecting can be seen as a practice of selecting, maintaining, and grouping objects of subjective value, that is, an emotional factor transcending commercial value or utility. In this way, the acquisition of objects involves passionate engagement, that is, acquiring objects that “move you”. Oliveira (2017) show that objects arise from events and thus shift the act of collecting to one of constant creation of collections (Fontdevila, 2017), like an artist preserving temporal records. For Rosa (2020), collecting should not be limited to quantity, authorship, or market values but should highlight the social role of the collector.

According to Dohmann (2017), collecting can be understood as a practice with complex and creative characteristics that occur amidst material-world relationships, entailing the search for, possession of, and organization of objects in a passionate and selective way. The author highlights the sociological function of collections in rendering memories tangible, enabling their transmission throughout history. Moreover, the assemblage of objects on display facilitates social and symbolic exchanges, revealing what is significant for a given society and what behaviors the objects impose on collectors. For Dohmann, a large part of history is marked by the objects that have been created, artifacts that require skill, embody purposes, shape user identities, and are rooted in material culture.

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Another important theme in the literature is understanding the objectives of collectors and their modes of action. Here, management problems arise, since collectors consider their collections incomplete, a constant state of being (Correia et al., 2024). The lack of a single piece can cause "productive disorder" (Benjamin, 2009, p. 246) and the perception that the whole is merely a fragmented work. Benjamin thus helps us reflect that the collector must embrace incompleteness, as noted in (Cordova, 2017).

Rosa (2020), in turn, highlights collectors' desire for the continuity of their collections, whether through family members or museums, demonstrating the transcendence of personal space-time. Such observations reaffirm Dohmann (2017) assertion that collections are a heritage of material culture and align with Krtalić et al. (2021) in emphasizing the feelings, values, and representational roles of objects in documenting the history and identity of individuals through family collections. From the perspective of the modern world, Pedrão and Bizello (2016, p. 835) argue that mass-produced objects have become the most popular members of collections, transforming into "small sanctuaries of different pasts, escapes from the present, and assertions of individuality", and thus, ways of expressing oneself as a collector defined by identification with their activity. Sanches and Silva (2018) state that objects assume new meaning when removed from circulation and original function to redefine the existence of the material. Furthermore, the persistence of such objects over time in people's daily lives marks their lives, evokes feelings, ideas, memories, and sensations, generating affective bonds and memories (Moraes, 2021).

When examining the act of collecting, Oliveira (2017) argues that the practice fosters a sense of well-being and belonging. It creates a symbolic world, enabling connections with communities of collectors who share similar objects. Thus, collecting becomes a form of social identification with groups that share common interests, fulfilling, as Bloom (2003) suggests, a fundamental dimension of being human.

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Building on Yates (2014) and Üsdiken and Kipping (2022), we adopt a qualitative-historical approach in Organizational Studies. Historical pathways address temporality by connecting past, present, and future perspectives. Our methodology prioritizes non-participant observation, interviews, photographs, and document analysis (Sá-Silva, 2009), facilitating data triangulation and enriched critical examination (Tarrow, 2019; Üsdiken & Kipping, 2022).

We worked with the photographs drawn on Passos (2013) and Pinheiro (2024), not treating them as illustrative records but as analytical elements that enable access to layers of meaning embedded in the collectors' practices, their ways of arranging, caring for, classifying, and presenting objects. In this sense, the photographs helped us stimulate our perception of the participants' lived reality, allowing for a deeper reflection on their experiences, stories, memories, and relationships with the lived world. Taken together with historical documents, the photographs were incorporated into the analysis by considering both what was recorded and how the recording occurred, as well as how it was presented to the researchers in specific narrative moments.

As for the documents, these included written records, catalogues, social media publications, and other materials produced or used by the participants. Their analysis was

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conducted according to the principles of documentary analysis (Pimentel, 2001; Sá-Silva, 2009), emphasizing the narratives, categories, and temporalities that emerged from the materials.

This entire process, by prioritizing multiple sources, as we did in this research, allowed us to avoid reductionisms and generalizations that might constrain the complex dynamics of research in pursuit of a supposed totality. This interpretive reading of images and documents sought to understand the meanings attributed by participants to their practices, rather than reducing visual representations to mere empirical evidence.

