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The Use of Early Recollections as a Measure of Personality: A Theoretical and Experimental Study

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THE USE OF EARLY RECOLLECTIONS AS A MEASURE OF PERSONALITY: A THEORETICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

by

Douglas A. Lockwood

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Degree of Master of Arts

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Douglas A. Lockwood
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present investigation is twofold, namely, to fit early recollections within a broad framework of sociological, philosophical and psychological thought, and to provide experimental evidence for the use of early recollections as a valid projective measure of personality.

A rather platitudinous and yet seemingly accurate assumption about humans is that they are social beings. They have always been imbedded in some sort of interpersonal frame, be it a small hunting and gathering tribe or a highly advanced and densely populated industrial state. Social existence, however, does not simply mean that people live in physical proximity, but in moral proximity as well, that is, within a system of norms, mores, laws, and so forth. Although these social rules perform the essential function of ensuring a relatively smooth and predictable pattern of interaction between members, thereby protecting the integrity of the communal network, they nonetheless lack a "real" or objective base. With this respect, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1964), whose works emerged at the turn of the century, proposed that society is based upon and held together by a set of beliefs and morals called the collective conscience, which is shared by the society's members and is a reality to which the people must conform or else suffer the consequences of ostracism and, in some cases, out-and-out revenge and retribution. Perhaps the most thorough exploration of this subjective and moral base of social reality
was performed in the 1960's by a group of sociologists representing the Ethnomethodological Theory, which was an application of Durkheim's general theory to this specific area. The Ethnomethodologists published a considerable amount of material on their topic, of which the findings of Garfinkel and Berger & Luckman, mentioned below, are representative.

In his book Garfinkel (1967) presented a number of studies concerning the substance of social reality. His students would violate simple social rules, such as facing the rear of elevators instead of the front, haggling over prices in large department stores, and treating family members as strangers, in an unusually polite and formal manner. The results consistently showed that persons subjected to the students' transgressions were shocked, confused, and basically disoriented. Considering the ease by which his students were able to play havoc with the social order, Garfinkel concluded that the social world is a very flimsy construction based on a number of beliefs, expectations, and morals that are accepted without question.

Berger & Luckman (1966) were also aware of the fragile nature of social reality and emphasized the necessity of everyday conversation in maintaining it. Without such conversation, reality, that is, morality may rapidly dissipate:

"Subjective reality is...always dependent upon specific plausibility structures, that is, the specific social base and social processes required for its maintenance. Disruption of significant conversation with the mediators of the respective plausibility structures threatens the realities in question" (p. 142).

Berger & Luckman went on to say that conversational reality-maintenance...
typically occurs at an implicit or preconscious level. That is, it does not, in the large majority of cases, directly define reality:

"It is important to stress, however, that the greater part of reality-maintenance in conversation is implicit, not explicit. Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is silently taken for granted" (p. 140).

From the foregoing, one can see the two major contributions of the Ethnomethodological movement. Firstly, the Ethnomethodologists demonstrated that the social world is based on an infirm and implicit moral structure, a situation that has several obvious implications for the individual. For one thing, he or she may experience contradictions in reality, that is, the moral order. A child raised on the values of honesty and achievement, for example, may find that the best way to get ahead is through underhanded means. Also, the individual may be faced with confusion and equivocality since morality tends to be upheld implicitly through conversation, a process which can be filled with ambiguity and uncertainty, and because morality may change quite drastically over time and space.

This brings us to the second finding of the Ethnomethodologists, which is that people tend to objectify and solidify the subjective world. That is, they adhere to and follow their beliefs and morals "as if" they were real. A society's members, said Garfinkel, "...refer to this world as 'the natural fact of life' which, for members, are through and through moral facts of life" (1967, p. 35). This assertion however, was really nothing new. One of the first attempts at explaining this "as if" world was made by the German philosopher Hans
Vaihinger in 1911:

"What we generally call 'truth', namely, a conceptual world coinciding with the external world, is merely the most expedient error...that is, that system of ideas which enables us to act and deal with things most rapidly, neatly, and safely, and with the minimum of irrational elements. ...The whole framework in which we place what is perceived is only subjective; subjective is fictional; fictional is false; falsehood is error" (1925, p. 108).

The same position may also be found in Alfred Adler's psychological theory, which incorporated much of Vaihinger's philosophy: "The human mind shows an urge to capture into fixed forms, through unreal assumptions, that is, fictions, that which is chaotic, always in flux, and incomprehensible" (1964, p. 96).

In spite of the unreal nature of fictions, they perform a desirable and purposive function for the individual. Fictions reduce the complexities and contradictions of a mass of experience to practical and manageable proportions. They allow one to derive sense and meaning from the environment, and provide the person with the capacity to act with any degree of conviction, confidence, and direction. "It is the fiction which teaches us to differentiate, which gives us support and security, which shapes and guides our doings and actions, and which forces our mind to foresee and to perfect itself" (Adler, 1964, p. 97).

Although all values, beliefs, attitudes, and virtues have a fictive base, some are more important to the individual than others and are, as a result, reified to a greater extent. For example, it is one thing for a person to question his or her belief that "Pepsodent cleans teeth their whitest", but quite another to question one's own estimate of personal worth. This set of especially meaningful and
important fictions, to which Darely (1938) ascribed deep-seated prejudices, systematic stereotypes, and self concept, goes by a variety of names, e.g., internal frame of reference (Rogers), private world (Frank), and apperceptive schema (Adler), but the meaning underlying these different terms is consistent. They all refer to an attitudinal core or point of orientation which the person takes as fixed and stable, and which acts as the foundation for self consistency. This process of building a consistent state of affairs around a basic core was explored by Leon Festinger (1957), whose Cognitive Dissonance Theory assumes that the person strives to reduce or avoid dissonance and enhance consonance. Festinger noted that when two expressions of the individual are in conflict, that which is the more important will resist change while the one of lesser importance to the person will in some way be modified or rejected so as to maintain the integrity of the more significant construct. Although Festinger's interest was in investigating how the individual deals with dissonance in belief and behavior, the theory can be expanded to include other expressions of the personality, too. Aronson, for example, concluded after a review of relevant literature that the general principles of the Cognitive Dissonance Theory may appropriately be applied to the perceptual processes. To use his own words, "Individuals will distort the objective world in order to reduce dissonance" (1972, p. 98).

It should be apparent that the frame of reference is not just an intricate collating device or computer that deals with information and events as is, but that it also has a hand in determining what form that information will take. The notion that the internal processes take part
in the formation of a given percept has existed in theory for quite some time. As Adler stated, "But a perception is never to be compared with a photographic image because something of the peculiar and individual quality of the person is inextricably bound up with it" (1927, p. 49). And Frank, in presenting what is often considered the first projective theory of any far-reaching significance, came to similar conclusions:

"We may emphasize that personality is approachable as a process or operation of an individual who organizes experience and reacts affectively to situations. This process is dynamic in the sense that the individual personality imposes upon the common public world of events (what we call nature) his meanings and significances, his organization and patterns, and he invests the situation thus structured with an affective meaning to which he responds idiomatically" (1927, p. 413).

In spite of its theoretical presence, this kind of thinking did not work its way into the field of perceptual research with any real impact until the late 1940's. At that time, a group of psychologists led by Jerome Bruner and his Directive State Theory set out to experimentally demonstrate the internal determinants of perception, that perception is not simply a mirror of the objective world, but that it is also molded by one's expectations and beliefs. Three of their studies are worth mentioning here.

