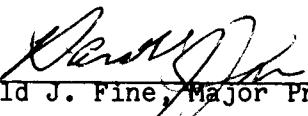
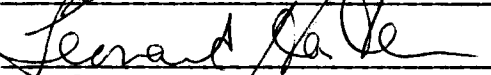
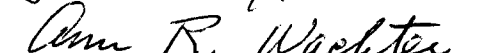


To The Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Janice Gayle Young entitled "A Phenomenological Study of the Earliest Memory." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.


Harold J. Fine, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost
and Dean of The Graduate School

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
THE EARLIEST MEMORY

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Janice Gayle Young

December 1986

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of individual's experiences of their earliest memory. A phenomenological method of research was used in gathering and analyzing data. Twenty participants were interviewed. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a phenomenological reduction procedure.

Earliest memory content was diverse. Fifteen themes appeared in the earliest memories; an additional nine themes were found when next-earliest memories were included in the analysis. While the content of an earliest memory was unique to the individual, analysis of interview transcripts revealed common themes in participants' experiences of remembering and talking about their memories. These themes were developed into seven dimensions to describe the essential features of the experience: (1) Priority, (2) History, (3) Source, (4) Temporal Stance, (5) Reality, (6) Significance, and (7) Meaning. A scoring manual was constructed and interview transcripts were scored on the basis of the seven dimensions.

Results indicated that participants engaged in a process of orienting to the memory by establishing one memory as earliest, by recognizing whether they had thought about the memory in the past, and by affirming the memory as their own. In simultaneously recalling and telling the memory, participants either "relived" the memory or "reported" the memory in an objective manner. As they reflected on their earliest memory, participants found varying degrees of significance and meaning.

Discussed in terms of relevance to theory and research was the importance of including, in addition to earliest memory content, the individuals' thoughts and feelings surrounding their earliest memories. Clinical implications were that the earliest memory could be a vehicle for self-expression and self-discovery, as well as an indicator to the therapist of the person's emotional, cognitive, and integrative capacities.

The study of the earliest memory from an experiential, phenomenological standpoint opens new areas for future research. The seven dimensions were noted as areas of focus that could further enhance our understanding of the earliest memory.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Memory as a human capacity has been a subject of curiosity and inquiry throughout the ages. Philosophers, scholars, and scientists have attempted to explain the workings of memory and remembering. Childhood memories and, more specifically, the earliest childhood memory have generated a wealth of speculation and a body of research.

One approach to understanding and explaining early childhood memories has been that of focusing on what is forgotten, typically referred to as childhood amnesia. Aristotle (cited in Strauss, 1960) conceptualized the mind as a pliable substance in which memory could be "stamped"; the mind of the very young child was too pliable to contain or hold an impression; only with maturity did it reach a consistency to hold permanently the impressions received. Freud (1899/1950) explained childhood amnesia as a manifestation of the repression of experiences which were of a disturbing or unacceptable nature. What was remembered was a "screen memory" which in a disguised fashion was linked to the repressed experience. Thus a more acceptable, unforbidden memory replaced the unacceptable one in a person's consciousness. More recently Schactel (1959) offered that early childhood experiences are lost to us, because education and acculturation provide us with language and other concepts or "schema" which become the vehicles that foster remembering; earliest childhood experiences, in their preverbal, preconceptual sensory aliveness, are discontinuous with our mature, conventional way of looking at and experiencing the world. As adults

we lack the means of recapturing or remembering this early state of being. On rare occasions when an early experience in its sensory richness is spontaneously evoked, our conventional mode of experiencing can be momentarily transcended.

Adler (1939/1956) approached childhood memories directly. Of the major personality theorists, he is the one who gave the earliest childhood memory a prominent place in his study of the person. Adler emphasized the continuity between the earliest childhood memory and the person as an adult. The earliest memory revealed major personality dynamics--specifically the person's approach to the world, or, to use Adler's words, his "style of life."

It appears that Adler provided the impetus for the earliest memory to become a source for inquiry in its own right, apart from childhood memories in general. Since that time, the earliest memory, alone or in conjunction with successive next-earliest memories, has been studied from various theoretical viewpoints, including Adlerian, psychoanalytic, ego psychology, and object relations theory. What these orientations share in common is the assumption that the earliest memory holds important information for understanding an individual. Research from these orientations addresses the question of what kind(s) of and how much information about a person can be drawn from his/her earliest memory. Interpretations and correlations have been made with this relatively small bit of data, either about character structure (Mayman, 1968), emotional conflicts (Burnell & Solomon, 1968), diagnosis of psychopathology (Hafner, Fakouri, Ollendick, & Corotto, 1979) or choice of work (Manaster & Perryman, 1974).

Statement of the Problem

Earliest memory research has focused on predicting or establishing relationships between some aspect of the person's behavior and the nature or content of the earliest memory. Various aspects of earliest memory content have been used as variables in the attempt to relate them to some observable behavior or defined characteristic of the person. Establishing and defining the utility of the earliest memory toward any of these experimental or clinical research aims suggests only indirectly what the earliest memory is. What is lacking is a full description of this phenomenon in and of itself as a basic human capacity and as part of the repertoire of human experience.

J. L. Hafner (personal communication, April, 1984) found that many people are intrigued by their earliest memories when the topic is suggested; recalling, thinking about, and talking about one's earliest memory can be an interesting and provocative experience. Adler (1939/1956), addressed the experiential aspects of his own earliest memories and the eventual course of his life. His personal experience, played a part in his making the earliest memory a major consideration in his theory of personality. As yet, studies have omitted the important consideration of the personal experience around the earliest memory, including the meanings as well as the mysteries and unanswered questions which surround it.

Research instead has followed a typical pattern of collecting earliest memories which the researcher analyzes, compares, or interprets in some manner, according to the hypotheses s/he is testing. Reported memories are treated as behavior, some aspect of which is

chosen to be objectified for observation and measurement. No research studies have included as part of the data the individual's thoughts and reflections about his/her earliest memories. Since this process was so useful to Adler himself, it would seem that a greater understanding of the earliest memory might be gained by following Adler's lead, i.e. including the person's own thoughts, feelings, and understandings in the study of his/her earliest memory. By gathering not only a person's earliest memories but also his/her reflections on them, we have access to an additional body of descriptive data, consisting of personal insights into earliest memories. Thus it could be expected that new material describing the nature and essence of this phenomenon might emerge.

Research Goals and Approach

The goal of this research project was to gain a greater understanding of individuals' experiences of their earliest memories and to describe these as fully as possible in a manner that is logically consistent and true to the experience. A phenomenological approach was chosen as being particularly suited to the study of experience. Accepting the phenomenological premise that there is structure inherent in experience and that this structure can be articulated, a goal was set of discovering the essential structure common to individuals' experience of their earliest memories.

This approach differs considerably from existing research on the earliest memory, in which traditional experimental research methodology has been used. The traditional approach to scientific research has

avoided the study of topics tinged with subjectivity; subjective aspects of variables were seen as contaminating the investigation. This has largely precluded the study of experience, which in its direct and natural form belongs to the subjective realm. For this reason many of the givens of being human, i.e. human experiences, have not been considered to be material suitable for scientific investigation. Phenomenological methodology, seen by Colaizzi (1978) as a frontier in psychological research, can be used to study human experience in a way in which it has not been studied previously.

The aim of the phenomenological approach is to describe and identify what is being investigated, using a quality of thinking which is reflective and meditative and an attitude of being with the topic in a direct, natural, and unmanipulated way (Colaizzi, 1978). The earliest memory was studied here as an experience embedded within the context of the person's life. Included were the precise moment of remembering, the Now, as well as the past event as it was remembered to have been experienced. This was followed by reflection upon the memory and upon the remembering.

Research was conducted by interviewing individuals about their earliest memory. The interview took the form of a dialogue between researcher and participant, both seeking to learn about and more clearly understand the latter's earliest memory experience. The aim was to gain a sufficient amount of data from a number of participants to allow the essential features, common to all early memory

experiences, to become clear. Once the essential features were articulated it was possible to formulate a comprehensive description of the earliest memory experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Earliest memories have received theoretical consideration from Freudian and Adlerian points of view. The basic difference between these two schools of thought was in what the earliest memory was understood to represent. The Freudian position was that the earliest memory was a "screen," linked associationally to, but concealing the significant and meaningful memory. The Adlerian position, on the other hand, saw the earliest memory itself as revealing the person's approach to life and style of life. Thus the meaning and significance of the earliest memory were apparent in the manifest content. The marked difference between Freudian and Adlerian positions was whether the earliest memory concealed or revealed important issues for the individual.

As psychoanalytic theory developed, ego functioning came to be seen as the primary basis for understanding the individual. Ego psychology and object relations, focusing on the individual's development and adaptation in an interpersonal world, has led to a much expanded understanding of earliest memories from the psychoanalytic point of view. Theorists, researchers, and clinicians look at earliest memories as representations of ego functioning (Burnell & Solomon, 1964) and characteristic modes of relating to objects (Mayman, 1968). These developments within the psychoanalytic mainstream have somewhat

lessened the gap between Adlerian and psychoanalytic approaches in that both schools utilize the manifest content of the earliest memory as the source of representational material.

Theoretical Considerations

Freud (1899/1950) saw memory of events of early childhood as veiled from adult consciousness due to the operation of repression. Early childhood is a time characterized by the experience and expression of basic id drives which as yet have not been tamed by reality considerations. Repression is established as the reality principle gradually assumes ascendancy. What remains of memories of this early time are "screens" which effectively keep from consciousness those events which are unacceptable to the ego. Childhood memories then are most likely "screen memories," memories of actual events which are linked by association to more highly charged and thus repressed memories. These screen memories were characterized by Freud as emotionally bland and seemingly indifferent or trivial, no offering through the nature of their content, an apparent reason for their being retained in memory. Their significance could only be understood through the process of free association, allowing access to the original significant event. The source of a person's anxiety or neurotic symptoms was to be found in the significant memory which was screened from consciousness.

Freud (1910/1953) found that not all childhood memories were of actual events. Such memories were fantasies developed at maturity and unconsciously transposed to childhood so that they could not be

distinguished from real events. Freud used the analogy of a country, which upon attaining a level of civilization which calls for recording its history, creates the story of its beginnings in a way which justifies the current political ideology. A person's adult memory is likened to the ongoing recording of current events, while childhood memory is a fantasied construction markedly influenced by a person's current tendencies. Thus clues to a person's current needs and motivations can be found in earliest memories of this type.

Freud and Adler differed primarily in terms of how information could be gleaned from early memories. While Freud held that their meaning was latent, Adler (1931) stated that the meaning was directly evident in the manifest content of the memory. When people recount earliest memories, they reveal their view of self and others, their view of the world, how they deal with difficulties, and how they move toward life goals. Basic to Adlerian psychology is the concept of style of life. Life style holds the key to understanding the individual, based on a two-fold conceptualization of his/her perceptual framework and major goals.

According to Adler (1931) there are no chance memories. A person chooses to remember those things which have a bearing on his/her present situation. The selective recall of early memories is unconscious, reinforcing the person's basic attitudes and motivations. The earliest memory unconsciously serves to justify the style of life. The style of life begins to take form in childhood and becomes stabilized and solidified with maturity. For this reason, earliest memories are stable and constant since they are justifying and

reinforcing the life style. The individual's current aims and motivations represented in earliest memories belong to the constant and ongoing individual style. The Adlerian approach does not concern itself with whether memories are of actual or fantasied events. The memory is real for the individual in the purpose it serves in supporting his/her style of life.