Using snowball sampling (Audemard, 2020), we identified participants through peer recommendations, ultimately studying 28 diverse collections (e.g., cars, artworks, coins [numismatics], stamps [philately], antiques) (Table 1). Through 29 semi-structured interviews (5 women; 24 men; aged 22-80), participants reflected on their collecting practices. Collection sizes varied (30-100,000 items) with values ranging from R$ 40 to millions.

Table 1
Universe of research participants

Nº	Fictitious name	Collection type	Beginning of the collection	Age at the time of the interview
1	Volpi	Football Shirts	1998	31
2	Mário	Football Shirts	2010	24
3	Givanildo	Football Shirts	2008	28
4	Vinicius	Phone cards, safety cards, miniatures, airline caps, "Remove for Flight" cards, and Velcro patches.	1968	61
5	Bernardo	Vinyl Records	1992	52
6	Cândido	Works of Art, Photographs and Sculptures	1971	80
7	Thomas	Sneakers	2000	35
8	Beatriz	Coins	2020	35
9	Dionísio	Miniatures	1976/2001	58
10	Gump	Reeds e Football Shirts	2001	37
11	Emanuel	Cars	1985	62
12	João	Cars, Miniatures and Vinyl Records	1983	54
13	Reginaldo	“Everyday Objects”	1992	71
14	Bonfante	Antiques and Vinyl Records	1979	55
15	Bruna	Souvenirs	1986	57
16	Josias	Minerals	2011	36
17	Alexandre	Coins	1979	60
18	Kleber	Miniatures	1998	45
19	Francisco	Minerals e Stamps	1967	75
20	Ronaldo	Miniatures	2007	59
21	Guilherme	Safety Cards e Miniatures	2012	22
22	Lucca	Antiques	1985	79

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23	Alice	Antiques	2012	45
24	José	Cars	1998	43
25	Daniel	Cars	1998	43
26	Arnaldo	Antiques, Vinyl Records, Cutlery, Stamps, Pencils, Watches and Coins	1969	61
27	Cláudia	Antiques	2019	59
28	Renata	Porcelain, Antique Tools, Pipes and Coins	2002	65
29	Murilo	Cachaça (Brazilian rum), Keys, Old Nails, Pipes, and Coins.	1984	69

Source: Research data. Elaborated by the authors.

All names presented are fictitious, preventing the identification of participants and their respective groups. Sometimes, subjects collect more than one type of object, but we chose to associate participants with the collections that best represent them. Complementarily, the field notebook data were triangulated with non-participant observation, allowing for expanded critical views of the phenomena (Tarrow, 2019; Üsdiken & Kipping, 2022). We observed, in this process, the practices of some research participants within each of the collecting processes. Among the collectors of shirts, sneakers, and cars, we followed the stages of idealization and conception of the collectible object to be acquired. With the participants who collected cars, coins, miniatures, and minerals, we observed the process of selection, negotiation, and acquisition of the objects, which took place mainly at fairs dedicated to these items, where we were present during the research. We also observed, through the non-participant observation method, the classification and maintenance of the collectible objects, especially among the collectors of shirts and antiques, who carried out the management of their collections and presented to us, in loco, the process of classification and care for their objects.

Having established the research corpus, we moved on to the data analysis and interpretation phase, following the contributions of Barreto (2018), focusing on the content that emerges from the narratives concerning the identities and identifications of the collectors. We worked with Clandinin and Connelly (2015) and Silva et al. (2021) and adopted the Narrative Analysis technique. This approach enables us to highlight participants' experiences comprehensively, connecting their narratives to the temporal context in which they occurred, while exploring the three-dimensional space of narrative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2015). In this process, we outlined elements encompassing the situation (location), interaction (personal and/or social), and continuity (past, present, and future). In our research, we particularly focused on the latter aspect, considering our view of memory analysis as part of a continuum that includes the past, present, and future as a unified phenomenon (Carvalho et al., 2021; Lyra et al., 2019).