In one of the first studies, Bruner & Goodman (1947) showed five coins, namely, the penny, nickel, dime, quarter and half dollar, to a group of children who were instructed to estimate the size of each coin with a circle of light. Another group of children underwent the same procedure except that they were presented with five cardboard disks the same size as the coins. The results showed that while the latter group
was quite accurate in their estimations, the former group magnified, or "accentuated", the actual size of the coins to considerable and statistically significant proportions. In a second part of this experiment, rich and poor children made their estimates and it was found that although both groups tended to accentuate actual coin size, the poor children, who were apparently in greater need of money, did so to a greater extent. The authors concluded that value orientation and subjective need play a part in the perceptual processes, and the extent to which these internal factors are active depends upon the strength or importance of the value or need in question.

Perceptual accentuation was again demonstrated by Bruner & Postman (1948), who presented adult subjects with positive, negative, and neutral symbols, i.e., a dollar sign, swastika, and diagonal pattern, respectively. They found that subjects' estimates of the positive and negative symbols' sizes were significantly magnified over actual sizes, and concluded that such perceptual distortion is adaptively meaningful. That is, accentuation of value-congruent events alerts the person to potential reward and furthermore maximizes the reward value of the event, and "...accentuation of negative symbols may aid under certain conditions in preparing the organism for defense and action" (p. 207).

In a third study, Postman, Bruner & McGinnies (1948) administered the Allport-Vernon Study of Values to subjects, who were also tachistoscopically presented with 36 words judged by an independent panel to represent the six value categories of the test. It was found that test scores and recognition times produced an inverse correlation. That is, subjects tended to recognize most rapidly those words that represented
important and desirable values, and slowest those that represented unimportant or undesirable values. A Chi-square test on this relationship was significant at the 1% level. The authors concluded that these results were indicative of two perceptual processes that operate in the service of one's attitudinal frame of reference, namely, defense and sensitization. The former term refers to ignoring or delaying recognition of events which are noxious, annoying, dissonant, or otherwise bothersome. Sensitization, on the other hand, refers to the swift acknowledgement of events that coincide with one's values or are adaptively significant.

One complaint that may be lodged against the above studies is that they were artificial, that is, they examined perception in situations that are quite far removed from what one might encounter in day to day living. Hastrof & Cantril (1954), however, avoided this problem by exposing their subjects to a complex interpersonal matrix. These authors showed the film of a football game between Dartmouth and Princeton to students of the two colleges, who were instructed to view the film as objectively as possible, and note each rule infraction and the responsible player. The results showed that Princeton students recorded a preponderance of wrongdoing on the part of the Dartmouth players, and vice versa. The authors concluded that this distortion occurred as a consequence of the students' attempts to give meaning and significance to the complexities and ambiguities of the event:

"We do not simply 'react to' a happening or to some im­pingement from the environment in a determined way...We behave according to what we bring to the occasion, and what each of us brings to the occasion is more or less unique. And except for the significances which we bring to the occasion, the happenings around us would be meaningless, would be 'inconsequential'" (p. 133).
Cantril reinforced this stand in a later article where he said, "We seem to give meaning and order to sensory impingements in terms of our own needs and purposes and this process of selection is actively creative" (1957, p. 123).

Although the Directive State Theory came under heavy criticism for its alleged overemphasis on the role of internal factors in the formation of perception -- Bruner himself realized this shortcoming and later revised his thinking into the more acceptable Hypothesis Theory⁠¹ -- it did make psychologists and especially experimentalists aware of, and stimulate interest in, the possible ramifications of values, needs, and attitudes on perception. The area in which the Directive State and Hypothesis Theories had their greatest impact was that of projective psychology. Bruner was aware of the similarity between his ideas on perception and existing thought in the field of projection and projective personality assessment, and attempted to integrate the two in his article "Perceptual Theory and the Rorschach

¹The Hypothesis Theory, which, like the Directive State Theory, attempted to explain perceptual distortion, removed the role of internal factors one step from the actual perceptual processes. In this theory, it was assumed that on the basis of past experience, attitudes, and needs the individual posits a number of hypotheses about the world. The person compares what actually happens to what is hypothesized or expected and if the objective situation does not fit the hypothesis, the latter is modified or rejected. If, on the other hand, a hypothesis is given rather constant reinforcement, it becomes more difficult to reject or change because the person tends to become selectively vigilant to an equal degree. That is, he or she becomes tuned into the recognition of supporting evidence in the environment and more or less turned off to opposing evidence. The main difference between this and the Directive State Theory is that while the latter comes dangerously close to a wish fulfillment model of perception, the former is more akin to that of a feedback loop. (See Bruner, 1957)
Test" (1948). His basic assumption, based on previous research, was that perception is the result of a cooperation between internal processes and external circumstances, and that the extent to which internal factors participate is dependent upon the ambiguity of the stimuli and the strength of the need or value involved:

"Generally speaking, the less structuredness or univocality of the stimulus input, the more striking the role of directive, nonsensory factors will be in determining perceptual organization...And generally speaking again, the greater the strength of the directive factors in the perceiver, say the greater the strength of his needs, the more the likelihood of their entering into the determination of a perceptual organization when the perceiver is in a situation related to his needs" (p. 161).

The foregoing analysis presents what may be considered the two basic assumptions of projective psychology. First, to use the words of Robert White, "Every performance of a person is an expression of his whole personality" (quoted by Bruner, 1948, pp. 157-158). That is, the various expressions of the individual, perception included, tend to hang together in a consistent manner as described by the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. The person will perceptually distort the environment in order to give it meaning with respect to a larger frame of reference:

"The individual organizes experience as he warps, twists, distorts, and otherwise fits every situation, event, and person into the framework of his private world, giving them the affective significance which they must have for him in his private world" (Frank, 1948, p. 15).

And, secondly, as stated above by Bruner, the extent to which one's "private world" is projected upon the public or objective world depends upon the equivocality of the event and/or the strength of the internal factor in question.
Although perception has been the sine qua non of projective psychology, the first afore mentioned assumption, namely, that all expressions of the person take part in the process of adaptation, suggests that other avenues of approach are available. Any human expression that relies upon the person's internal state, because of either the intrinsic nature of that process or the situation in which it must operate, can be used projectively. The present paper is especially concerned with the projective nature of memory, that the recollection of past events is influenced and molded by the attitudinal frame of reference of the individual.

First of all, it should be noted that the comments and conclusions made previously with respect to perception may be applied to memory, as well, for it is merely an intellectual convenience to think of the two as separate agencies of the personality. The French philosopher Henri Bergson was adamant on this inseparability of perception and memory:

"Our perceptions are undoubtedly interlaced with memories, and inversely, a memory...only becomes actual by borrowing the body of some perception into which it slips. These two acts, perception and recollection, always interpenetrate each other, are always interchanging something of their substance as by a process of endomosis" (1911, p. 72).

Although an experimenter may attempt to cancel out the effects of memory in order to arrive at a clean measure of perception, the end result is destined to fall short of total success. Bruner & Postman (1948) realized the functional similarity of these two processes and rather casually expanded the results of their study on perception to pertain to memory as well: "One cannot expect a simple one-to-one
relationship between the affective symbolic value of objects and perceptual or mnemonic accentuation" (p. 207). The Directive State and Hypothesis Theories of perception made no effort to exclude memory as a determinant. Memory, either in the form of attitudes and needs, or hypotheses, has a definite place in the determination of perception.

Just as it is in error to think of perception as a slave to environmental events, so is it to consider memory as an uninvolved storehouse of past perceptions. Memory, like perception, serves an adaptive and utilitarian function for the individual. One may again consider the philosophy of Bergson:

"The function of the body is not to store up recollections, but simply to choose, in order to bring back to distinct consciousness, by the real efficacy thus conferred on it, the useful memory, that which may complete and illuminate the present situation with a view to ultimate action" (1911, pp. 233-234).

And, "Its primary function is to evoke all those past perceptions which are analogous to the present perception, to recall to us what preceded and followed them, and so to suggest to us that decision which is the most useful" (p. 303).