Ego psychology has developed in the course of further elaboration and clarification of Freud's thinking. Earliest memories are seen as reflecting the functioning of the ego in its defensive as well as integrative activity (Burnell & Solomon, 1964). Ego activity is apparent in the manifest content and unconscious meaning of the earliest memory. Latent meaning through association is acknowledged but is not seen necessary for understanding what is operative in the memory (Kramer, Ornstein, Whitman, & Baldrige, 1967). Earliest memories are selected on the basis of unconscious motivations. Unconscious needs and wishes selectively attach themselves to early memories. This process is identical to that in which day residue is selected as the vehicle for expression of unconscious wishes in dreams.

Earliest memories reveal character structure, conceptualized as the relationship between id, ego, and superego, crystallized into a permanent style of adapting and coping (Langs, 1965). Memory functions to preserve the status quo or to re-establish a familiar frame of reference, whether in a healthy or neurotic fashion (Chess, 1951). The earliest memory tends to remain the same over time unless there is some change in the structural balance, as might be the case in successful psychoanalysis (Saul, Snyder, and Sheppard, 1956).

Individuals experience and remember similar situations in different ways (Orgler, 1952). The level of psychic development at the time significant events are experienced, as well as the person's needs at the time of recall, affect what is remembered. From the point of view of ego psychology, earliest memories are thought to be memories about childhood rather than of childhood. They symbolize historical reality (Saul, Snyder, & Sheppard, 1956). What is important is the psychic reality, for it is this psychic reality which is the basis of the person's core dynamics.

Reflected in earliest memories is the person's characteristic way of relating to others. Earliest memories are populated by characters who represent internalizations of significant objects from childhood years. The inner object world reflects and predicts ways of current interpersonal relating (Kanhana, Weiland, Snyder, & Rosenbaum, 1953; Mayman, 1968).

Some of the basic differences between the psychoanalytic and Adlerian approaches to the understanding of earliest memories are reconciled in light of ego psychology. It is agreed that manifest content can be interpreted meaningfully as revealing the individual's typical mode of functioning. Both the concepts of character structure and life style imply consistent, stable, and enduring patterns of behavior with motivations and relational elements. The interpretations one makes will reflect the theoretical foundation used. Research, whether from the psycholanalytic mainstream or Adlerian Individual Psychology, seems directed toward similar ends with questions about how

much can be learned about an individual through earliest memories. Theoretical differences appear in the conceptualization of what is discovered.

Research

Material in this section is organized according to theoretical frame of reference. Adlerian research on earliest memories as they relate to life style and psychopathology is followed by a parallel presentation of psychoanalytic research with attention to ego functioning, character style, and diagnosis of psychopathology in reference to earliest memories.

Individual Psychology: Earliest Memories and Life Style

Adler (1931) saw earliest memories as valuable because they revealed life style, which he used as the basis for understanding the individual. Life style represents the individual's enduring and consistent manner of perceiving, relating, and moving toward his/her goals. A person's earliest memories, selected in accordance with this enduring style, are thus thought to remain unchanged throughout life. Hedvig (1963) investigated this premise by comparing the stability of earliest memories and TAT themes under conditions of success or failure, or conditions of friendliness or hostility. Under the success or failure conditions, there were significant differences in the thematic content around need for achievement in TAT stories, while earliest memories in the comparison group did not show this variability. TAT stories elicited under friendly or hostile conditions showed significant variability, while earliest memories did not.

Hedvig concluded that earliest memories were more stable than TAT stories. She interpreted these results as supporting the notion that earliest memories were based on enduring qualities of the personality and thus were not susceptible to effects of environmental variables.

According to Adler (1931) there is a continuity which extends from one's past into the present and future, represented in earliest memories. Gushurst (1971) found results supporting continuity of earliest memories as seen in present life style. Hafner and Fakouri (1978) studied the relationship of earliest memories to present life style and future goals in a population of hospitalized psychotic patients. Patients were interviewed to assess reason for admission and plans for the future. Two earliest memories were obtained from each patient. All material was interpreted according to Adlerian premises. Relationships between earliest memories and present crisis, earliest memories and future plans, and present crisis and future plans were judged by two psychologists. Three categories of relationship were used: relationship to permanent love object, restriction of social interest, and problems with authority. A significant relationship was found between earliest memories and present crisis. There was a greater, though non-significant relationship between present crisis and future plans. These results were interpreted as supportive of Adler's notion of the continuity and stability of style of life as expressed in the earliest memory.

According to Adlerian theory, an individual's earliest memories remain unchanged throughout life unless there is a basic change in his life style. Such a change in life style is likely to happen only in

the course of successful therapy. Supportive evidence is reported in the literature in the form of case studies. Eckstein (1976) presented such a case in which the patient's earliest memories changed, reflecting a new life style. Sometimes change in the earliest memory occurred in the form of a changed perception, particularly in the affective tone of the event, in the course of therapy (Croake, 1975).

Adlerians have identified a number of critical dimensions which go into the assessment of life style. Earliest memories have been investigated with relation to these factors. Barrett (unpublished manuscript) studied the relationship between scores on three standardized tests and earliest memories scored for the same traits. Scores for anxiety, need for approval, and locus of control were obtained from the Manifest Anxiety Scale (Taylor, 1955), the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlow, 1960), and the Adult Norwiki-Strickland Internal External Scale (Norwiki & Duke, 1974), respectively. Judges scored earliest memories according to a scale devised for comparison with that in the standardized test for the particular trait. Significant correlations were found between test scores and earliest memory ratings, with the exception of females on need for approval. Lack of agreement between judges on early memories scores for need of approval in females indicated that females in the sample expressed this trait in a more ambiguous fashion than did males.

Based on assumed differences in life style between low and middle socio-economic status, Epstein (1963) studied earliest memories of adolescents from each level. In the area of affect, differences were found, with lower class subjects showing significantly more angry

feelings; middle class subjects showed significantly more euphoric feelings. Memories of the lower class group had a significantly more reference to siblings, while parental reference occurred significantly more in memories of middle class subjects. Results were interpreted as suggesting less acceptance of the expression of anger and greater parental influence in a middle class life style.

Ansbacher (1946) found that subjects who scored differently on a scale measuring degree of security or insecurity produced different kinds of earliest memories. Subjects who scored as secure had more memories of someone being harmed. Purcell (1952) investigated secure vs. insecure style of life, as measured above, in relation to affective features of earliest memories. Secure subjects rated significantly more memories as pleasant than did the insecure subjects, while insecure subjects rated significantly more memories as unpleasant.

Holmes (1965) replicated Purcell's study but included a middle range in the security/insecurity rating. Three earliest memories were obtained from each subject. There were no differences between the high secure group and the low secure group for affective tone. The middle secure group, however, produced more pleasant first memories as compared to the other two groups. Affective tone in this group did not differ from the other groups on the second and third memories. Holmes interpreted this as suggesting a curvilinear relationship between degree of security and affective tone in the first early memory. The pleasant affective tone in the first early memory of the middle secure group was seen as defensive. The high secure group was considered not to need to defend, while the low secure group was seen as unable to

defend against the anxiety aroused in this situation. Importance of eliciting more than one earliest memory was demonstrated by the significant differences found between the first memory and those that followed.

Perception of self and others is an important consideration in assessing life style. Wolman (1970) studied the developmental course of perception of others during adolescence. Noting that normal development in early childhood proceeds from a narcissistic, egocentric perception of others to perception of others as independent and separate from the self, Wolman suggested that this process is reversed for a time in adolescence until the adolescent crisis is resolved. Early memories reveal the content and affect of the adolescent's fantasy life. It was hypothesized that the greater degree to which the earliest memories expressed desire and yearning for a need fulfilling relationship or a fear of harm or deprivation, the less the object will be perceived as separate and independent from the self. Likewise, earliest memories of independence, achievement, and self-sufficiency would correspond to a more mature, objective perception of others. Subjects were delinquents at two correctional institutions. Because of their situation, it was assumed that the typical adolescent conflicts would be magnified. The subjects were asked for three earliest memories, two of which were of mother and of father respectively. On a second task, they were asked to define the words mother, father, brother, sister, friend, and teacher. Definitions were scored on a 1-5 scale with the lowest score referring to a purely egotistical or functional definition, and the highest score indicating "essential

characteristics" ascribed to a significant other as independent of the subject. Earliest memories were scored on the basis of 11 different categories reflecting salient issues of adolescence. Memories in each category in order of frequency were correlated with percentage of each level of definition. Results supported the hypothesis that earliest memories reflecting succorance and need fulfillment wishes corresponded with a narcissistic-egocentric perception of significant others, while earliest memories stressing independent action were related to the objective perception of significant others.

Adler (1931) stated that one's attitudes toward family members and early childhood environment would be expressed repeatedly in other relationships and situations, because these attitudes were consistent with life style. In a study using female high school students, Kadis, Greene, and Freedman (1952) obtained teachers' written descriptions of each student's approach to tasks and relation to the staff. Students were asked for their earliest memory and earliest memories of mother and father; the TAT was also administered. Judges scored approach to tasks and relation to authority on the basis of teachers' descriptions, earliest memories, and TAT. Matching to the criterion of teacher description was attempted with the TAT alone and then with the TAT and earliest memories. The addition of earliest memories led to significant improvement in matching on the approach dimension and a trend in the same direction on the authority dimension. Some differences were found in the kind of information in the TAT and

earliest memories. Earliest memories appeared to predict observable functioning traits, whereas the TAT tended to indicate underlying needs which were not directly observable in behavior.

Degree of activity and social interest are component factors of style of life. McCarter, Tomkins, and Schiffman (1961) found that earliest memories accurately predicted performance on items related to social interest and degree of activity on a picture arrangement test.

Friedberg (1975) compared earliest memories of homosexual and heterosexual adults on the basis of the Adlerian notion of life style. Analysis of earliest memories indicated that homosexuals viewed the world as more hostile, had a weaker sense of identity, were more dependent, and had an impaired sense of gender identity. The heterosexual group was rated significantly higher in social interest. The significant differences suggested that homosexual and heterosexual adults could be distinguished on the basis of their earliest memories when these are interpreted according to an Adlerian frame of reference.

Manaster and King (1973) studied the earliest memories of five homosexual men in therapy in order to look for trends indicated in theoretical literature about homosexuality. All cases had at least one early memory where there was a woman who hurt the subject or who was angry with the subject. The mother and women in general appeared in an unfavorable light. The authors saw this study as supporting other research and theory on homosexuality.

An area investigated so far only from an Adlerian perspective is the relationship between earliest memories and birth order. Like earliest memories, birth order is a major consideration in Adlerian

theory for understanding the individual. Fakouri and Hafner (1984) compared earliest memories of first born and later born individuals to see whether different personality types, hypothesized on the basis of birth order, would be indicated in the earliest memories. The later born group had more mention of siblings in their earliest memories than did first borns. This was seen as indicating later born children's tendency to compete and live comparatively with their older siblings. First borns showed more non-family members, more themes of illness and accidents, and settings of hospital or doctor's office than did the later born group. Interpreted in light of Adlerian theory, the differences and the areas of focus were seen as related to first born individuals' having been "dethroned" by the birth of another sibling. The more negative focus of these individuals' earliest memories suggested their struggle to deal with and overcome this early disappointment.