By opting for Narrative Analysis, we based our approach on the contributions of Pentland (1999), Reuter (2007), and Santos et al. (2019), allowing us to structure historical narratives based on six guiding assumptions, including reflection on the intention and language of the narrative: 1) the proposed research theme; 2) narrative time; 3) verbal and non-verbal language; 4) characters; 5) narrative voices; and 6) action reference points. With these aspects defined, and starting from our choice to work with the narratives of subjects who have experienced, are experiencing, and intend to experience collecting in

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the future, we considered "the intention and the language, how and why the incidents are narrated, and not simply the content to which the language refers" (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). In this way, the technique allowed us to analyze how language is used to transmit the signified identities, as well as the sequencing of events given to a particular theme. After this, for the operationalization of the data storage, categorization, and coding stage, we relied on the support of the Atlas.TI Cloud software. At the beginning of the analysis, we arrived at categories that revolved around the continuum of past, present, and future. The past was linked to: i) the ways in which collecting began in the subjects' trajectories; ii) the meaning of the past that the objects evoke; iii) the act of collecting as a safeguard of history. Following this, the second category revolved around the present time, involving: iv) the way these subjects express themselves and identify themselves through the activity, the main focus of this work; in addition to v) organization into collector collectives; vi) management of searching, acquisition, purchase, transport, cataloging, storage, management of spaces (and the lack thereof), maintenance and possible sale of collectible objects; vii) the financial aspects linked to the activity as a business; and, finally, viii) the future postulated with the performance of the activities, in a future that never ends. These procedures allowed us to align the focus of this excerpt, analyze and discuss the various identity narratives present in the participants' collections, as presented in the next section.

THE PLURAL NARRATIVES OF COLLECTOR SUBJECTS

Between possession, being, and pleasure in the collecting experience

In this section, we retrieve representative elements from the interviews that provide clues about the identification processes of the participating collectors. Instead of drawing conclusive results, we present entry points for understanding the collecting phenomenon based on the theoretical assumption that collections are not merely ways of material accumulation but ways of inventing (Almeida, 2012), seeing and appropriating the object (Benjamin, 2009), deriving pleasure (Oliveira, 2017), or expressing oneself as a human being (Bloom, 2003). Thus, the dialectical movement between having (material accumulation) and being (self-reinvention) opens a field of identification possibilities, including some that permeate the collecting experience, as we will attempt to demonstrate below.

> I started acquiring models and gradually understanding more [...] You discover this and develop a desire for it. When I realized 'wow, I have a considerable amount of sneakers,' I saw they were very specific [...] and saw myself as a collector (Thomas, Sneakers).

Thomas' narrative reflects the procedural and incomplete nature of collections, initiated through both the acquisition of objects (having) and self-perception as a collector (being). The phrases "you discover" and "you create" demonstrate how particular desire co-emerges with the discovery of collecting as a potential practice. Thus, even before considering himself a collector, the desire to collect establishes the foundation for his future actions. This subject, not yet fully formed but aspiring to become, embodies the historical and contradictory process of becoming. Although Thomas' process began with acquiring numerous sneakers, it was the objects' specificity that enabled him to recognize the identification process constituting him as a collector. Hence, subject formation cannot be decoupled from socially constructed meanings of such actions.

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Thomas' account aligns with the dominant narrative positioning collecting as intentional accumulation (Dohmann, 2017), yet simultaneously complicates this notion through desire. Across all 29 research narratives, the desire to collect emerged as the central organizing principle.

> I collect for both pleasure and memory. When you complete something, it feels very good [...] though it's not entirely rational. The pleasure comes [...] from valuing your collection so much that achieving your goals brings satisfaction (Givanildo, Football Shirts).

> Being a collector is personal satisfaction. Unlike my son who focuses on having all shirts of the year [...] I prefer old objects that remind me of my family (Arnaldo, Antiques).

The lexical choices, pleasure, personal satisfaction, and taste, demonstrate collection as a conduit for desire, although its manifestations vary across participants. For Givanildo, pleasure functions as a symbolic reward upon completing a collection (Dohmann, 2017), operating within an achievement logic: collections are totalities (whether complete or partial), where ostensibly irrational pleasure is rationalized through goal attainment. In contrast, Arnaldo divorces desire from quantifiable objectives (e.g., "having all shirts of the year"), anchoring it instead in familial affective memory. Where Givanildo dichotomizes pleasure and memory, Arnaldo synthesizes them, collecting becomes an act of remembrance.

Memory's role in constituting collector identities (Moraes, 2021; Oliveira, 2017), the objects evoke an unfinished past. For Arnaldo, antiques materialize lived time, forging emotional links to family history (Moraes, 2021). These objects condense self-images, familial ties, and reinterpreted spatiotemporal contexts into pleasure. Collecting thus emerges as both narrative practice and world-reordering mechanism, amplifying the object's transformation (Dohmann, 2015; Sanches & Silva, 2018).