Bartlett (1932), on the basis of a number of studies, went one step beyond Bergson and proposed that memory is not only subject to selective recall, but that the actual content of what is recalled is a personal construction fashioned to fit the needs of the individual in a given situation as well. To use his own words, "Remembering appears to be far more decisively an affair of construction rather than one of mere reproduction" (p. 205), and "The past is being continually
re-made, reconstructed in the interests of the present" (p. 309).

Bartlett went on to suggest that memory is constructed in this manner so as to reinforce or justify current attitudes: "When a subject is being asked to remember, very often the first thing that emerges is something of the nature of attitude. The recall is then a construction, made largely on the basis of attitude, and its general effect is that of a justification of the attitude" (p. 207).

Adler, who borrowed from Bergson's philosophy, but worked independently of Bartlett, also took notice of the selectivity involved in memory, and of the contiguity of memory and attitude:

"We remember those events whose recollections further an important underlying movement. We forget likewise all those events which detract from the fulfillment of a plan. We find thus that memory, too, is subordinated to the business of purposive adaptation...(Lasting) memories are frequently surcharged with a one-sided prejudice, may...appear as an attitude, an emotional tone, or even as a philosophic point of view" (1927, p. 50).

And Dreikurs, in a presentation of Adlerian psychology, had the following to say about memory, which is reminiscent of Bartlett's position: "All memory serves to justify a definite line of conduct which is being pursued at the time or has been planned for the future...There can be no doubt that each individual tries to justify his attitude by looking back to those experiences" (1950, p. 86).

Experimental evidence for the influence of attitudes on memory retention and recall is also available. Watson & Hartmann (1939), for example, found that theistic and atheistic subjects remembered in greater quantity and with better quality material which supported their religious attitude, and that they often distorted adversary positions
so as to make them less effective or to give them a different meaning more compatible with one's beliefs. Although the overall results of this study were descriptively consistent with memory theory, the majority of statistical analyses fell short of significance. Similarly, Edwards (1941) found that subjects who favored or opposed New Deal politics better retained information supporting their stand. The results of this study, however, were statistically significant, which Edwards took as support for his hypothesis that, "Experiences which harmonize with an existing frame of reference will tend to be learned and remembered better than experiences which conflict with the same frame of reference" (p. 36). It should be noted, however, that subjects did not simply forget or somehow distort all oppositional material, for this would lead the individual far from the world to which he or she must adapt. In fact, as found by Watson & Hartmann, subjects tended to remember with good quality such material when it was of a strong or formidable character. That is, the person must not only be reminded of what one is working with, but also what he or she is up against. Memories, out of adaptive necessity, not only "speak clearly the language of encouragement", but also "of warning" (Adler, 1927, p. 50).

The foregoing indicates that memories are a creative and adaptively purposeful production of the individual. They tend to align themselves and be consonant with attitudes, which they further serve to justify. Thus, like perception, memory is subject to distortion and selectivity according to one's values, attitudes, and needs in a given situation. In fact, as suggested by Freud (1965, p. 655), memories may provide a more fertile soil for projection than perception since the former is
further removed from the objective world, and thus give the inner processes a broader range of influence. That is, perception always takes place within an objective situation, which sets definite limits to the amount of distortion, and therefore projection, that can take place. Memory, on the other hand, is largely an artifact of some past happening and lacks the restraints of immediate reality. As a result, memory, as compared to perception, involves a greater degree of imagination and internal determination, and thus has a greater projective potential.

A considerable amount of interest was generated in childhood memories, in particular, at the turn of the last century, and the result was a number of investigations that took a strictly taxonomic and statistical approach (Miles, 1893; Henri & Henri, 1898; Colegrove, 1899; Hall, 1899). These authors were concerned primarily with determining such things as the average age of first memories, sense modalities employed, differences between the memories of men and women, the emotional tone of memories, and their accuracy. None of these studies, however, attempted to explain why or for what reason one particular event might be remembered and not another, or otherwise give the results any meaning within a theoretical frame. Such attempts to deal with early recollections within a larger theoretical perspective of personality did not appear on the scene until the interests of Freud and Adler were pointed in that direction. Although the ideas of these two men on memory were blatantly antithetical, they managed to agree on two points, namely, that early memories are significant in the study of personality, and that they are, for the most part, erroneous reconstructions of
In Freud's opinion, childhood memories are "screen memories", which "...owe their preservation not to their own content but to an associative relation between their content and another which is repressed" (1960, p. 43). He went on to say, "The formation of screen memories has at its basis the forgetting of other more important memories" (p. 45). For Freud, then, early recollections serve to screen or hide repressed material, the awareness of which would be too painful and overwhelming for the person to handle, but at the same time to provide symbolic expression. The impulse or conflict exists, but it is replaced in awareness by a benign analogy or metaphor:

"The child no less than the adult only retains what is important; but what is important is represented (by the processes of condensation, and more importantly, of displacement...) in the memory by something apparently trivial" (1953, p. 211).

A good example of this theory, which assumes that the manifest memory content is an innocuous and symbolic expression of some latent and repressed material, put into practice was given by Freud as follows:

"A man of twenty-four has preserved the following picture from his fifth year. He is sitting in the garden of a summer villa, on a small chair beside his aunt, who is trying to teach him the letters of the alphabet. He is in difficulties over the difference between 'm' and 'n'
and he asks his aunt to tell him how to know one from the other. His aunt points out to him that the 'm' has a whole piece more than the 'n' -- the third stroke. There appeared to be no reason for challenging the trustworthiness of this childhood memory; it had, however, only acquired its meaning at a later date, when it showed itself suited to represent symbolically another of the boy's curiosities. For just as at that time he wanted to know the difference between 'm' and 'n', so later he was anxious to find out the difference between boys and girls, and would have been willing for this particular aunt to be the one to teach him. He also discovered then that the difference was a similar one -- that a boy, too, has a whole piece more than a girl; and at the time when he acquired this piece of knowledge he called up the recollection of the parallel curiosity of his childhood" (1960, pp. 48-49).

From this example and other comments by Freud one can see that his theory of childhood memories holds true to his general atomistic approach to personality. That is, an early recollection is the result of an ego compromise. The id is given partial gratification, but in such symbolic form that retaliation from the superego, i.e., anxiety and guilt feelings, is obviated.

Unlike Freud, who, as we have seen, concentrated his efforts on exposing the hypothesized latent content, Adler claimed that there is no such thing as latent content in memory. Instead, the important information is to be found in the beliefs and feelings manifestly revealed in early recollections, which supposedly coincide with one's basic frame of reference. This approach is based on Adler's theory of life style, which assumes that all expressions of the individual have the same basic meaning and spring from the same basic source. The person retains in awareness those childhood events which best exemplify and reinforce a given set of attitudes to be employed in his or her unique mode of goal striving toward a goal of superiority and away
from a feeling of inferiority:

"The basic attitudes which have guided the individual throughout his life and which prevail, likewise, in his present situation, are reflected in those fragments which he has selected to epitomize his feelings about life, and to cherish in his memory as reminders. He has preserved these as his early recollections" (Adler, 1937, p. 287).