Style of Life and Psychopathology

Symptoms and emotional suffering are seen as being linked to style of life. Orgler (1952) illustrated with two case studies how similar traumatic experiences were remembered in markedly different ways by each individual. One case was a famous and successful individual who in his earliest memory took a stance of cheerful optimism, concern for others, and an active approach in the face of an unpleasant event. The other case was an individual whose life was marked by failure, fearfulness, passivity, and dependency--all of which were features of

his earliest memory. Although the events occurring in childhood were similar, these events were interpreted by each individual in light of his basic approach to the world.

Brodsky (1952) gave case examples in which the individual's concept of the environment, human relationships, and approach to problems, as seen in his or her earliest memories, were related to the problems where which brought into therapy. Earliest memories were suggested as useful in diagnosis.

A number of Adlerian researchers have questioned whether earliest memories can be used to diagnose psychopathology. Verger and Camp (1970) saw the value of earliest memories as a totally unstructured projective measure. The individual does not rely on an external stimulus as in the TAT or Rorschach. Using earliest memories more for life style analysis, however, they saw little evidence supporting the use of earliest memories in differential diagnosis. They did feel, however, that coarser distinctions within the realm of psychopathology might be made on the basis of earliest memories.

In a study by Ferguson (1964) judges were able to match life style with earliest memories but were unable to diagnose psychopathology in a clinical population. Ferguson accounts for these results by explaining that life style alone does not lead to psychopathology; it is rather the interaction of life style and environment that are responsible for psychopathology. Earliest memories were seen as tapping life style only.

Hedvig (1965) explored the use of earliest memories of children as part of a diagnostic procedure. Adlerian clinicians were asked to

distinguish between children diagnosed either as psychoneurotic or as adjustment reaction with conduct disorder, using only earliest memories. The combined results of three judges differentiated the two groups at a significant level, but agreement among judges was low. Hedvig concluded that the ability of the clinician was a critical variable in the use of earliest memories for diagnosis. She suggested that earliest memories be part of a test battery rather than used as the single means of making the diagnosis.

Differential diagnosis using an Adlerian frame of reference has not been consistently demonstrated as useful, nor has it been systematically studied in research. It would appear that the value of the earliest memory lies in the assistance it gives the clinician in the understanding of the individual.

Non-Clinical Issues

Research investigating hypothesized relationships between earliest memories and choice of work is uniquely Adlerian. There has been no such investigation from a psychoanalytic viewpoint. Adler (1939/1956) had very definite ideas about the connection between earliest memories and work, as seen in an early memory of his own:

When I was five, I became ill with pneumonia and was given up by the physician. A second physician advised treatment just the same, and in a few days, I became well again. In the joy over my recovery, there was talk for a long time about the mortal danger in which I was supposed to have been. From that time on I recall always thinking of myself in the future as a physician (p. 200).

Adler's early memory illustrates the basic tenets of his theory of personality and the development of life style: the individual as a

child finds himself in a position of inferiority (in Adler's case, life threatening illness); he is motivated to overcome this condition, and the way in which he acts and relates to others in this attempt characterizes his typical manner of coping. Adler stated that vocational choice frequently could be seen as a response to an early childhood experience and that this can be demonstrated by analysis of the earliest memory.

Attarian (1978) studied the relationship between early memories and vocational choice in college seniors. Subjects were chosen from six different college major areas. The Holland (1971) self Directed Search was administered, and a minimum of five earliest memories were obtained from each subject. The Self Directed Search failed to predict vocational choice at a significant level. On the basis of earliest memories, however, two of three judges trained in Adlerian methods were able to correctly categorize students as to their educational choice. Thus earliest memories were seen to yield significant information for predicting vocational preference.

Adler (1931) thought that physicians tended to have more memories of traumatic, medically related events in their earliest memories. Holmes and Watson (1965) found that two "service professions," nursing and teaching, could be distinguished when three earliest memories were taken from each subject. Nursing subjects had more medically related references, while teaching subjects had more educationally related references.

Manaster and Perryman (1974) developed a scoring manual which included all variables used in previous research from Adlerian as well as other theoretical orientations. The manual included the following variables: characters, themes, kind of details, setting, activity/passivity, internal/external locus of control, and affect. The investigators gathered earliest memories from graduate students planning to enter the following occupations: teaching, counseling, nursing/medical, biological science, and accounting/business. Significant differences between groups were found in the characters and affect variables. A group's performance on these variables was seen as corresponding to characteristics associated with individuals in that profession. For example, the nursing/medical group had significantly higher frequency of "mother" in the characters variable than all other groups except counseling. The "mother- helper-supporter" image was seen as salient for individuals preparing to work in a helping profession. Significant differences in affect of earliest memories between counselors and the other groups was seen as reflecting counselors' interest in the more emotional world.

Hafner and Fakouri (1984a) compared earliest memories of senior college students majoring in accounting, secondary education, and psychology to see if a relationship between earliest memories and choice of work existed. The variable clusters identified by Manaster and Perryman (1974) were used. Differences were found within the variable clusters of characters, details, setting, internal/external locus of control. In another study of the same design, Hafner and Fakouri (1984b) compared earliest memories of graduate students in

clinical psychology, dentistry, and law. Differences between some of the groups were found in the variable clusters of characters, themes, setting, activity/passivity, and affect. In both studies those in the psychology groups had significantly more mention of non-family members than some of the other groups. Likewise the psychology group expressed more themes of "fear and anxiety" in the earliest memories. This difference was significant in the later study. The higher frequency of negative affect was a trend in the psychology group in both studies. The researchers interpreted these findings as reflecting Adler's notion that life style was directed at mastering feelings of inferiority. The salience of fearful and anxiety-provoking situations, as well as recall of events associated with negative or dysphoric affect were seen as attempts to overcome such situations.

Psychoanalytic Perspectives: Ego Functioning and Character Style

Later developments in psychoanalysis, particularly in the understanding of ego functioning, have led to investigations of the manifest content of earliest memories to reveal character structure and patterning of defenses. Questions about the utility of earliest memories in differential diagnosis have also been addressed. Research involving these issues is presented below.

Burnell and Solomon (1964) investigated the hypothesis that the earliest memory is an expression of ego functioning, reflective of current emotional stresses as well as underlying characterological conflicts. Specifically they sought to (1) examine the predictive value of earliest memories in discriminating success and failure in

military basic training; (2) to explore the significance of thematic content of earliest memories; and (3) to evaluate the intuitive versus the systematic approach to the psychodynamic interpretation of earliest memories. Subjects were recruits who had been unsuccessful in basic training and were in treatment at a mental health clinic. Controls were an equal number who were successful in basic training. The stringencies of military basic training were seen as exacerbating typical issues of late adolescence, particularly in the areas of separation and relation to authority. Social history and earliest memories were gathered from each subject. Three judges evaluated the earliest memories intuitively and then systematically. A higher occurrence of aggression was found in the patient group's themes. In contrast, the control group had a higher number of scene memories, which were thought to be screens for repressed aggression; the repression of aggression in this situation was seen as a sign of coping and adaptation. There were no sex differences within the patient group for aggressive themes. The female controls, however, had a significantly lower number of aggressive themes than the male controls. No differences were found between male and female controls on dependency themes. There was a low occurrence of sexual themes among female patients and female controls. Examination for progressive versus regressive tendencies in the expression of aggressive, dependent, or sexual themes revealed no differences between groups. Intuitively analyzed earliest memories predicted success and failure with a higher degree of accuracy than analysis by a systematic approach. Differences on the basis of quality, intensity, and

complexity, rather than the nature of the content seemed to be critical for the judges in making correct predictions. The study concluded that earliest memories taken under stress could predict coping ability. Earliest memories represent the "attempt on the part of the ego to integrate, synthesize, and resolve current emotional conflicts by reactivating experiences of childhood with similarly underlying conflicts (p. 564)."

An earliest memory, given upon request, is seen as the product of preconscious ego activity, manifesting the ego's synthetic functioning. Based on this premise, Levy and Grigg (1962) studied the predictive value of earliest memories against the criterion of clinical judgment of the therapist. Subjects were outpatients whose earliest memories were taken from admission data on their charts. These individuals had been in therapy 10 weeks at the time of the comparison. One experimenter scored the earliest memories by a system of thematic configurational analysis, involving identification of dependent, aggressive, and sexual themes and the regressive versus progressive features in the theme. The other experimenters obtained a dynamic formulation of the patient from the therapist of 10 weeks; this formulation was also scored as above. Attempt was made to match earliest memories with data obtained from the therapist. Eleven matches (statistically significant) were made. Examination of failure to match indicated that denial was a prominent defense in cases where both experimenters missed. Denial was a minor mechanism where there was a correct match. Content of earliest memories was vague and barren, and themes were fewer and tended to repeat themselves in cases

where there was failure to match. Results suggested a close correspondence of earliest memories and thematic content of therapy sessions, offering support for the predictive validity of earliest memories in this area.

Earliest memories have been shown to reflect total personality functioning. Kahana, Weiland, Snyder, and Rosebaum (1953) presented case material where the patient's unconscious conflicts, emotionally traumatic childhood experiences, primary ego defenses, and transference trends were revealed in the earliest memories. Saul, Snyder, and Sheppard, (1956) demonstrated with a case example that earliest memories revealed the individual's core dynamics and chief motivations. They suggested the diagnostic and prognostic utility of earliest memories for uncovering latent patterns.

The relationship between earliest memories and character style has been studied by attempting to match kinds of earliest memories to particular styles. As a part of a larger scale study, Langs (1965a) studied the earliest memories of 48 male actors who had been placed in the following categories on the basis of a psychological test battery: obsessive-compulsive, inhibited obsessive-compulsive, hysterical, and narcissistic. Obsessive-compulsive characters were most distinguishable by their earliest memories. Some distinctive features were passivity, absence of people in an active role, paucity of other people, and voyeuristic content. The second group, inhibited obsessive-compulsives, had earliest memories high in traumatic and destructive content and also situations where someone loses control. Hysterical characters' memories were ambiguous and difficult to assess.

The narcissistic group showed more frequent themes of travel and separation. Langs reported that these early memory trends corresponded closely with clinical observations of the same character types. In a second related study (1965b) using the same subjects, earliest memories were found to predict personality significantly better than chance.

Characteristic patterns of relating and coping can be understood in terms of a person's internalized objects. Internalized self and other relationship are projected onto the external world, observable in level of functioning and character style. Earliest memories illuminate the individual's internalized object world.

Mayman (1970) developed a scale to measure the quality of object relationships as revealed in earliest memories. The scale follows a continuum along which are found typical characteristics of psychotic, borderline, narcissistic, neurotic, and normal earliest memories. Distinctions are made on the basis of the kind of interaction or lack of it with other people: the psychotic tends to relate only to malevalent objects in a chaotic or other-worldly setting; the borderline perceives others as all good or all bad; relationships are characterized by ambivalence, and the object and self stand out much more clearly; true mutuality between separate individuals characterizes the earliest memory of a normal individual. Mayman (1978) designed a scale to show relationship patterns which follow a line of development based on the Freud/Erikson stages of psychosexual development. Characteristic relationship patterns range from the oral to the latency stage, and each stage is broken down into its prototypical themes and issues.