> Being a collector is an expression of subjectivity... preserving, cultivating memory [...] The jersey brings that image of a time, it's an object connected to history. But collecting is also going back in time [...] to my childhood plaza, buying shirts with my mom (Volpi, Football Shirts).

> The collection is a way of being, a therapy... not to escape reality but to remember what he has been through [...] It's in his blood to live this thing. He went through great moments, and wants to have this for life in the form of an object (Dionísio, Miniatures).

The accounts of Arnaldo, Volpi, and Dionísio substantiate Pedrão and Bizello (2016) assertion that collected objects serve as historical records of the collector. These collections materialize persistent memories (Dohmann, 2015, 2017), constructing a temporal bridge between past and present (Bosi, 2015; Bom Meihy & Seawright, 2020). This dynamic transcends conventional subject-object dichotomies, as objects become sites of continuous (re)cognition that exceed scientific categorization (Sanches & Silva, 2018) while enabling the revival and reconfiguration of the past (Benjamin, 2009).

Beyond their memorial function, collections facilitate subjective expression (Volpi) and even constitute modes of being (Dionísio). This suggests that collector identities emerge not through passive internalization of social codes (Oliveira, 2017; Souza, 2017), but through active processes where identities shape actions and environments, repositioning subjects within their life narratives. Volpi's case particularly demonstrates how collecting enables subjective expression through transformed practices:

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> I wear the shirts to incorporate what they represent [...] Taking them out to look is nice, but wearing them is best - it's there on your body, undeniable. It makes you plan your life in the city, follow your path. I like embodying the state of mind the jersey carries (Volpi, football shirts).

Wearing a collector's shirt operates dialectically, it simultaneously utilizes the object and elevates it as the focal point of bodily expression. In Volpi's practice, his body becomes a mediator of the shirt's symbolic content ("what it represents"). While conventional clothing obscures the body, his curated shirts construct a deliberate corporeality. This body-object-desire network ultimately reconfigures urban experience itself, demonstrating that collecting exceeds memorial functions to actively generate present-tense modes of being. Thus, beneath the veneer of identity stability (Cabana & Ichikawa, 2017) lies an ongoing somatic reconstruction, a process where collected objects become prostheses of selfhood.

The collector subject, the collected object, and the other who sees them

To develop the analyses of the processes of constructing a collector identity, it is necessary to remember that identification involves the subject's recognition of an enunciated "I" (Butler, 2020). In recollections, this first-person enunciated "I" reconstructs its image before an "other" (the researcher) based on memories, affections, and expectations that sometimes remain unconscious. The interview moment is only a fragment that, although essential for its record, is not a mere representation of the enunciating subject. Therefore, we do not intend to say "who" the participants in the research are, although there are biographical elements that cross it. Thus, we highlight the construction of the "collector" category, which is fundamentally relational.

> Suddenly, people start calling you a collector (laughs) [...] It was through others. Life is about others, don't you think? [...] They called me an art collector and it stuck. Today, I am an art collector [...] But I also feel like one (Cândido, Works of Art).

Cândido's case demonstrates how collector identities emerge relationally, where self-recognition ("I am") and external validation ("people") are mutually constitutive processes. His narrative reveals that becoming a collector involves not merely internalizing others' perceptions but embodying the material-semiotic weight of the labels ascribed to him, an intersubjective self-construction (Menezes, 2014; Pollak, 1992).

The collected object itself serves as another crucial axis. As Cravo (2017) identifies, art collecting typically follows three motivations: passion, status, or investment. In the Brazilian context, the art collector occupies an imagined social position as an erudite figure, where artworks function as dual markers of economic capital and cultural distinction. The act of being named an "art collector" (rather than simply a "collector") legitimizes privileged social standing vis-à-vis the naming other. Significantly, even for less culturally valorized objects, the "collector" designation tends to generate positive self-representation, further underscoring the fundamentally relational and socially embedded nature of these identity formations.

> Every collector has their vanities [...] they want to show off their collection. 'I have it, I got it, only I managed [...] look how pristine it is, it's rare, I paid this much.' There's definitely that aspect of vanity (Bernardo, Vinyl Records).

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Bernardo's narrative foregrounds desire as constitutive of collector identity formation. His self-presentation centers on what he reflexively terms "vanity", a pursuit of recognition mediated through the collection's dialectic of seeing and being seen (Almeida, 2012; Dohmann, 2017). While not aspiring to fame, Bernardo's daily practices reveal how collecting functions as both autobiographical statement and social claim: the visible assemblage confers visibility upon its curator, albeit within limited circuits.