Throughout his career, Adler stressed the concepts of holism and unity of the personality, which propose that the various parts of the personality are consistent with each other and are merely variations of the same theme. Although the basic frame of reference, therefore, may be inferred from any expression of the individual, Adlerians are particularly interested in, and rely heavily upon, information obtained from early recollections. There are two reasons for this emphasis. Firstly, people tend to look upon their first memories as meaningless curiosities and, as a result, present them to the therapist with little fear of revealing some unsavory bit of information. But it is just this notion that there is nothing worth hiding in early recollections that makes them so revealing. As stated by Adler, "In the main, people are perfectly willing to discuss their first memories. They take them as mere facts and do not realize the meaning hidden in them" (1931, p. 75). Because the person thinks of these memories as irrelevant or silly, they tend to be exempt from the disguises and safeguarding mechanisms that commonly imbue the day to day expressions of the individual. Early recollections, therefore, present a clear and uncontaminated picture of one's basic view of life or frame of reference. The second reason for the special significance of early recollections is due to their distance from the objective world. That is, one may be
able to recall with perfect clarity all the details of an event that happened a week ago, and perhaps the main details of one of a year ago. But when a period of twenty, thirty, forty, or more years separates the actual event from its recollection, the memory content tends to deteriorate and the details become foggy. As a result of this ambiguity, the person must project something in the memory so that it makes sense, and has meaning within his or her conceptualization of the world, in much the same way that one responds to a Rorschach card.

One can see from these two reasons that the interest of Adlerians in early recollections is more of a practical than theoretical one. Although they do have a sound base in the theory, it is unusual to find any mention of early recollections in Adlerian literature outside of case studies and discussions of the practical applications of the theory. But within this practical setting, first memories are essential. As stated by Adler himself, "I would never investigate a personality without asking for the first memory" (1931, p. 75).

It should be obvious that Adler conceptualized memory, and especially early memories, as the result of attitudes and thus reflective of attitudes, a position which is nearly identical with that of Bartlett. Because of this supposed attitudinal base of memory, the Adlerian interpretation of early recollections likewise has an attitudinal bias. With this respect, Mosak (1958) had the following to say about the Adlerian interpretive scheme:

"In interpreting early recollections it should be understood that what is elicited are the individual's attitudes and not a mere description of his overt behavior...The recollections describe a modus vivendi rather than a modus..."
operandi" (p. 305).

Mosak went on to give the following example of the Adlerian method, which, in contrast to Freud's, shows an emphasis on what the memory reveals rather than hides:

"ER -- We had a cookie jar on the top shelf in the kitchen. I couldn't reach it by myself, so my uncle lifted me up, and I got the cookie jar.

"Interpretation -- This memory, given by a woman, is suggestive of a feeling of smallness on her part. In order to get the 'goodies' of life, she must rely upon the assistance of bigger people. From a diagnostic viewpoint dependency upon her uncle may be significant. However, the recollection expresses a more generalized dependency feeling either toward all people or with respect to men specifically...Nonetheless, even were the above incident an isolated occurrence in the subject's life history or perhaps even fictitious with no actual dependency on the uncle possible, the retention of the incident would point to an underlying, generalized feeling of dependency" (pp. 304-305).

During the past two decades, a number of investigations have been performed in order to determine the efficiency and validity of early recollections as a personality measure. The overall results indicate that manifest content interpretation of first memories provides accurate and meaningful personality information.

One of the first experiments on the projective use of first memories was performed by Lieberman (1957), who administered a projective test battery, composed of the Rorschach, Wechsler-Bellevue, and House-Tree-Person drawings, to 25 subjects, in addition to obtaining their early recollections. Two personality assessments via a trait check list were made for each subject, one on the basis of the tests, and the other on early recollections. The results showed that interpretations based on first memories were substantiated by the
the projective tests to a statistically significant degree \( (p<.001) \), although the testing approach tended to provide a greater quantity of information. Lieberman concluded, "The advantages of utilizing childhood memories were the ease and rapidity of obtaining them as well as their function as a check upon other projective materials" (p. 36).

Levy & Grigg (1962) elicited early recollections from 21 psychiatric patients and used this information to score subjects on the continuums of Dependency-Independency, Destructive Aggression-Constructive Aggression, and Sexuality, each of which consisted of several thematic categories. The authors then attempted to match their profiles based on early memories with reports written by the subjects' therapists. Their matchings were successful beyond a .03% chance of Type I error. The authors concluded that early recollections may be used as measures of "preconscious themes", but added that the validity of this technique tends to deteriorate when the subject is characterized by massive and pervasive denial and when first memories are vague and barren.

In Friedberg's study (1975), it was hypothesized that early recollections would provide sufficient information to differentiate homosexuals from heterosexuals on seven variables. It was expected that the former group would present recollections indicative of greater dependency needs, a view of the world as a more dangerous and hostile place, and lesser social interest, gender identity, self identity, activity and initiative, and goal direction. The sample consisted of 30 homosexuals and 30 heterosexuals, who were instructed to write their
early recollections down on paper. The raters had no face to face contact with the subjects and scored each protocol without knowing from which group it came. The mean scores for the two groups on the seven variables were then compared and the differences found to be significant at or beyond the 5% level for the first five variables mentioned above. On the basis of these results, Friedberg concluded that, "ERs can be used to aid in identifying life styles" (p. 204).

Ferguson (1964) attempted to determine how efficiently clinicians could match early recollection protocols with life style reports in two separate studies. In the first, three leading members of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology were used as judges. Each interviewed 30 subjects and for each wrote a summary life style report, resulting in three reports for each subject, or 90 in all. Each judge then attempted to match the 60 reports written by the other two with protocols. All three clinicians were successful beyond the .003 level of significance. In the second part of this study, matchings were made using the reports and protocols of ten subjects from the above procedure, by ten clinicians of various theoretical positions who furthermore had no face to face contact with the subjects. The ten judges included six Freudians, two Adlerians, and two eclectics who were familiar with the Adlerian interpretation of first memories. They were all instructed to make their matchings on the basis of their own judgement. Seven of the judges were able to make successful matchings ranging from a .03 level to perfect matching. The three judges whose results did not reach significance were all senior psychoanalysts, who admitted they could make no sense out of the procedure and made no successful
matchings at all.

It should be noted that the above studies were successful in differentiating persons or groups according to information obtained from early recollections on dimensions ranging from the discrete categories used by Levy & Grigg to the gestalt type life style reports in Ferguson's study. Thus, it would appear that early recollections provide valid personality information regardless of whether one is interested in determining, say, how aggressive a person is, or his or her more general view of life. It should also be noted that the above studies, which are representative of others concerned with the validity of first memories, did not involve making a prediction for each subject with respect to a given performance. Although Levy & Grigg came close to a predictive investigation, their results were complicated by the matching task. In fact, in an extensive review of the literature on this topic, the present author was able to find only one bone fide predictive study (McCarter, Tomkins & Schiffman, 1961). The authors of that experiment obtained early recollections from 75 university students and used that information to predict scores on several scales of the Tomkins-Horn Picture Arrangement Test. The results, however, were mixed, with predictions exceeding chance levels of success on some scales, but failing on others. Thus, the present investigation, which is of the predictive type, is justified because of the paucity of this kind of research. In addition, the present study is of immediate value in a practical sense, since whenever a therapist makes a guess or a hunch about a client on the basis of first memories, he or she is making a prediction.
As stated earlier, first memories do not simply satisfy the curiosities of the therapist, but also serve a definite purpose for the individual. They remind the person of his or her goals, interests, and beliefs, and encourage and justify action consistent with one's basic frame of reference. But this link between belief and action is not a simple and direct one. For these beliefs to be translated into action, as Dreikurs (1967) has made clear, a concomitant and appropriate emotional response must occur as well. Emotions, to use Dreikurs' words:

"...provide the fuel, the steam, so to speak, for our actions, the driving force without which we would be impotent. They come into play whenever we decide to do something forcefully. They make it possible for us to carry out our decisions. They permit us to take a stand, to develop definite attitudes, to form convictions" (p. 207).

Dreikurs went on to say, "Strong emotions indicate strong desires. And without strong desires nobody is going to do much about anything" (p. 213).