Harder (1979) used Mayman's (1978) scale with earliest memories to identify narcissistic-ambitious character types in a non-clinical male population. The TAT and Rorschach were also used. Instruments were validated against a criterion of clinician's judgment after extensive interview and self-description questionnaires. Results of this study indicated that earliest memories and each of the other two instruments were capable of differentiating narcissistic-ambitious character type from those rated non-ambitious-narcissistic. Implications from this study were that a certain style is identifiable on the basis of earliest memories examined in terms of object relations.

As indicators of character style and ego functioning, earliest memories are considered to be stable and unchanging unless basic characterological changes occur. This thinking in psychoanalytic treatment of earliest memories is in agreement with Adlerian theory. Coming from this premise, Langs (1967) studied the stability of earliest memories under the effect of LSD- 25. Subjects were 48 male actors, aged 20-42 years, who were assigned either to experimental (LSD) or placebo group. Earliest memories were obtained from each subject on the pretest day. On the following day, earliest memories were once again obtained under the influence of drug or placebo. The major hypothesis of the study was that drug ingestion will have a regressive effect on report of earliest memories as distinguishable from the placebo effect. Additional hypotheses were that memory changes of regressive nature will occur only in certain subjects, based on their personality characteristics; and changes in earliest memories will be due to drug effect. A regressive trend was defined as any one

of the following: more primitive content, disturbance in the manner of report, or shifts to an earlier recollection. In terms of producing new or same earliest memories on the second day, there was no difference between drug and placebo groups. Half the subjects in each group retained their original memories. The experimental group did show more regressive effects in terms of more regressive content, more disorganized reporting, and more regressive features on the whole. The new memories produced under the effect of LSD were regressive for age and content. In the placebo group, new memories were not regressive. To further analyze these findings, the subjects were placed in one of five characterological categories based on the results of psychological tests. Experimental and placebo subjects in each category were compared: Obsessive-compulsive, obsessive-compulsive inhibited, hysterical, narcissistic, and schizoid. In this comparison, placebo subjects showed more content change while the subjects in the drug condition showed more regressive features in their earliest memories. Among experimental (LSD) subjects, changes that did occur were around oral, anal, voyeuristic themes and increased movement and interaction. In the placebo group changes occurred around traumatic themes. In the schizoid diagnostic category, there were more alterations in earliest memories among experimentals than placebo subjects. The major earliest memory changes occurred in experimental subjects assessed to have the greatest degree of psychopathology. Stability or change of earliest memory among experimentals was seen as related to personality factors. Changes in earliest memory among the placebo subjects could not be

related to personality features. Langs considered the earliest memory to be an organization which reflects the individual's coping mechanisms and character style. Stability of earliest memories was maintained in subjects whose personalities appeared to be healthier and more integrated. Regressive disruptions or alterations of earliest memories tended to occur in individuals judged to be more disturbed--the instability of their personality being reflected by similar instability of their earliest memory.

Langs (1971) conducted a single case study follow-up of one of the experimental subjects whose earliest memories had shown marked regressive shifts. In this study the subject was again asked for his earliest memories. Those reported matched the memories given in the normal asking state five years earlier. After lengthy probing, small fragments of an altered state (LSD-25) memory were recovered. Recall under the altered state had not made the more regressive memories available for integration by the ego, as evidenced by the ability to recall the pretest memory but failure to fully recall the altered state memory five years later. Langs studies support the notion of the earliest memory reflecting enduring character organization and as such remaining unchanged over time.

The stability issue is addressed in the comparison of clinical data in dreams and earliest memories. Dreams have long been considered to offer access to the unconscious, whereas earliest memories have received much less consideration in this respect. Kramer, Ornstein, Whitman and Baldridge (1967) observed that dreams and earliest memories contribute to the diagnostic process by providing material additional

to that gained from formal tests such as the Rorschach and TAT. Earliest memories were distinctive from dreams in that they tended to reflect ongoing characterological features of the individual, while dreams focus on more reactive features of the personality. In a later study comparing dreams and earliest memories, Kramer, Wingert, and Whitman (1971) observed that dreams reflected the current situation, while earliest memories represented more enduring concerns.

Diagnosis of Psychopathology

The logical extension of the use of earliest memories in revealing character style and ego functioning is to investigate their potential for differential diagnosis. Drawing from the case material of patients in treatment, Eisenstein and Ryerson (1951) indentified typical earliest memories corresponding to various diagnoses. Diagnostic categories distinguishable by earliest memories were psychosomatic disorder, masochistic character neurosis, anxiety hysteria, obsessive compulsive neurosis, depressive syndromes, and homosexual perversions. The authors also noted a close correspondence between Rorschach records and earliest memories in many cases.

Jackson and Sechrest (1962) studied the earliest memories of patients drawn from four neurotic diagnostic categories in order to evaluate the utility of earliest memories in differential diagnosis. The following hypotheses were tested: anxiety reaction patients will give earliest memories with fear themes; obsessive-compulsive patients will give memories which include strong prohibitions; patients with gastro-intestinal disorder (ulcers, colitis) will have memories related

to gastro-intestinal distress. The hypotheses were supported for all categories except the obsessive-compulsive. The frequency of occurrence of the hypothesized themes was too low, however, to suggest the use of earliest memories alone for differential diagnosis. Additional findings were that themes of sex occurred more frequently in memories of obsessive-compulsives. Themes of illness, accidents, and trauma were found more frequently in anxiety neurotics, patients with gastro-intestinal disturbances, and normals. The four diagnostic groups did not differ significantly in terms of pleasantness of unpleasantness of earliest memories. Compared to normals, however, the neurotics recalled more unpleasant earliest memories.

Earliest memories have been related to psychodynamics and medical diagnosis. Janowsky (1970) compared ulcerative colitis and peptic ulcer patients on a number of measures including earliest memories. Ulcer patients reported primarily unpleasant memories while colitis patients tended to have happy earliest memories. Loeb, Peal, Loeb, and Templeton (1973) compared earliest memories of two monozygotic twins who were 57 years old. One was diagnosed an obsessional character suffering from diabetes mellitus and involutional depression. The other twin was diagnosed anxiety neurotic; medical diagnoses were coronary insufficiency and aortic aneurism. Earliest memories were seen as differentially reflecting each twin's dynamics and response to environmental stressors.

Tentative support for the use of earliest memories as a diagnostic procedure had been found in studies of severely disturbed hospitalized patients. Langs (1960) tested whether earliest memories could

differentiate between two groups of hospitalized females--paranoid schizophrenics and hysterics. Earliest memories were scored by three judges. The following significant features emerged: hysterical women recalled trauma, punishment and illness; concerns with body parts, clothing, appearance, rejection, and moral issues were revealed; the memories were action oriented. Earliest memories of the paranoid schizophrenic women showed a lack of interaction among individuals; ideation rather than action was predominant, and happy occasions were recalled.

Hafner, Fakouri, and Ollendick (1979) compared earliest memories of paranoid schizophrenics and normal subjects. Significant differences were found between the themes given in each group. The schizophrenic group's themes were more varied and innocuous. The normal group produced themes dealing with dramatic life events, illness or injury. Although the difference was not significant, a tendency was observed for earliest memories of normals to be set in the home, school, or hospital. Setting for the schizophrenic group's earliest memories was more variable.

The above studies suggest that differences exist among earliest memories of various diagnostic groups, both neurotic and psychotic. Research in this area, however, is too limited to answer the question of whether earliest memories alone can be used for diagnosis.

Aim of the Present Study as Compared to Previous Research

The research reviewed in this chapter represents the approaches of Adlerian Individual Psychology, psychoanalysis, ego psychology, and object relations theory to the study of the earliest memory. Clinical and normal, non-clinical populations were used. Research designs were traditional experimental methods and occasionally clinical case studies. Overall, the findings have been inconsistent and inconclusive; however, the earliest memory has a valence or an attraction which continues to generate questioning.

The present study differs from previous research in that it approaches the earliest memory in a context. Here the context is provided by dialogue between the rememberer and the investigator. Studying the earliest memory within a context of persons in the world is an attempt to expand the possibilities for understanding this uniquely human phenomenon. The aim here is to describe earliest memories in a way which enhances understanding, departing from the more traditional methods of testing hypotheses and drawing causal relationships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Remembering one's childhood involves a complex interplay of past and present. This research was designed to study the earliest childhood memory as it was experienced by the rememberer and told in the course of a dialogue with the investigator. A phenomenological approach was used in gathering and analyzing data with the aim of producing a description of the earliest memory experience in terms of its essential features and invariant structure.

Participants

Participants in this study were nine female and 11 male psychotherapists between the ages of 30 and 65. It was not possible to compute an average age, because three participants declined to give their exact ages. Professionally they came from the disciplines of psychology, social work, or psychiatry. All were currently engaged in the practice of psychotherapy.

The investigator had contacted various mental health facilities in the search for participants. Those who took part in the research had volunteered after the purpose of the study and the means for assuring confidentiality had been explained to them individually.

Demographic data on the participants is presented in Table 1. From this table it can be seen that all had received advanced degrees in their respective disciplines. Twelve were from the field of psychology, four from psychiatry, and four from social work. Seventeen

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Category	Number of Participants	
	Male	Female
Age Interval		
30-39	9	4
40-49	1	3
50-59 +	1	2
Education Level and Discipline		
Ph.D or Psy.D. - Psychology	8	4
M.D. - Psychiatry	2	2
M.S.W. - Social Work	1	3
Marital Status		
Married	10	7
Divorced	1	1
Single	0	1
Number of Children		
None	6	3
One	2	2
Two	3	3
Three	0	1

were married, two were divorced, and one was single. Eleven had children. All were considered to be from a middle socioeconomic bracket.

Although this selection of participants limits the generalizability of the results, this limitation is accepted, because a goal was to choose mature, well-functioning adults who had attained age appropriate developmental milestones in terms of their work personal lives. A most important consideration was that these participants were considered to meet the basic requirements, according to Colaizzi (1978), of articulateness and experience with the topic under investigation, for inclusion in phenomenological research. De Rivera and Kreilkamp (1981) further state that fruitful research of this nature requires participants who are sensitive, capable of introspection, and interested in the nuances of experience. Such experiential, cognitive, motivational, and verbal capacities in research participants allow for the phenomenon under investigation to be presented in the fullest and richest manner possible. It is thought that psychotherapists, who by the nature of their training and work develop and utilize these capacities, would be well qualified to participate in the phenomenological investigation at hand.

Instrument

Each individual participated in a semi-structured interview with the investigator. A follow-up contact was made at a later date, during which time the participant was given a chance to respond to feedback about research results.

Introduction

At the time of volunteering for the research project, each participant was given an appointment one to two weeks later for the interview. Participants knew the topic of the research at the time of volunteering. They were given no instructions for the intervening time period between initial contact and the interview. Several participants questioned whether they should think about the topic or attempt to remember specifics before the interview. They were told to think about the topic as much or as little as they wished, and that no preparation was required.

The Interview

The research was conducted through a one to two hour tape-recorded interview with each participant. The primary source of data was the semi-structured portion of the interview in which the participant was asked to tell his/her earliest memory. Additional questions were asked when needed in order to encourage further reflection and talking about this experience. In the course of the interview the participant was asked to recall his/her next two earliest memories. This was done to encourage further remembering and reflecting on early childhood experiences in the course of talking with the investigator in order to see what would emerge.