Significantly, Bernardo's desire manifests through capitalist logics of possession ("I have/paid for") and self-overcoming ("I achieved"). His account exemplifies what Benjamin (2009) theorized as the collector's dual capitalist subjectivity, simultaneously the owner and the self-made conqueror of acquisition challenges. However, we caution against universalizing this "vanity" as essential to collector subjectivity. As Cândido's contrasting narrative demonstrates (and Lucca's case will further illuminate), these are articulations of desire within specific social imaginaries. The collector's "self" emerges through plural, contingent gazes, never a singular formation.

> Few enjoy showing off. They prefer conversing with other collectors - it's a special language [...] Because we're considered crazy. That's how we're seen: either crazy or extravagant for spending money on these things (Lucca, Antiques).

Lucca's narrative destabilizes Bernardo's premise about the exhibition of the collection. The characterizations attributed to collectors as "crazy" or "extravagant" reveal collector identities that subvert the social prestige of the art collector, pointing to a fundamental unintelligibility. Here, the naming operation confers on the "I" (collector) a stigma, or even an identity negatively perceived by the "other." Unlike Cândido, Lucca collects objects that are socially devalued, disparate items without thematic or functional organization. This practice defies instrumental rationality and generates stigmas in society and in personal relationships.

In the context of modern society, these objects are discursively constructed as having lesser value, framing the collector as "crazy" for rejecting instrumental rationality or "extravagant" for spending money to accumulate objects of low use value. However, Lucca demonstrates that the collector's identity transcends others' perceptions. By evoking collector affinity, his narrative reveals how collecting creates shared experiences and belonging. These identity dynamics are fluid: the same act that generates negative readings (by non-collectors) can produce positive recognition among peers. These are not fixed binaries (collector = positive self-perception; non-collector = negative perception of the other) but dynamic and contradictory processes.

The singularity of identification emerges through relationships between the collector, the collected object, and observers. The collector is not reducible to external discourses, as they can contest the narratives that define them. Thus, individual agency becomes fundamental to analyzing subversive positions that transform identification into constant self-resignification, as Menezes (2014) argues. When examining collectors of socially devalued objects, we see that "collector" identity may not always confer pleasure. To explore how negative meanings (e.g., "madness," "extravagance") might be overcome, we must analyze the collector-object relationship.

> I already had an eye for objects [...] I look at them in 360 degrees, not just in their original position. I see them upside down; sometimes they lead me to create new objects [...] You saw things here I transformed, like the bicycles on the ceiling (Reginaldo, Everyday Objects).

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According to Benjamin (2009), the act of collecting only becomes possible when the functionality of the object is removed, that is, its primitive function. By doing so, the collector re-approaches the object under different conditions, imbuing it with other symbolisms that allow for enchantment. Through Reginaldo's memories, objects offer a horizon of possibilities for significance, far beyond those established by the orthodoxy of their function. Changing the way of looking at things also changes the object itself, which appears as a transformed other. In this sense, the collection offers the collector an opening to create.

With Reginaldo's permission, we conducted this record during one of our visits to one of his nine warehouses of everyday objects. The bicycles on the ceiling challenge our own apprehension of what a bicycle is, as it loses its initial functionality as a means of transportation that one pedals. By removing it from this axis of significance, it could become something else in a place that causes estrangement (the ceiling). Overall, Reginaldo's warehouse challenges instrumental rationality with its piled-up and seemingly disorganized objects. However, when asked, he asserts that they are organized in a "chronological disorder" and are sectioned according to his interests. Thus, the disorganization hides other forms of organization that are not apprehensible by those who seek, beforehand, an ordering according to function.

By calling himself an "objeteiro" (objecteer), Reginaldo transforms his relationship with objects into a daily activity. Here, we use the figure of the "objeteiro" as a synonym for collector, since neither fits into any preconceived forms of relating to objects. Each object goes through a particular circuit of identifications that demands from Reginaldo a stance of "objeteiro" that is, someone willing to immerse in this relationship and in the multiple forms of recreation of being (Correia et al., 2020; Monteiro et al., 2017), in this case, a collector.