Since it would appear that the influence of a belief upon action depends upon the strength of the accompanying feeling state, it is hypothesized here that early recollections that are subject to frequent recall will provide lower predictive validity than those of infrequent recall. That is, since the emotion eliciting properties of a stimulus tend to deteriorate as a function of frequent exposure to that stimulus, as shown in the therapeutical intervention of flooding, for example, it would seem that if one thinks often of his or her early recollections, then the emotional response to them weakens in intensity. And as this feeling state weakens, it is assumed that
so does the influence of attitudes, as conveyed in memory, on other expressions of the individual. A second reason for this hypothesized outcome is that if one is frequently exposed to an event, that event may lose the freshness and ambiguity necessary as inducements to projection. For example, if a person were permitted to mull over a Rorschach card on several occasions before actually giving a response to it, that response would probably be of little value. By that time the individual would have been able to go beyond his or her immediate and important needs and attitudes to find a percept that best fits the stimulus, in an objective sense. With early recollections, as well, frequent recall would probably enhance the probability that detailed elaborations are based on logic, or what probably happened in reality, and thus reduce the projective effect. In addition, a high rate of recall may lead the person to think of the recollection as a significant and important event in and of itself, which may result in the memory content becoming clouded by a variety of defense and safeguarding mechanisms. Although this issue is of apparent clinical importance, there have been no investigations, to the author's knowledge, of either theoretical or empirical nature on the effect of recall frequency on the validity of early recollections.

The third hypothesis of the present study is that there is no difference between the predictive validities of early and later childhood memories. Even though Adler's theory emphasized the unity of the personality, that is, all expressions of the person have the same basic purpose and meaning, clinicians are especially interested in early childhood recollections. Mosak (1958), for example, claimed that memories
from late childhood are more easily influenced by one's "current mood" than early childhood memories, and are thus less accurate indicators of the basic frame of reference. He arbitrarily sets the cut off point for early childhood memories at eight years of age. However, Mosak's assertion seems curious since all human expressions, including current mood and later childhood memories, are theoretically subject to and consistent with this frame of reference. Adler himself warned, "We should not distinguish too sharply between old and new remembrances, for in new remembrances also the action line is involved" (1929, p. 118).

In summary, the present study is an attempt to support the following hypotheses.

1. The manifest content of early recollections may be used to successfully predict personality variables.

2. Predictions that are based on recollections subject to frequent recall are of lesser predictive value than those of infrequent recall.

3. No difference exists between the validities of predictions based on early childhood memories and late childhood memories.

Whenever a distinction is to be made between recollections according to the age variable, the terms "early childhood memories" and "late childhood memories" will be used. All other terms, e.g., early recollections and first memories, will pertain to both age categories.
METHOD

Subjects

Subjects (Ss) for the present study were drawn from two psychiatric residential treatment centers and one outpatient agency in Kalamazoo and Van Buren Counties. They numbered 42, 18 men and 24 women, and represented all general diagnostic categories, i.e., neurosis, psychosis, personality disorder, transient situational disturbance, and alcohol and substance abuse. Ages ranged from 17 to 59 years, with a modal range of 20 to 30 years.

Criteria for inclusion into the sample were that Ss be literate, willing to take part in the study, and not in a psychotic episode or immediate crisis situation. Nearly all clients of the two residential programs during a twelve week period were contacted and approximately 70% met criteria. These Ss constitute about 70% of the total sample. Attempts were also made over a three week period to contact as many of the outpatient clients as possible. Most were contacted before or after group or individual therapy sessions and only about 20% met criteria, due mainly to their lack of interest in the study. Thus, in terms of composition, the present sample is best representative of a residential population. However, in determining to whom the results may properly be applied, the outpatient elements should not be disregarded. This is said not only because of the actual presence of outpatients in the sample, but also because of the vague and fluid line that differentiates the two groups. That is, most residential
Ss in this sample were at one time outpatients and will probably resume that status at the end of their residential stay. Likewise, many of the outpatient Ss underwent residential treatment at one time or another. In fact, this kind of mobility between outpatient and residential sectors can be expanded to include psychiatric inpatients as well, since the majority of Ss had, on one or more occasions, participated in this kind of treatment, especially at Kalamazoo State Hospital and the Borgess Hospital Psychiatric Unit. Thus, even though the present sample, on the face of it, is largely representative of a residential population, the high degree of client mobility between outpatient, residential, and inpatient agencies indicates that the results of this study may be generalized to an overall psychiatric population.

Procedure

If a client met criteria, he or she was administered the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) and asked to give his or her early memories. Administration of the test always preceded elicitation of recollections since it was anticipated that some Ss might decide to drop out of the study during the testing procedure. This actually happened on two or three occasions, however.

The EPPS was chosen for this study for two reasons. First, it is a rather short test, composed of 225 items, and thus presented minimal risk of a high drop out rate due to apprehension of committing a considerable amount of one's time and energy to an unexciting task. Second, since the test scales relate to specific categories of behavior,
it was thought that predicted scores could be made without complica-
tion from a number of concomitant variables, as would have been
the case with Cattell's 16PF, for example.

Percentile scores on three EPPS scales, namely, Deference,
Affiliation, and Succorance, were used as dependent or criterion var-
iables. As one can see in Table I, which presents examples of test
statements related to these scales, the scale titles are quite descrip-
tive of what they measure. That is, Deference measures the extent
to which one conforms to authority and convention, Affiliation, one's
need for friendship, and Succorance, one's need for sympathy, help,
and pity. Although any or all of the total fifteen EPPS scales could
have been used for this study, it was decided to use a small number
of them since the size of the critical Bonferroni F statistic would in-
crease proportionally with the number of scales. For example, while
the critical value for 32 Ss and three scales is 6.43 at the 5% level,
that for all fifteen scales would be 10.17. The above three scales,
in particular, were chosen because in the author's experience, early
recollections from a psychiatric population commonly include events
related to authority, friendship, and succorance, and would thus seem
to have the best promise of providing the information necessary to
make predicted scores for a large proportion of Ss on each scale.

After the S finished the test, he or she was given the following
instructions as a means to obtaining early recollections: "Remember
back as far as you can. What is your earliest memory? Picture it in
your mind as if it were happening again." Ss were further encouraged
to give as much detail as possible, through open ended questions like
Table I: Examples of test statements for EPPS scales Deference, Affiliation, and Succorance.
TABLE I

EXAMPLES OF TEST STATEMENTS FOR EPPS SCALES
DEERENCE, AFFILIATION, AND SUCCORANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deference</td>
<td>I like to follow instructions and do what is expected of me; I like to conform to custom and avoid doing things that people I respect might consider unconventional; I like to accept the leadership of people I admire; When I am in a group, I like to accept the leadership of someone else in deciding what the group is going to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>I like to have strong attachments with my friends; I like to make as many friends as I can; I like to form new friendships; I like to be loyal to my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succorance</td>
<td>I like my friends to feel sorry for me when I am sick; I like my friends to sympathize with me and to cheer me up when I am depressed; I like my friends to make a fuss over me when I am hurt or sick; I like my friends to encourage me when I meet with failure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
'"And then what happened?" and "Can you recall any more details?", plus a verbal statement regarding the feeling tone of the memory. Ss were also asked how old they were at the time of and how often they think of the recalled event. This procedure was repeated until the S could recall no more early memories or until five had been accumulated. On the average, each S presented 2.8 memories, with a mode of 3.0. All of this information was obtained in a single face to face session with each S, taken down in longhand as accurately as possible, and shortly thereafter typed onto a prepared form. Although taping these sessions would have undoubtedly been more accurate, it was opted to use the above procedure in order to avoid any problems with confidentiality and the possibility of Ss becoming distracted or balking at the idea of being taped.

Independent or predictor variables were the predicted EPPS test scores for the three scales based on information found in early recollections. (For a description of the scoring method, see the Appendix.) These predicted scores were dichotomous, that is, high or low, which were transformed into numerical form, 1 or 0, respectively, for the data analyses. Although ideally each S would have been given three predicted scores, one for each scale, this was not possible in many cases simply because recollection protocols often lacked sufficient information. On the average, 2.4 predictions out of a possible three were made for each S. About 17% of the Ss received one predicted score, 33% two predictions, and 50% three predictions.