The general format of the interview and the questions were developed after reviewing phenomenological research methodology (Valle and King, 1978, and Colaizzi, 1973). The questions are listed in the Interview Guide in Appendix A. A pilot study was conducted in which

psychotherapists and individuals not in the mental health field were interviewed. This provided an indication of the effectiveness of the procedure for eliciting the experience under investigation and also allowed for further refinement of the interview procedure. In addition, colleagues of the investigator offered observations and reflections on their earliest memories and suggested questions for exploration.

The aim was to provide an atmosphere conducive to sharing and describing earliest memory experiences as fully as possible. The questions were open-ended and designed to serve as a general guide rather than a strict format, thus allowing for spontaneity on the parts of both participant and investigator.

Investigator and participant worked together in the interview as "research partners," both seeking to understand and learn more about the latter's experience. This approach, referred to as the "conceptual encounter" (de Rivera & Kreilkamp, 1981) is similar to psychodynamic principles of interviewing.

Background information was collected at the end of the session by having the participant fill out the Background Data Sheet (Appendix B). This included information as to age, marital status, training and degrees, years of experience as a psychotherapist, theoretical orientation, experience with personal psychotherapy, and current percentage of the work week engaged in the practice of psychotherapy. In cases where time was limited, participants completed this sheet later and mailed it to the investigator.

Data Collection

Participants were allowed to choose the location for their interview. Fifteen chose to be interviewed in their own offices; three came to the investigator's office, and two chose their homes.

Before beginning the interview, each participant was given the Information and Consent Form (Appendix C) to read and sign. The interview was audiotaped with the full knowledge and consent of the participant.

Each participant was assigned a number which was the only identification used on his/her research contributions. Only one master list with the names and assigned numbers of participants was kept by the investigator in a secure place for the duration of the research. This list was destroyed upon completion of the project. Tapes and transcripts were and are kept in a secure place accessible only to the investigator.

Another consent form (Appendix C) was used with participants who allowed excerpts of their interview transcript to be used for illustrative purposes in the text and scoring manual. These individuals were given a copy of the excerpt in question and asked to edit it, if need be, in order to be comfortable with its use for the above purposes. No material was used without the knowledge and written consent of the participant.

An additional consent form was signed by the participant who allowed the transcript of his interview in its entirety to be reproduced for this study. This form appears in Appendix C. This participant was given a copy of his typed transcript and asked to read,

correct, and edit it in such a way that he would consent to its being published in the study. Once the form of the transcript was accepted, the participant returned this and one copy of the consent form to the investigator. This interview transcript appears in Appendix D.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data analysis was to derive from the interviews a number of themes and meaningful statements which described a person's experience of his/her earliest memory. By collecting and organizing this material from a number of individuals' interviews, it was hoped that the structure which holds across different individuals' experiences could be found. From the realization of this structure, a phenomenological definition of the earliest memory experience could be formulated. This definition, expressed in the form of essential features, could then be applied in the description of an earliest memory in a way which allows for individual uniqueness within the essential structure of the phenomenon.

To facilitate the process of data analysis, the taped interviews were transcribed by the investigator. This took place shortly after completion of the interview, providing an opportunity also for the investigator to make notes about her impressions and feelings which occurred during and immediately after the interview. The audio tapes were referred to at various times during study of the data for more subtle cues such as voice quality, word emphasis, and emotional expressiveness which would not be as apparent in the transcripts. The typed transcripts, however, were the primary form in which the data was approached for analysis.

The method for analysis of earliest memory interview transcripts followed with some modifications, procedures described by Colaizzi (1978), Jones (1984), Dapkus (1981), and Myers (1985). Steps in the order of progression were as follows: (1) Acquiring a feeling for the data, (2) Marking off meaningful segments of the data, (3) Extracting significant statements, (4) Formulating meanings, (5) Organizing the formulated meanings into thematic groups, and (6) Formulating an exhaustive description of the phenomenon in a way which identifies its fundamental structure. Each of these steps is described below.

Step 1: Acquiring a feeling for the data. This step involved listening to each tape as well as reading and re-reading the transcript in order to be with the material in its immediacy as it showed itself. This step had actually begun in the interview itself with the investigator attempting to divest herself of previously held notions and hypotheses about earliest memories and allowing herself to be open and attentive to the participant's experience. This attitude was maintained in reflecting upon the interview through listening to the tape and reading the transcript.

In a process referred to as "memoing" (Jones, 1984) the investigator made note of her reactions and feelings which had occurred during the interview and later in listening to the tape or reading the transcript. Questions, thoughts, and observations about what was said were noted in the margins of the transcript and on separate sheets of paper placed beside each page of the transcript. Memoing was continued during each succeeding step of the data analysis.

The goal at this stage was not to order or organize the material but rather to allow for an unforced responsiveness to the phenomenon, which in this case was the person's experience of his/her earliest memory. This way of being with, listening to, and responding to another person's experience is the same way in which the therapist attends to and responds to the patient, using the external situation as well as his/her own internal cues to follow and understand the other person.

Step 2: Marking off meaningful segments of the data. While each person's transcript constituted a complete and meaningful unit of data, this was oftentimes unwieldy because of length and amount of material. To proceed with the analysis, a transcript was marked off into segments, each of which could be seen as a meaningful chunk of data. In addressing the issue of what constituted a meaningful and workable amount of material for a segment, the most natural and logical division was to separate the transcript according to each memory which was reported and discussed. Each reported memory and the portions of the transcript pertaining to it were taken as one unit. This proved to be an effective initial division. Further division within this unit involved marking off the memory content alone, excluding portions of the dialogue about the memory. This enabled the investigator to look at what were the stories or earliest memory contents which participants reported. Additional meaningful segments of the data were answers to certain questions. This made for further division of material related to a memory and served as well in marking off those parts of the

transcript which did not pertain specifically to one memory. Spontaneously occurring issues which arose during the dialogue were marked off according to how one would separate the material into paragraphs in the transcription.

Discrete segments or groupings of segments were used according to what seemed most useful at a particular stage of the data analysis. For example, there were times when all of an individual's reported memories were studied as a unit; at other times only one memory was the focus of study.

With the transcript divided in this manner, it was possible to study and compare certain segments across several or all individuals' transcripts. Moving back and forth between the study of an individual transcript, or section of it, and studying select portions from two or more individual's transcripts was a continual process throughout this and subsequent steps of data analysis.

Step 3: Extracting significant statements. This step involved reading the protocol and selecting specific statements which pertained to the essence of the individual's experience. This step, in following Steps 1 and 2, provided shape and organization, specifically articulating what had begun as a feeling for the data.

Significant statements were listed, sometimes in abbreviated form, on a separate sheet of paper and were also underlined within the text of the protocol. The latter allowed them to be highlighted for ease in reviewing and reading while still being part of the text, which was often referred to in its entirety.

Significant statements could be identified by their apparent meaning in terms of the context of the dialogue; at times the vocal quality, facial expressions, emphasis, and emotions which accompanied the statement indicated its importance and significance for the rememberer. Thus the investigator used various cues, some obvious and others more subtle, in drawing the significant statements from the interview and protocol.

Step 4: Formulating meanings. In this step significant statements were paraphrased to more general statements of meaning. In this process the step was made away from specific content to a broader view of what the person meant. Colaizzi (1978) refers to this as "creative insight." Care was taken to remain true to the participant's expression of his/her experience.

This step yielded a list of meaning statements for each individual's transcript. In this form connections could be drawn between statements which seemed related. One meaning statement might have connections to several other meaning statements, suggesting that the former is alluding to a more general trend or theme.

In addition to formulating meanings for each person's transcript, it was useful to compare meaning statements across individuals. Formulated meanings from comparable segments of each transcript were examined, and similarities and differences were noted.

Step 5: Organizing the formulated meanings into thematic groups. In this step there was movement back and forth between an individual's transcript and related segments of several or all the transcripts.

Initially the formulated meanings from an individual's transcript were grouped according to some thematic relatedness. This yielded a list of thematic groups for that individual. Then meaning statements from all transcripts were examined, and groupings were made of related statements across all individuals. This process required repeated regroupings in the attempt to place together those statements clearly expressing a specific theme. Some statements appeared to belong to more than one grouping, and no attempt was made to assign a statement to only one group in this case.

Themes from an individual's transcript provided the outline for describing that person's experience. The essential features expressed in these themes could then be compared to the themes of other individuals in the study. A sorting and comparing process took place in which the presence or absence of expressed themes were noted across the data from all participants.

Checking the adequacy of the named theme was done by working backward through preceeding steps. For example, the theme was checked against each formulated meaning it encompassed, each significant statement, and finally against the transcript and what was understood to be the individual's experience.

Step 6: Formulating an exhaustive description of the phenomenon in a way which identifies its fundamental structure. In the process of referring themes, meaning statements, and significant statements back to the transcripts, it became apparent that certain features and issues were recurrent across experiences. The task at this level was to

discern in broad outline form what was common to all participants' experiences as expressed in dialogue with the investigator. This took into account the content of the memory, the process of remembering, thinking and talking about the memory, and the reactions and feelings engendered by this activity.

Seven thematic categories evolved as essential issues which were consistently present in all the interview protocols. These thematic categories provided a way of describing the experience in general. Individual's experiences differed qualitatively within each of these areas. The seven thematic categories, expressed as brief statements, phrases, or questions, were named. Each named thematic group was considered as a dimension through which qualitative features of an individual's experience could be specified.

As the dimensions were identified as the essential features of the experience, it was noted that the dimensions and the thematic categories they specified fell into three main groups. While each dimension represented a separate facet of the experience, certain of these dimensions were related in terms of the overall process. Seeing the dimensions in related groups led to an understanding of the structure of the experience being three-fold, with the seven dimensions serving to elaborate upon this structure and qualify it.

It should be noted at this point that a straightforward progression through the first five steps of analysis did not immediately and directly yield the structure and the descriptive dimensions. This stepwise approach proved to be only a beginning in the attempt at discerning the structure of the experience. Following

this initial organization, there was repeated forward and backward progression through the steps. Material generated at different steps of the analysis gave emphasis to some major issues. For example, one significant statement from a protocol articulated an issue, sensitizing the investigator to the same issue, less clearly stated, but common to other participants' statements about their experience. At the thematic level, certain themes by their recurrence came to be seen as having structural implications.

The approach to the data was at times organized, directed, and systematic; at other times it was unstructured, diffuse, and unfocused, allowing for a more intuitive response to the material. Working with the data in this manner required a tolerance for ambiguity which is a characteristic noted by Dapkus (1981) as necessary to one conducting phenomenological research. The systematic, empirical approach combined with one which was intuitive and indirect eventually led to the realization and development of a means of describing the experience in structural terms.

Scoring the Interviews

The seven dimensions were used as a means of scoring interview protocols. Several early attempts to score all interviews had led to a reworking and a refinement of what the dimension represented and what the thematic category expressed. When the seven dimensions could be applied to all interview protocols, this system was considered to be an adequate means of describing the essential features of remembering and talking about the earliest memory. The essential features, or

dimensions, belonged to and elaborated upon the basic three-fold structure of the experience. In the scoring, the dimensions were treated as dichotomous variables, where scoring in one or the other direction most nearly described that aspect of the memory.