Furthermore, we propose that processes of subjectivation are composed of complex relations among the collecting subject, the collected object, and the "other" who sees them. Despite the multiple possibilities of self-signification opened in these relationships, there are broader conditions that traverse the act of collecting. Unlike Reginaldo, who reconfigured his entire life to dedicate himself to the collection, most participants face a limit of the collection and, simultaneously, the limits of their own collector identity. The narrative fragment below is representative in this sense:

> Every collector is obsessed with their own collection [...] you completely lose your limit [...] it's a question of desire, of always perpetuating. Then [...] that desire no longer makes sense. Then you move on to another desire [...] If you don't have control, it's as if you're going to be held hostage. you're going to be held hostage. And economically hostage too (Bernardo, Vinyl Records).

Beyond establishing that collector identity is not fixed but dialectical (Vuuren et al., 2012), we argue it is also non-singular, coexisting with other identity positions (Woodward, 2009). Bernardo’s narrative illustrates this fluidity through a moment of rupture: his identity as a collector becomes strained by symbolic limits (anguish, loss of meaning) and material constraints (cost). This crisis interrogates his self-conception: does collecting reduce to “wanting to have more”? When objects lose meaning, does identity persist only through new desires? Who dominates whom, the subject or the object?

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These questions reveal our focus lies not in the collection's permanence, but in the subject beyond collector identity. Collections function as subjectivation devices, creating conditions for new modes of being through relations between self, other, and object. The symbolic and material investment in collecting reconfigures perspectives, ways of existing, and life itself, a process that persists even if collections end.

We thus posit that collections generate new conditions for subjective emergence. The triad of self/other/object opens possibilities for novel ways of being. To invest in collecting is to transform gazes, reconfigure one's visibility, and alter life holistically. Even terminated collections leave enduring transformations, a process exceeding subjective intention. While we acknowledge contradictions in collectors' object-possession (which may render them hostages to desire), we reject framing this as passive resignation. Instead, collecting reveals agency: subjects simultaneously recreate themselves and their objects through identification practices.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From Brazilian collectors' narratives, we examined how identities and identifications are composed through memory, materiality, and everyday organizing. Building on our introductory positioning, we conceptualized memory as a social, selective, and situated phenomenon and treated collecting as an empirical window onto mundane modes of organizing that are typically overlooked in mainstream management theory. Our analysis shows that collecting cannot be reduced to material accumulation: it operates as a way of inventing, seeing, and appropriating objects, and as a source of pleasure and self-reinvention. In this sense, the act of collecting reorders relations between subject, object, and society, opening identification pathways that exceed a simple logic of possession.

Empirically, the accounts illuminate how desire, pleasure, and memory structure identification work. Across cases, becoming a collector is narrated as a process – discovering, aspiring, being named, and recognizing oneself – rather than a fixed state. Objects mediate this process by condensing lived time, enabling re-significations and, at times, being worn or displayed to enact identities in the present. Recognition by others further shapes these trajectories: the same practice may attract prestige, indifference, or stigma, and such readings fluctuate across audiences and situations. These dynamics show that collector identities are plural, negotiated, and historically situated.

Theoretically, we contribute by specifying an analytical lens that relates identification to a triad of subject-object-others. This lens clarifies how identities hinge on (i) subject positions narrated and enacted over time; (ii) the properties, trajectories, and transformations of collected objects; and (iii) audiences and interlocutors who recognize, value, or contest identity claims. It also foregrounds memory as an active, present-oriented force that shapes these relations, bringing to organizational studies the organizing work embedded in collecting as a site where legitimacy is negotiated and selves are composed.

This triadic lens invites further research attentive to processes of identification. Future studies can compare configurations across collecting domains and organizational contexts (clubs, fairs, markets, and online platforms), trace longitudinally how shifts in objects and audiences reorient identification, and follow how practices of care, classification, and display stabilize or unsettle recognition over time. By treating collecting as a privileged

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terrain where identity, memory, and everyday organizing meet, our study offers a clear path to investigate how subjects, objects, and others co-produce who people are – and how they come to be seen – in the flow of ordinary life.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request to the corresponding author Gabriel Farias Alves Correia. The dataset is not publicly available due to contains information that compromises the privacy of research participants.

GENERATIVE AI DISCLOSURE

No Artificial Intelligence tools were used.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledge the funding from the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa de Minas Gerais (FAPEMIG) for project code APQ-00845-22, coordinated by Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri and with author Gabriel Farias Alves Correia as scholarship recipient. They also thank the National Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) for the scholarship and support provided to author Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri.

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