In order to test the hypothesis that early recollections can be used to successfully predict personality variables, the actual and
predicted scores were correlated separately for the three scales, and the resultant F values compared to Bonferroni F statistics for significance. Since the number of predicted scores varied across the three scales, the Bonferroni values were likewise allowed to vary as a function of the total number of predictions made for each scale.

Since the three sets of criterion and predictor variables were simultaneously tested for significance, it was necessary to use a family-wise error rate in order to stabilize the probability of Type I error. That is, if the three obtained F values were compared to typical univariate F statistics, the actual chance of Type I error could range anywhere from \( \alpha \) to \( 1 - (1 - \alpha)^c \), where \( c \) equals the number of simultaneous tests. For the present study, with three tests and a significance level of 5%, a univariate approach would result in an actual alpha of as much as \( 1 - (1 - .05)^3 \), or about 14%. The Bonferroni method avoids this potential inflation and stabilizes alpha by interpreting the results in the same way they were obtained, that is, simultaneously. Whereas the univariate approach would make a separate inferential statement for each of the three tests, the Bonferroni would make only one, which is, namely, at the 5% level, there is a 5% chance that one or more of the statistically significant results are falsely significant.

In order to test Hypotheses II and III, each predicted score was classified according to the recollection age and recall frequency of the memory or memories used in making that prediction. For Hypothesis II, predictions were classified as coming from recollections
of frequent or infrequent recall rates, which correspond to more than once per three weeks and once per three weeks or less, respectively. Actual and predicted scores were then correlated for the three scales at these two levels of recall frequency. The two correlation coefficients for each scale then underwent Fisher's z transformation and were tested for a significant difference by computing a \( \frac{z}{\sigma} \) value, which corresponds to a z score on the normal distribution. Since these values of the three separate scales were simultaneously tested, the actual probabilities of Type I error were adjusted by the formula \( \alpha_{\text{family}} = 1 - (1 - \alpha_{\text{individual}})^c \).

A similar procedure was employed for Hypothesis III. Predictions were classified as being based on recollections in which the S was less than eight years of age or between eight and twelve years. Recollections in which the person was older than twelve years were not accepted for the study. Eight predicted scores out of the total 99, however, were based on memories that included both age categories, and were thrown out of the sample for this analysis. Correlation coefficients and Fisher's z transformations were computed for each scale and the probabilities of Type I error determined as for Hypothesis II. Since Adlerians are concerned with early childhood memories, specifically, it was decided that if the difference between the two age levels for any scale exceeded a 10% level of confidence, then predictions based on later childhood memories would be thrown out of the sample for Hypotheses I and II. If, on the other hand, the differences are nonsignificant, this would be taken as support for the hypothesis that predictive validity does not vary as a function of recollection age, and both early and late childhood memories would
be used to test Hypotheses I and II.

Since the author had face to face contact with all Ss prior to making his predictions, a separate and independent set of predictions was made by a co-rater in order to ensure that the scoring method was practical and communicable, and that the author did, in fact, base his predictions on the scoring scheme and not on intuition or extraneous information and cues gained during the interviews. The co-rater was instructed in the scoring method and given several confabulated examples for practice before she actually made her predictions.

---

The co-rater was a 35 year old female, who has her Masters degree in education. She has little understanding of Adlerian psychology, and even less of the clinical application of early memories according to any theory, which enhanced the probability that she relied exclusively on the scoring method in making her predictions.
RESULTS

Table II summarizes the results of the present study with respect to Hypothesis I, namely, that early recollections may be used to successfully predict personality traits. Starting from the left side of the table, these columns indicate the scales, number of Ss given a prediction, point biserial correlation coefficients, coefficients of determination, mean percentile scores on the test scales at the High level of prediction, percentile scores at the Low level of prediction, the obtained F statistics, significance levels, biserial correlation coefficients, biserial coefficients corrected for attenuation on the criterion variable, and inter-rater reliability coefficients. The bottom row of Table II gives several weighted averages, for descriptive purposes only, on the combined values of the three scales.

As seen in Table II, the correlation coefficients between actual and predicted scores ranged from .364 to .587, with corresponding F statistics from 5.51 to 13.18 for the three scales. The F statistic for the Affiliation scale was found to exceed the Bonferroni critical value at the 1% level of significance. Statistical trends, with probabilities of Type I error less than 10% but greater than 5%, were also found for the Deference and Succorance scales.

Inter-rater reliability coefficients were satisfactory and ranged from .668 to .948. In addition, for a prediction to be made, the raters had to first decide whether sufficient information was present in a given protocol, that is, whether or not it met the
Table II: A summary of the validity coefficients between actual and predicted scores and reliability coefficients for predicted scores.
TABLE II

A SUMMARY OF THE VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN ACTUAL AND PREDICTED SCORES
AND RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS FOR PREDICTED SCORES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r_{pt. bis.}</th>
<th>r^2</th>
<th>\bar{Y}_H</th>
<th>\bar{Y}_L</th>
<th>F_{obt}</th>
<th>sign. level</th>
<th>r_{bis.}</th>
<th>r_{bis.xy'}</th>
<th>r_{xx}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deference</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>.364</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>31.05</td>
<td>5.51</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.444</td>
<td>.573</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>.587</td>
<td>.345</td>
<td>65.45</td>
<td>31.88</td>
<td>13.18</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td>.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succorance</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>.402</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>71.17</td>
<td>38.00</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>.559</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Averages</td>
<td></td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>62.25</td>
<td>33.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>.820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
scoring criteria as described in the Appendix. Inter-rater agreement that such information did or did not exist was 92.9%, 88.1%, and 78.6% for Deference, Affiliation, and Succorance, respectively. These reliability coefficients and the percentages of agreement indicate that the scoring method was practical and communicable, and that the author's face to face contact with Ss had little biasing effect upon his predictions. It may also be pointed out that if the author did use extraneous information gained during the interviews, then one would expect him to make more predictions than the co-rater for the simple reason that he would have more to go on. However, the total number of predictions made by the two raters was almost the same, with the author predicting 99 scores and the co-rater 95.

Statistics under the heading \( r_{\text{bis.}} \), i.e., biserial correlations, are the point biserial correlation coefficients corrected for course grouping. These values refer to the correlations one would expect if the study had used continuous data on the predictor variables. The column headed \( r_{\text{bis. xy}} \) presents the biserial coefficients corrected for attenuation on the Y variable. These statistics, which ranged from .559 to .816, estimate what the validity coefficients would have been if the predictor variables were composed of continuous data and if the test scales were error free, that is, had reliability values of 1.0\(^4\). These values are given here because they better approximate,

\(^4\)Corrected split-half reliability coefficients for the three scales, which were used to compute the \( r_{\text{bis. xy}} \) statistics, were taken from Edwards (1959) and equalled .80, .70, and .76 for the Deference, Affiliation, and Succorance scales, respectively.
in comparison to the point biserial and biserial statistics, the predictive validity of early recollections in a clinical setting. That is, whenever a therapist makes a prediction or otherwise comes to some conclusion about a client on the basis of first memories, he or she has a continuous range of options from which to choose with respect to a given trait. In addition, the therapist attempts to predict directly some factor within the client, rather than an indirect measure of it. He or she might predict "This client is depressed", but most probably not "This client's test results will indicate that he is depressed". As a result, the therapist does not have to worry about the reliability of the variable or trait involved. It should be noted, however, that in practice there is the problem of the reliability of predictions based on early recollections. Two experienced clinicians may come to very different conclusions on the basis of the same memories. Similarly, correcting for attenuation on Y does not remove error variability due to the reliability of the predicted scores.