All earliest memories were scored for each dimension. Next-earliest memories were also scored on dimensions present in the transcript.

Reliability Check

A reliability check was performed to see if the system for describing the earliest memory experience could be communicated to others and used by them with similar results. A scoring manual was composed containing in detail the descriptive process. Each dimension was described conceptually. The scoring process for each dimension was presented.

Reliability raters were two clinical psychologists. They were provided with a scoring manual and a scoring chart which contained an abbreviated description of each dimension and an explanation of the scoring method. When each rater was able to score a group of earliest memories with a percentage of agreement of 80 or above with the investigator and with each other, the description on the basis of the structural dimensions was considered adequate.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

By analyzing interview transcripts through a procedure which combined a stepwise, systematic approach with one that was unstructured and intuitive, it was possible to discern a structure common to all participants' experiences of remembering and talking about their earliest memories. The present analysis, began with, and moved beyond, the content of each person's earliest memory.

In this chapter, the presentation of results begins with a description of the manifest content of individuals' earliest memories, followed by the major focus of the study--describing the structure of the earliest memory experience as that structure emerged from the interview data.

Manifest Content of Earliest Memories

The initial question in this study dealt with what people's earliest memories were about. In telling their earliest memories, participants presented a wide array of personal stories. The contents of these earliest memories were rich and varied, covering a wide range of topics and situations.

During data analysis, the content of each memory was marked off in the transcript for study as a discrete unit. This allowed one to look at what were the events and situations which participants remembered as their first memory.

There were 20 earliest memories--one from each participant. The content of each earliest memory was thematized, with each theme(s) expressing what that memory was about. It was possible to assign more than one theme to a memory. Compiling the themes from each of the 20 earliest memories into one list revealed 15 different themes. These themes fell into three categories based on whether the theme focused on the event, on describing a self-feeling, or on interaction involving self and other(s). The themes are listed below according to their respective categories:

The Event

1. A traumatic, frightening experience
2. Illness, injury, accident
3. Separation, loss, death
4. A first-time experience
5. A special occasion or holiday
6. A vividly pleasurable experience

Self-Feeling

7. Mastery, competence
8. Shame, embarrassment
9. Feeling alone, isolated
10. Comfort, security

Self and Other(s)

11. Sibling rivalry, competition
12. Conflict, fighting
13. Cooperation, playing together
14. Being given to, cared for

15. Being with parent(s)

A special valued experience

A negative experience

A neutral experience

Broadly speaking, the participants' 20 earliest memories were about events, feelings, and relating with other people.

During the course of the interview, participants also were asked for at least two next-earliest memories. A total of 66 next-earliest memories were reported. Manifest content of each of the next-earliest memories was marked off and thematized in the manner described above with earliest memories. A total of 24 themes was discovered in this group of memories. There were nine themes in addition to the 15 themes noted as occurring for earliest memories. Of these additional themes, four expressed a self-feeling, and five described an interpersonal situation.

Table 2 lists the content themes of earliest memories and next-earliest memories with the number of occurrences of each theme in each group of memories. Each of the original 15 themes occurred also in the group of next-earliest memories. The nine additional themes assigned to next-earliest memories are indicated in Table 2.

When deciding to include next-earliest memories in the interview format, the investigator had no way of knowing whether this data would be useful toward the goal of further understanding the earliest memory. At the level of describing manifest content, the availability of the 66 additional memories made it possible to compare the earliest memory with other early memories. What is apparent from thematizing both

Table 2. Tabulation of Content Themes of Participants'
Earliest Memories and Next-Earliest Memories

Theme	Number of Occurrences	
	EM*	NEM**
<u>Focus on The Event</u>		
Traumatic, Frightening Experience	5	6
Illness, Injury, Accident	1	11
Separation, Loss, Abandonment, Death	2	3
First-time Experience	3	5
Special Occasion, Holiday	2	3
Vividly Pleasant Experience	4	3
<u>Focus on Self-Feeling</u>		
Mastery, Competence	4	2
Shame, Embarrassment	1	3
Feeling Alone, Isolated	2	2
Comfort, Security	1	1
Disappointment, Failure		1
Vulnerability		1
Puzzlement, Not understanding		4
Having Magical Powers		1
<u>Interpersonal Focus: Self and Other(s)</u>		
Sibling Rivalry, Competition, Jealousy	2	4
Conflict, Fighting	2	8
Cooperation, Playing Together	2	6
Being Given To, Being Cared For	2	5
Being with Parent(s)		
Special, Valued Experience	1	4
Negative Experience	1	3
Neutral	2	1
Accusation, Punishment, Abuse		5
Rebelling		4
Helping		1
Being Praised		1
Being the Center of Attention		1

*Earliest Memories

**Next-Earliest Memories

earliest memories and next-earliest memories is that earliest memories thematically deal with the same kinds of events, feelings, or interpersonal situations as next-earliest memories. The larger number of themes in the next-earliest memories group appears to reflect the much larger group of memories from which they are taken. The additional themes of next-earliest memories would seem to reflect a wider range of feelings and interpersonal situations rather than a totally different kind of memory content.

Looking at the tabulation of themes from earliest memory content, it can be seen that traumatic, frightening experience occurs most frequently, closely followed by vividly pleasant experience and mastery, competence. The numbers are too small to suggest that any one theme is more typical than another for this group of participants. Within the earliest memory themes, comparing the frequency of themes with negative or unpleasant connotations with the frequency of those with more pleasant or positive connotations, we can see that the numbers are about equal. For example, of the themes with an interpersonal focus, Sibling rivalry, jealousy, competition, and Conflict, fighting have tabulated frequencies equal to Cooperation, playing together and Being given to, being cared for.

Inspecting the tabulated frequencies of themes for next-earliest memory content, it is apparent that the theme of Illness, injury, accident occurs most frequently, followed in frequency by Conflict, fighting; A traumatic, frightening experience; and Cooperation, playing together. Within the group of themes of next-earliest memories, tabulated frequencies of themes with negative connotations exceed those

of themes that are more positive. Considering these frequencies, however, one must keep in mind that each memory could be assigned one or any number of themes. Therefore, in making observations such as those above, we are working at the level of theme frequency rather than frequency of kinds of memories.

Qualitative aspects of themes and of memories were found to take on meaning at the individual level in ways which were not apparent when one looked only at the content of the memories. For this reason, further analysis of the content of memories was not conducted. The data led instead to a recognition of the importance of the context which participants gave their earliest and next-earliest memories in the course of the dialogue. This context often led to seeing the memory in a totally different light from what originally appeared in looking only at manifest content.

The major thrust then was to study the earliest memory as it belongs to a larger context. This context is the person--his/her life history, current concerns, and the immediate interpersonal setting of the dialogue with the investigator. The dialogue was a context within which various levels of experience came together to make up the experience of remembering and talking about the earliest memory. The remainder of this chapter will be taken up with results of data analysis designed to yield an understanding of the structure of this experience.

The Structure of the Earliest Memory Experience

The structure of the earliest memory experience emerged as a three-fold process, elaborated by seven qualitative dimensions. The three major structural aspects, as well as the seven dimensions, had developed out of seven thematic categories emerging directly from the interview data as common to all participants' experiences. Relationships among these categories eventually translated into the three-fold structure noted above. The three major structural aspects, the seven dimensions, and the thematic categories out of which these structural features evolved are presented in Table 3.

The basic structural outline and the dimensions are invariant features by which all participants' experiences may be described. The dimensions allow for and describe individual variability within a structure that is common to all earliest memory experiences. The dimensions, grouped according to the major structural aspects, are described below. The dimensions will be discussed more fully later in this chapter as they are used to describe the experiences of participants in this study.

Orienting to the Memory

Orienting describes the process of preparing to talk about the earliest memory as well as of giving the earliest memory a point of orientation within one's life experience.

Table 3. Major Structural Aspects, Dimensions, and Thematic Categories of the Experience of Remembering and Talking About the Earliest Memory

Major Structural Aspects	Dimensions	Thematic Categories
Orienting to the memory	Priority	Deciding which memory is the first
	History	Recognizing whether I have thought about this memory before
	Source	Establishing this memory as my own or as told to me by another
Recalling and telling the memory	Temporal Stance	Reliving the memory or objectively reporting it
	Reality	Remembering a memory which is real and logical or magical and illogical
Reflecting	Significance	Discovering how this memory stands out from other childhood events
	Meaning	Knowing the meaning of this memory in my current life context

Priority. This dimension is basic to the earliest memory experience in that one memory is defined as preceding all other memories in the individual's personal chronology of childhood experiences.

History. This category deals with a person's awareness of her/his earliest memory over time, i.e. whether s/he has thought "this is my earliest memory" at some time in the past, or whether this memory is newly discovered.

Source. This dimension refers to whether the memory was experienced to originate from oneself personally remembering the event or from another person who told the participant about this particular early childhood event.

Recalling and Telling the Memory

Simultaneously recalling and telling one's earliest memory is the immediate, here-and-now experience with the earliest memory. How one tells the memory and what the memory is are the focus here.

Temporal Stance. This refers to the quality of a person's involvement with the event(s) in the memory, during the remembering and telling about it. It deals with whether the experience is that of leaving the present moment to relive the event or whether the stance is firmly in the present while reporting the event. The degree and intensity of emotional involvement as one tells his/her memory suggests stance in the past or in the present.

Reality. This refers to whether the remembered events conform to reality the way an adult would see it or more to the way a child would experience the world. This dimension deals with the quality of thinking, whether reality-oriented or magical.

Reflecting

Reflecting is moving away from active remembering to think and talk about what was remembered. Often this involves placing the memory in a larger context which gives the memory an intensity or meaning not originally apparent in the content itself.

Significance. Significance refers to whether a person has an idea of why this earliest memory is remembered out of all the other many childhood events which could have been remembered but were not.

Meaning. This dimension is an integrative one dealing with whether a person finds some larger meaning in her/his earliest memory, beyond its being "just" a memory. Meaning describes the person's understanding of the memory in the context of his/her current life.

These seven dimensions elaborate the basic structure of orienting, recalling, and reflecting in the total experience of remembering and talking about the earliest memory. The dimensions are those features in which variability and individual uniqueness are portrayed while the overall structure and the interrelatedness of the dimensions remains the same across individuals.

The Scoring Manual

In order to score individual recall protocols, a Scoring Manual (Appendix E) was constructed. The Scoring Manual contains the most comprehensive elaboration of the dimensions; in addition, it provides a means of scoring earliest memory interviews on the basis of the seven dimensions. Scoring criteria and scored examples for each dimension appear in the Manual.

An abbreviated description of the scoring criteria and the symbol used in scoring are presented below.

(1) Priority

Certainty that the memory is the earliest (C).

Uncertainty about any memory being the earliest (U).

(2) History

The person has known this as his/her earliest memory for some time (H).

The person has been aware of this memory before but had not previously defined it as his/her earliest memory [H].

The person has not thought of this memory prior to the interview (nH).

(3) Source

The person remembers memory events directly. Self as source (S).

The memory is of an event told to one by other(S). Other as source (O).

(4) Temporal Stance

The experience is of being "back in the past" or reliving the memory (Rel).

The experience is of reporting the memory in an objective detached manner (Rep).

(5) Reality

Memory content is logical and could have actually happened (A).