The validity coefficients obtained at the two levels of recall for the Deference and Affiliation scales are found in Tables III and IV, respectively. The difference between these coefficients at the frequent and infrequent levels of recall was nonsignificant for both scales, although noninferentially they point in the hypothesized direction.

Since all data for the Succorance scale at the frequent level of recall had High predicted scores only, it was impossible to compute a correlation coefficient, which left the planned procedure
Table III:  Validity coefficients at the infrequent and frequent levels of recall for the Deference scale.

Table IV:  Validity coefficients at the infrequent and frequent levels of recall for the Affiliation scale.
### TABLE III

**VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS AT THE INFREQUENT AND FREQUENT LEVELS OF RECALL FOR THE DEFERENCE SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Infrequent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$z = 0.227, \ p = 0.97$, two-tailed

### TABLE IV

**VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS AT THE INFREQUENT AND FREQUENT LEVELS OF RECALL FOR THE AFFILIATION SCALE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequent</th>
<th>Infrequent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$z = 1.17, \ p = 0.42$, two-tailed
useless. As an alternative method, a two-dimensional Chi-square test was performed in order to describe the relationship between the correctness of High predicted scores and the frequency of recall. The correctness variable was dichotomized as correct or incorrect and corresponded to actual test scores of above 50 percentile points or 50 points or less, respectively. The Chi-square matrix is presented in Table V. The relationship between these two variables, i.e., correctness and recall frequency, was found to correspond to a Chi-square value of 9.91 and a phi coefficient of .585. These statistics, however, cannot justifiably be subjected to an inferential analysis with respect to Hypothesis II because the Chi-square approach was a post hoc investigation of only a part of the data, i.e., the predicted High scores. Descriptively, however, one can see that predicted scores based on memories of infrequent recall were typically correct, whereas those based on recollections of frequent recall were correct in only four out of nine instances. Thus, the High predictions for the Succorance scale were generally more accurate when based on memories of infrequent, as opposed to frequent, recall. Although this finding is in harmony with Hypothesis II, the inferential results for the Deference and Affiliation scales indicate that the hypothesis should be rejected.

Tables VI and VII present the validity coefficients at the two levels of recollection age and the results of the test on Hypothesis III, namely, that the predictive validities of early childhood memories and late childhood memories are not different. The "mixed" category is provided for descriptive purposes only and gives the correlation
Table V: A two dimensional Chi-square matrix representing the frequency of correct and incorrect predictions at the High level at frequent and infrequent levels of recall for the Succorance scale.
TABLE V

A TWO DIMENSIONAL CHI-SQUARE MATRIX REPRESENTING THE FREQUENCY OF CORRECT AND INCORRECT PREDICTIONS AT THE HIGH LEVEL AT FREQUENT AND INFREQUENT LEVELS OF RECALL FOR THE SUCCORANCE SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Infrequent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent</td>
<td>E = 4.5</td>
<td>E = 4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 = 4</td>
<td>0 = 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequent</td>
<td>E = 10</td>
<td>E = 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 = 17</td>
<td>0 = 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$x^2 = 9.91, \phi = .585$
Table VI: Validity coefficients at early, late, and mixed levels of childhood recollection age for the Deference scale.

Table VII: Validity coefficients at early, late, and mixed levels of childhood recollection age for the Affiliation scale.
### TABLE VI
VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS AT EARLY, LATE, AND MIXED LEVELS OF CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTION AGE FOR THE DEFERENCE SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>Late</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>.462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$z = 1.04, p = .51$, two-tailed

### Table VII
VALIDITY COEFFICIENTS AT EARLY, LATE, AND MIXED LEVELS OF CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTION AGE FOR THE AFFILIATION SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Early</th>
<th>Late</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.465</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$z = .338, p = .93$, two-tailed
Coefficient between actual and predicted scores for predicted scores based on recollections covering both age levels. The obtained z scores were nonsignificant for the Deference and Affiliation scales, which thus supports Hypothesis III and indicates that both early and late childhood recollections may be used to test Hypotheses I and II. An analysis of the data for the Succorance scale was not possible because the Late category contained only two pairs of actual and predicted scores.
DISCUSSION

With respect to the hypothesis that early recollections may be used as a valid measure of personality, the correlation between actual and predicted test scores was, for one scale, found to be significantly greater than zero at the 1% level. That is, there is a 1% chance that this correlation occurred on the basis of chance alone and that in reality the population correlation coefficient is equal to zero. Statistical trends beyond the 10% level were also found for the other two scales.

Although these results are statistically promising, the question arises as to whether they are meaningful. The coefficients of determination, which indicate the proportion of variability in the actual test scores accountable to the predicted scores, ranged from .13 to .35, which is certainly not spectacular. It should be kept in mind, however, that these results are based on an experimental situation quite different from the clinical setting in which early recollections are most likely to be used. As stated before, the biserial coefficients corrected for attenuation on Y give a better indication of the clinical validity of first memories. The coefficients of determination of these values ranged from .31 to .67 and thus give increased support for the practical significance of early recollections as a personality measure.

These findings are consistent with Adler's theory, which states that early recollections are congruent with and reflective of the person's basic beliefs and attitudes: "There are no 'chance memories':"
out of the incalculable number of impressions which meet an individual, he chooses to remember only those which he feels, however darkly, to have a bearing on his situation. Thus his memories represent his 'Story of My Life'..." (Adler, 1931, p. 73). However, the correlations obtained in this study, even when corrected for attenuation, are not of such a character to legitimize the use of first memories as a sole indicator of personality. Adler realized this limitation when he noted, "Early recollections give us hints and clues..." (1937, p. 287), but certainly not hard and fast facts. Nonetheless, the results indicate that early recollections may be used as a quick and practical screening device or as an effective member of a larger battery of tests.

The hypothesis that the predictive validity of early recollections would deteriorate under conditions of frequent recall was not given support in the present study. Although the data on all three scales were descriptively consistent with the hypothesis, the inferential findings for the Deference and Affiliation scales indicate that the differences between the correlations at the two levels of recall frequency may be easily explained as a matter of chance fluctuation. The probabilities of Type I error for these two scales were 97 and 42 percent. In addition, the results on the Succorance scale could not, because of the nature of the method employed, properly be subjected to an inferential analysis. Hypothesis II, therefore, is rejected.

As expected, no significant difference was found between the predictive validities of early and late childhood memories for any
of the scales. Thus, even though Adlerians tend to lay particular stress upon early childhood memories, it would seem that childhood memories in general may be used as accurate predictors of personality variables, or at least those of a discrete kind as used in this study.

The following summarizes the results of the present study with respect to the three hypotheses tested:

1. Early recollections were found to provide information useful in the prediction of personality variables. Correlations between actual and predicted test scores exceeded the 10% level of significance for two scales, and went beyond the 1% level for the third. Hypothesis I was upheld.

2. The predictive validity of early recollections was found not to vary as a function of recall frequency. Hypothesis II was rejected.

3. The predictive validity of childhood memories was found not to vary as a function of recollection age. Hypothesis III was upheld.
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Adler, A. The Science of Living, 1929, New York: Greenberg, Inc.


Friedberg, R. Early recollections of homosexuals as indicators of their life styles. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, Nov. 1975, (2), 196-204.


Miles, C. A study of individual psychology. *American Journal of Psychology*, 1893, 6, 534-558.


Predicted test scores were made on the basis of the interplay between the actual events of a recollection and its feeling tone. Both of these pieces of information were necessary for a prediction to be made since, if one will recall from the introduction to this paper, memory both encourages and admonishes. The feeling tone of a recollection thus indicates whether the memory content portrays something desirable or undesirable. For example, two people may recall with similar detail receiving a spanking from mother, but their emotional responses may indicate antithetical tendencies. One may recall feeling ashamed about his or her misdeed and see the punishment as justified, while the other may remember feeling resentful and picked upon. If these recollections, as hypothesized, reflect here and now dispositions of the two persons, it would seem that the former is a conformist who places considerable stock in what authority figures say and do. The second person, on the other hand, presents a memory more in line with the attitude of a rebel, someone who resists authority.

Since the Deference and Affiliation test scales relate to two interpersonally specific attitudes, namely, toward authority figures and friends, criteria were set up for who had to be present in an S's early recollections for a prediction to be made. For a predicted score to be made on the Deference scale, the memory had to include an adult in authority, usually a parent or grandparent. And for Affiliation, a nonrelative child of about the same age as the S in the memory had to be present. Furthermore, these figures were required
Table VIII: Early recollection content that indicates High and Low predicted scores for the three EPPS scales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deference</td>
<td>Sees authority figures in a favorable light; conforms to demands or requests of authority figures.</td>
<td>Sees authority figures in a disparaging way; rebels against authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>Sees friends and peers in a favorable light.</td>
<td>Avoids friendship; portrays friends and peers as undesirable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succorance</td>
<td>Wants or needs help, sympathy, protection, etc., or gets it without asking and likes it.</td>
<td>Does not want help, protection, sympathy, etc., or rejects it when offered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to be in roles of central importance, that is, related to the major theme or event of the recollection. For example, one woman in this study began her recollection by saying, "I was walking down the street with my mother and then we split up and I started walking down the hill." She went on to describe in considerable detail and length an auto accident that she witnessed. Although her mother was initially present in this memory, she was not related to the primary theme of feeling helpless in situations that call for immediate action. Consequently, this recollection did not meet the criterion for a prediction to be made on the Deference scale.

The Succorance scale, too, had its criterion for scoring, which was based on what happened in the recalled event, rather than on who was there. That is, the person asked for, demanded, or was offered help, care, protection, or sympathy.

In actually predicting a score, the rater had to decide whether an S's recollection protocol indicated a high or low value placed on authority, friendship, and succorance. Table VIII presents the basic themes in memories that relate to High and Low predicted scores for the three scales.

The following examples, which are taken from the present sample, and explanations are given in order to clarify the scoring method.

Male, age 43

Recollections

1. I was in a bad car accident with my mother. We were on our way to pick up my brother from school and she passed out at the wheel and hit a tree. She got cut up real bad and ended up in the hospital and I had a broken leg from it. I remember that I crawled on my hands and knees for about a half mile to
a farm house we passed to get help. I was really scared.
I was on crutches for a while after that.

2. I remember going to the hospital to get my tonsils taken out. I was really pissed off at my folks for letting the doctor do it. I got sick and vomited all over from the ether.

Predictions and Explanations

Deferece -- Low

This predicted score is based on material in both memories. In the first, he sees his mother as incompetent, and in the second, he portrays both parents as unresponsive to his needs. One also sees in his second memory an unwillingness to conform to his parents' expectations.

Affiliation -- No Prediction

There are no same age peers in either memory.

Succorance -- High

In the first memory, he remembers himself as being in dire need of help. He is injured and frightened and seeks out assistance from others.

Female, age 36

Recollections

1. I remember when my sister was born. She's four years younger than me so I must have been four at the time. An older sister and brother built a snowman in front of mom's window because she was spending a lot of time in bed resting. I guess I was too young to understand. It's interesting that my first memory of life would be that. I have a hurt or dislike for my sister. We had our problems, me and Julie.

2. I remember when my mother was nursing Julie on the front porch of our house. It was springtime. She gave me some pennies so I could go to the store and get some candy for myself. I felt very pleased, like I was very big and didn't need anyone's help. It made me feel like I wasn't the baby of the family anymore.

3. I remember moving into our house -- the house I had all my life until I got married. I remember meeting this neighbor girl. She had pigtails and was walking on the railing. She saw my older brother and said, "Hey, that guy's in my room at
school." She was really excited that a kid in her class lived next door to her. I guess if the same thing happened to me, I'd be excited too.

4. I was playing in the parking lot next to our house and there was this girl who's a year and a half younger than me and she lived in this nice big house across the street. I guess she looked out the window and saw me playing -- maybe she felt sorry for me -- and she came over and we started talking and became the best of friends. We were always together up until junior high and that's when she took my boyfriend away. There's a real punchline to this story. I found out a while after I divorced my husband that she was seeing him on the sly while we were married. I think they may even be married by now.

**Predictions and Explanations**

**Deferece -- Low**

In Recollections 1 and 2, this woman remembers events which signal a rather drastic shift in her position in the family. She no longer holds down the favored position of the youngest child, but is now just another daughter. In both memories, she sees her mother withdrawing attention from her and giving it to her youngest sister instead, which this woman probably considered as unfair. The basic message is one of at least partial rejection by the mother.

**Affiliation -- Low**

In Recollections 3 and 4, the basic theme is that friends do not care about this woman. In the first, the girlfriend's attention is quickly and easily shifted to the brother. The second memory, especially, paints a very disparaging picture of friendship. Her thought that the initial contact between this woman and her friend was based on pity indicates right away that she perceives friendship as a matter of upmanship and competition. As a result, friends cannot be trusted, an interpretation that is reinforced when she tied the memory into the later events in junior high school and adulthood.

**Succorance -- Low**

In Recollection 2, this woman remembers undertaking a task on her own and feeling very pleased about it.

Male, age 22

**Recollections**

1. This was when my parents had a new septic tank put in. They
told me not to go near the hole so I just stood there and watched as they put it in. I remember that I felt scared about falling in.

2. I remember when we moved out to the farm and it was a very cold day. My parents were with me and they made me stay in the living room because that was the warmest place in the house. There wasn't any heat. I didn't like moving because I had to leave all my friends.

Predictions and Explanations

Deference -- High

In both recollections, this S portrays his parents as caring and concerned people, who take action to protect him from danger.

Affiliation -- High

Although no friends are actually present in either memory, Recollection 2 indicates that this man places a high value on friendship since he felt badly about having to leave all his friends.

Succorance -- High

In both memories, this man remembers receiving protection and extra attention and accepting these gestures without hesitation.

Male, age 54

Recollections

1. This was in Oklahoma and my mom and dad were separated and my mother took me down to my grandmother's to live. I remember crawling along the floor and I burnt myself on this big black stove. I jumped back and started hollering and my mother came in and got me and put something on the burn -- butter or some kind of salve -- to make it feel better. I knew she was protecting me and I cuddled up into her arms until I stopped bawling and fell asleep.

2. I remember walking down the road to school and I was throwing rocks at a flock of geese. I would do that every day on my way to school, but this one day they turned on me and started into honking and pecking and flapping and chased me back home. I ran into the house so they couldn't get me. I was scared when they started in on me, but I felt better once I got inside away from them.
3. I remember when I got my first bicycle. This was in Chicago after my parents got back together. My father bought it for me and I was riding it around the block and this bully took it away from me. I told my dad and he went over and talked with his father and after a few minutes my dad came back with the bike. I was afraid the bully was going to hurt me, so I gave him the bike. Well, really, he took it from me. I didn't give it to him.

Predictions and Explanations

Deference -- High

In Recollections 1 and 3, this man remembers his parents as kind and helpful.

Affiliation -- Low

In Recollection 3, he remembers being taken advantage of by a peer. Although the bully in this memory is not a friend, proper, the recollection would seem to function to remind this person that he must be cautious and on guard with others, an attitude that is opposed to the basic feeling of trust necessary for friendship.

Succorance -- High

In Recollections 1 and 3, this S is either physically or emotionally injured and looks toward others to help him out. Although Recollection 2 indicates that he is capable of taking independent action, the general theme of the protocol is that he will seek out others for help whenever possible.