Memory content is illogical and has a quality of magical thinking (M).

(6) Significance

The memory stands out for the rememberer for reasons apparent to him/her (App).

The reasons for remembering this memory are not apparent to the rememberer. (nApp).

(7) Meaning

Meaning of the memory for this person is known (K).

Meaning is not known (nK).

Additional Score:

New meaning emerges in the course of the dialogue (N).

Although dimensional scoring is dichotomous, it should be noted that the dimensions are continua along which experience can be qualitatively described. The dichotomy is meant to represent the opposite ends of a continuum; the separation is made for purposes of labeling and scoring. The dichotomies are meant to capture human possibilities inherent in the earliest memory. Ambiguities which

sometimes made scoring decisions difficult reflect the complexity of human experiencing where many situations do not present themselves as clearly one way or the other.

The scoring system was used with all interview transcripts. When each participant's earliest memory and related portion of the dialogue could be scored according to the dimensional system, this was taken as further confirmation that the dimensions represented invariant features of the total experience. Scores of each participant's earliest memory appear in Table F.1.

The interview format included asking participants for two next-earliest memories. Some participants spontaneously gave these and additional early memories. The number of next-earliest memories given by participants ranged from two to 11. The total next-earliest memories for all participants was 66. Since this data was available in the transcripts, the scoring system was also applied to next-earliest memories and related portions of the dialogue. Each memory was scored on as many dimensions as were apparent. Priority was not used since these were next-earliest rather than earliest memories. Scores of next-earliest memories appear in Table F.2.

Reliability Check

The scoring system was subjected to a reliability check to assess whether the scoring process was readily communicable to others. The reliability task involved two independent raters scoring 20 interview segments, each containing an earliest memory and the portion of the

dialogue related to this memory. The percentages of agreement between the investigator and the raters and between both raters were computed. These results appear in Table G.1.

Agreement with the investigator across all dimensions was 87% for Rater A and 90% for Rater B. Agreement levels between raters was 84% and was considered to be sufficiently consistent to allow for further analysis of the data.

Agreement levels for each dimension between investigator and raters ranged from 75% to 100%. Between raters the range was 70% to 100%. The greatest number of disagreements occurred for the dimension of Temporal Stance (Rep/Rel) and Meaning (K/nK). These dimensions were the most difficult to score because of the subtleties in the scoring criteria. In the interview the participant often gave vocal and bodily cues which could not be communicated in a typed transcript. Thus the investigator had access to data not available to the Raters. The fact that the levels of agreement on both dimensions ranged from 70% to 95% suggests that individuals who are articulate and capable of talking about their experience can communicate this experience in a manner which others can agree upon fairly consistently.

Among the memory segments scored, there was 100% agreement between the investigator and Rater A on all dimensions of nine memories; 100% agreement was reached on eight memories with Rater B. There were five earliest memories which received identical scorings across all dimensions by both raters and the investigator.

Validity Checks

Statistical testing of the validity of these dimensions was not within the scope of this project. The investigator did receive confirmation that the conceptual model represented major aspects of the experience when presenting the results of the study to participants and to colleagues. Participants were contacted individually and presented with the results of the study. Their comments and responses supported the findings and in some cases helped to clarify the dimensions. None of the participants found the results to be contrary to their experience.

The investigator gave one formal presentation and several informal presentations to peers where the purpose and outcome of the study were discussed. Responses to these presentations indicated that the dimensions were understandable. Several individuals commented that the dimensions brought out aspects of remembering which they thought were interesting and important but which they had not thought of before.

In several instances, individuals not in the study volunteered their earliest memories upon hearing the topic of study. It was then possible to discuss the dimensions and verify qualitative features for scoring the memory. These informal events were also seen as validating the dimensions and the means of scoring them.

Results of Scoring Participants' Earliest Memories

Since this was a study of the earliest memory, the scores given to each participant's memory and the experience of remembering it were collected and studied separately from next-earliest memories. Results related to the earliest memory are given primary emphasis.

Priority. The dimension of Priority refers to one memory being experienced as the earliest. Nothing else is remembered prior to the events in this memory. This dimension actually defines the phenomenon. The scoring of certain (C) or Uncertain (U) points up an interesting finding that individuals expressed varying degrees of certainty as to whether the memory they recalled was their earliest. Examples in the data covered the range from the experience of unquestioned certainty to complete uncertainty, where the experience was of picking one memory arbitrarily from a group of early memories--none of which clearly preceded another.

Some degree of certainty was expressed by 85% of the participants that the memory recalled in the interview was truly the earliest event they could remember. Statements such as "This has always been my earliest memory," and "I know this memory is my earliest, because it's the only one I have in that house," reflect implicit and explicit certainty as to the memory's place in the personally experienced chronology of remembered events. A somewhat less certain stance was taken by the participant who stated, "The two that immediately come to mind are....I don't know which of these came first, but I'll tell you what I think came first." This individual had a less clearly defined experience of the priority of the memory he decided to report as his earliest, yet he "thinks" it came first.

Fifteen percent of the earliest memory experiences received a score of uncertain (U). Individuals represented here did not feel they had one memory which they could readily call the earliest. While they were able to pick a memory to talk about in the interview, the choice

seemed to be among several memories, any one of which could have been the earliest. This experience is qualitatively different from that of the individual who without hesitation or doubt knows and tells his/her earliest memory. An example of uncertainty along this dimension is as follows:

I'm not exactly sure what's the exact earliest one. I have several from around the time I was probably four or five, but I don't know which one came first. I don't think I have an earliest memory. Should I just pick one of these to tell you about?

Since the nature of this study is to describe the phenomena in question, there was no attempt to conceptualize why some individuals experience one memory as clearly the earliest while others did not. Some individuals convey their earliest memory with a manner of certainty that shows no questioning of the memory's position as earliest. Priority, while implicit in these cases, is a firmly established part of the experience. Other participants were more explicit, as if establishing proof of this memory being the earliest.

From analysis of the dialogue surrounding each memory, it was possible to see how some individuals affirm one memory as the earliest. As was mentioned earlier, the earliest memory was often associated with a specific location, such as a house where the participant lived until age two. The factual history, such as when the family moved, was used to mark a specific age and to circumscribe an era in the participant's early experience. "This is the only memory I have of being in that house. The next memories are in the house where my parents moved when I was two. People in the memories sometimes mark a time period as in the following example: "My grandmother died when I was

two-and-one-half, so I had to have been younger than that." This participant used a person in the memory to establish an approximate age, which in turn was used to support her experience of the priority of her memory. Markers, while not part of the scoring system, are distinctive features of many earliest memories. A marker when it is used, facilitates the rememberer's connectedness to one memory as earliest. It is as if an objective, external link joins and supports the internal, subjective experience of the memory's priority.

The participant's age at the time of the memory was an additional feature associated with Priority. Nineteen participants spontaneously gave an approximate age in talking about their earliest memory. The remaining participant was able to say how old she was when questioned. The approximate ages as perceived and reported by participants appear in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Perceived and Reported Age in Earliest Memory by Participants

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>	
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Before age one		1
One to two	3	
Two to three	3	4
Three to four	2	2
Four to five	3	2

History. History as a dimension refers to a person's relatedness to a memory as earliest memory over time. The scoring of this dimension by History (H) or no History (nH) reflects the finding that some individuals have known their earliest memory for many years, while others had not identified or thought about what their earliest memory would be prior to the interview. Among participants, 13 reported an earliest memory which they had identified as such several years ago. In several instances awareness of their own earliest memory came in the course of education and training; for example: "I first thought about my earliest memory when we studied Adler in graduate school." For others, the memory as earliest memory goes back to childhood: "I was telling my family about this when I was around seven or eight, and they were surprised I could remember so far back." Another participant described an ongoing relationship with her earliest memory: "I think about his memory about once a year, usually in conjunction with some accomplishment that I feel proud of."

Attempts to score all earliest memory experiences as either (H) or (nH) on the dimension of history revealed an additional feature. It was found that some participants had a history with their memory; that is, they had thought about it from time to time over the years, but they had not designated it as their earliest memory prior to participating in this study. To account for these cases a score of [H] was given to denote a separate qualitative feature of experience. Four earliest memory experiences fell into this category.

For some participants the interview was the first experience of indentifying an earliest memory. One participant stated, "I know we ask about earliest memories in interviewing patients, but I actually never gave any thought to what my earliest memory would be." Three earliest memory experiences received a score of (nH).

Source. This dimension refers to whether the individual experiences his/her memory as an event she/he remembers from personal experience or whether the images and events in the memory were conveyed to him/her by someone else. The scoring of Self (S) or Other (O) on this dimension highlights one interesting facet of the experience of remembering one's early childhood; that is, what one hears about him/herself as a child can take on a form similar to an actual memory of an event. This was illustrated by a participant who stated, "My mother told us so many stories about what we did as kids that it's hard to know whether I really remember some of these things."

An interesting finding of this study was that all participants reported as their earliest memory an event that they personally remembered. Memories where there was no mention of source were scored (S) as implicitly indicating that the experience was of remembering the event oneself. The score of (O) was given to some next earliest memories. Results of the scoring of these memories will be presented later.

Temporal Stance. This dimension describes the manner in which an individual remembers his/her earliest memory, i.e. whether recalling evokes an experience of "reliving" the event or whether the individual

reports the events in the memory in a manner of looking back on the past from a present standpoint. The score of (Rel), or reliving, points up a human possibility of becoming caught up in the remembering so that it feels like one is in the past event.

Seven earliest memory experiences received a score of (Rel). This score was given if the rememberer was seen to transcend the present moment, even briefly, at any time during the telling of his/her earliest memory. Of all the dimensions, Temporal Stance required the greatest use of inference in the scoring.

Experiences which received the score of (Rel) often involved the more proximal senses of smell, touch, and taste. One participant, seen as reliving his earliest memory, said "I can feel the cool leaves against my face; I can even smell the blossoms." This in addition to other indicators, suggests an experience of reliving. Other cues such as emphasis on certain words, emotional investment, and facial expression were more subtle indicators of reliving.

Reporting (Rep) was the more frequent score on this dimension, given in 13 cases. In reporting the rememberer maintained the stance of telling about a memory as the task of the present moment remained the primary focus. One participant describing what it was like to talk about his earliest memory stated:

I've talked about these memories many times in therapy several years ago, so theres's nothing new. I would think you would get more of a startle and surprise response with someone who hadn't done this before.

This participant is referring to the rather matter-of-fact way in which he told his earliest memory, his experience being that it had an over-rehearsed effect which seemed to preclude spontaneity and emotional involvement in the remembering and telling.

Reality. The dimension of Reality points out that it is possible to remember something that did not occur. In the realm of early childhood experiences, we touch upon what it was like to be in the world as a small child. Although adults look back on many of their childhood experiences with a knowing air of what really could and could not have possibly happened, some have retained a bit of the child's perspective in their earliest memory. The scores of Magical (M) or Actual (A) denote whether the individual has some of the prelogical, magical view of the world within his/her earliest memory (M), or whether the memory fully conforms to the adult way of viewing the world (A).

The dimension of Reality refers to the memory of how the world looked to one as a child, as well as to how one thought about and perceived childhood events as recalled in the memory. An example of the former is seen in the following excerpt from a participant's interview:

My parents' bed looked so large. As I picture it now, it was just huge in that room. I know it was just a regular full sized bed; they didn't even have Queen size beds back then, but it really looked large.

From the visual images associated with her earliest memory, this participant could imagine what the world looked like to her as a child

alongside her adult understanding that it could not have been exactly the way it appeared in her memory. The memory would receive a score of (M) because it retains aspects unique to the child's world.

Another participant provided a view of the magical in her earliest memory:

I was sleeping in my crib and I woke up and looked through the bars and saw the sandman standing there. He was about this tall, and he was just standing there. It's very vivid.

Still another form which the magical can take was seen in the following excerpt:

I used to really have a conviction that it happened--even though I knew it couldn't have...going into my room. The room was pitch black, and I raised my arms toward the ceiling and started to rise up...I must have had a number of dreams in which that happened.

This individual remembered an experience of feeling she had magical powers following events in her memory which had left her feeling defenseless and powerless. She still held the world of the magical in her memory, even though her adult logic called for a realistic explanation of the experience as having been a dream.

Of earliest memories reported by participants, four or 20% received a score of (M) indicating that the memory contained some aspect of the magical thinking and perceiving of childhood. For the most part, the earliest memories were remembered to have happened in a way logically feasible to the adult rememberer. Sixteen out of 20 earliest memories received a score of Actual (A) on the Reality dimension.

Significance. This dimension refers to the figure-ground aspects of one's experience of his/her personal history. In terms of the earliest memory, the issue is whether the rememberer "understands" why this event stands out from among the many events which took place in his/her childhood. Scoring along this dimension points up the finding that some individuals experience their earliest memories as trivial occurrences; the reason they are remembered is not apparent to them. Others find it readily apparent why their earliest memory is remembered and or remember-able.

Among participants in the study, 17 indicated some understanding of the significance of their earliest memory; what about the events in the memory made it memorable was apparent to these individuals. The remaining three participants found no apparent reason for remembering their earliest memory. The memory's significance remained unknown in terms of their own experience and understanding.

The manner in which participants attributed significance to their earliest memories fell into three categories. In the first category, significance was seen as due to the content of the memory in and of itself: the content was remarkable, dramatic, or striking in a way which made it understandably memorable. In the second category, participants elaborated the difference between their earliest memory and the general context of their childhood experience; the aspect of contrast was developed in the dialogue. In the third grouping of earliest memories experienced as significant, participants described

their memories as expressing a continuing theme or pattern which typified childhood experience; in some cases this pattern was seen as continuing into adulthood.

Dramatic or striking content. The significance of an earliest memory based on the dramatic or remarkable nature of its content is illustrated by comments and reflections on the memory. One participant remarked, "I seem to remember things according to their injury quotient." Another participant stated, "I was in the hospital and away from my parents for the first time. It was scary." These comments point up striking features of the earliest memories which would make them stand out in a child's life, as best illustrated by the following participant's reflections:

I think the memory of my brother and the doctor--what seemed to me to be the middle of the night was a very unpleasant memory. It was a crisis--mildly overwhelming, I think. It was out of the routine, and my parents were very much people who kept to a routine. Think of all the thousands of nights that my brother and I went to bed at 7:00 or 6:30 , or whatever, regular as clockwork.

The actual events in each early memory which preceded the above comments were seen as traumatic and unusual, thereby making it apparent to the individual that this event would be remembered. It seems that people generally expect to remember events of a remarkable nature. The significance of these memories would also be apparent to others hearing about the memory because of the manifest content.

Contrast with the overall experience of childhood. Some ways in which Significance was experienced were less obvious from the content of the memory and were more related to the individual's understanding of the memory as it belonged to the larger context of his/her

childhood. Such a memory might seem unremarkable to a listener until the rememberer revealed more about the memory. Memories in which contrast was salient show the memory as different from the way one remembers his/her experiences of childhood as a whole. The example below from interview transcripts illustrates how a participant came to realize the significance of his earliest memory in the course of talking about it:

Investigator: What do you think it is about this memory that makes it stand out for you now?

Participant: I don't know...it seems safe and very warm, and very comfortable. It was something familiar...I don't know anything else about it except it was safe--compared to some of the other experiences as I got older that didn't seem so safe...As I think about it now, probably because of some of the later circumstances that I remember...that didn't feel safe.

The participant continued the theme of contrast between the earliest memory and later events in his childhood, indicating his understanding of what was special, notable, and therefore significant to him about his earliest memory. While the actual memory content might not seem remarkable to an observer, the additional information revealed the memory's figural aspects against the rememberer's more general experience of childhood.

A continuing or repeated theme. While the above example illustrated Significance of an earliest memory based on its discontinuity with what was the usual, it was found that Significance can also be experienced on the basis of continuity. Several participants observed that their earliest memory expressed a characteristic pattern or theme; in its expression of a repeated and

typical theme, the memory was seen as remember-able. One participant, reflecting on her earliest memory, stated, "This memory is a metaphor for how my family relates to each other--even to this day."

A breakdown of different ways in which significance was experienced appears in Table 5.

Table 5. Significance Attributed to Earliest Memory Content

<u>Attribution of Significance</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
Dramatic, striking content	4
Contrast with overall experience	6
Expression of a continuing theme	7
Not Significant	3

In memories seen as expressing a continuing theme of one's childhood or life, the distinction between the dimension of Significance and the dimension of Meaning becomes less clear. In some instances, earliest memories are experienced as significant because of the meaning the individual associates with the memory. Significance and Meaning were maintained as separate dimensions, however, because it was found that some individuals experience their memories as rememberable due to striking content but do not attach any significant meaning to the memory. The converse also was true where the figural aspects of the memory were not experienced as apparent to the individual but meaning was attributed. Although there were cases where

the dimensions of Significance and Meaning were closely related and intertwined, they were still viewed as separate dimensions of the experience because of the qualitative distinctions made possible by the separate consideration of these features.

Meaning. This dimension involves the rememberer's utilizing the earliest memory in the service of greater self-understanding. Often a link is made between the memory and the later course of the person's life. Adler (1939), for example, made the connection between his memory of being seriously ill and his decision to become a physician.

Of the participants in this study, 15 associated meaning with their earliest memory; the remaining 5 did not see their earliest memory as having any meaning.

One participant recognized an important facet of his identity in his earliest memory. In reflection he stated,

I associated immediately when I talked about mastery. My sense is that all my life there have been things to master. That's kind of how I approach life. I'm only happy with challenges--when I have to master something.

This individual saw his earliest memory as expressing a major motivation throughout his life.

The meaning attached to an earliest memory can also reflect ongoing issues and specific, unchanging patterns of interpersonal relating as illustrated by the following participant's reflections:

This kind of difficulty in my relationship with my mother reflects the same issues I have with authoritarian women in my professional life. I remember dealing with this and related memories in my therapy. Recalling my earliest memory now just reminds me that it's still an issue.

Constancy and change. Within the dimension of Meaning the issues of change and constancy emerged. Looking at the group of individuals who had a history of knowing their earliest memory for a period of time, it was found that some had come to experience the meaning and implications of their earliest memory differently than when they had first become aware of it. Their feelings and thoughts about this memory had changed; the memory was viewed and experienced in a different light. An example of this appears in the words of one participant:

I used to think this meant I was a bad child...that something was wrong with me when I would think back on this memory. Recently I've come to realize that my grandmother had no tolerance for my energy and curiosity as a young child. I see it more now as her being limited and rigid. I was a spunky little kid who really wanted to know what was going on in my world.

This participant's changed perception of meaning in her earliest memory reflects an evolving and enhanced understanding of herself. It also demonstrates that the meaning an earliest memory has for an individual can change over the course of his/her life. Some participants indicated that they had gained a different or greater understanding of their earliest memory when dealing with their own children around issues expressed in the memory; the perspective offered by being a parent gave these participants a new understanding of their own parents and facilitated identification with the child as well as with the parent in understanding the implications of the memory.

While change was demonstrated as a possibility, it was also found that meaning can be experienced as constant and unchanging over time. The meaning which an individual finds in his/her earliest memory and

the part this meaning plays in the larger context of his/her life was found to be a highly individualized and personal matter. The many ways in which meaning was experienced and expressed reflects the complex interplay of memory and identity.

An interesting finding of this study was that as individuals talked about their earliest memories, they sometimes made new connections and came to new realizations. New meaning emerged in relation to the earliest memory in the course of the interview. A score of (N) for new awareness of meaning was given in eight cases.

Results of Scoring Participants' Next-Earliest Memories

As was mentioned above, the scoring system (with the exception of the category of Priority) was applied to next-earliest memories as they were recalled and discussed during the interview. The twenty participants reported a total of 66 next-earliest memories. These memories and the associated dialogue were scored when discussion was adequate for purposes of coding the memory.

For the dimension of History, 49 of the 62 cases scored received a score of [H], indicating an awareness of the memory over time. Thirteen individuals recalled memories they had not thought or prior to participating in the study; these received scores of (nH).

Sixty-six memories and associated dialogue were scored for the dimension of Source. Self as source or (S), was given in 63 of the cases. Other (O) as source was the score in three cases. This small percentage of cases highlighted the possibility of experiencing as a memory events which one was told about as a child.

For Temporal Stance, 66 scores were given. Forty-seven were scores of (Rep), the experience being that of reporting the memory from a more objective stance. Nineteen next-earliest memories were scored as (Rel), where the rememberer was described as reliving the memory as s/he recalled and told about it.

The Reality dimension, scorable for all 66 next earliest memories, was scored as Actual (A) in 56 of the cases where the memories conformed to adult logic and thinking. A score of (M) or magical was given in 10 cases, indicating that these memories contained elements of magical thinking and perception, characteristic of the world of a young child.

The dimension of Significance was scored for 58 of the memory segments. In 56 of these cases, the significance of the memory was experienced as apparent (App), while in two cases, the significance was not apparent (nApp) to the rememberer.

Meaning was ascribed to 54 of next-earliest memories by participants. In four of the 58 next-earliest memories scored on this dimension, there was no known meaning (nK).

Comparison of Scores of Earliest Memories and Next-Earliest Memories

In general, scoring of both sets of memories, earliest and next-earliest, produced comparable values across the relevant dimensions; i.e. the self as source (S) characterized 20 out of 20 (100%) of the earliest memory protocols and 63 out of 66 (95%) of the next-earliest memory protocols. The numbers and percentages of each score for each of the dimensions are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of Scores of Earliest Memories and Next-Earliest Memories

Dimension	Score	EM*		NEM**	
		N	%	N	%
Priority	C	17	85	-	-
	U	3	15	-	-
History	H	13	65		
	lHl	4	20	49	79
	nH	3	15	13	21
Source	S	20	100	63	95
	O	0	0	3	5
Temporal Stance	Rep	13	65	47	71
	Rel	7	35	19	29
Reality	A	16	80	56	97
	M	4	20	10	15
Significance	App	17	85	56	97
	nApp	3	15	2	3
Meaning	K	15	75	54	93
	nK	5	25	4	7
	N	8	40	7	12

* Number and percentage of earliest memories (Total N=20) receiving score

** Number and percentage of next-earliest memories (Total N=66) receiving score. NEM received score only on those dimensions where sufficient data was available for coding the memory.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe and gain a greater understanding of an individual's experience of his/her earliest memory. An empirical phenomenological approach was used to gather and analyze the data. A phenomenological method of research is based on the premise that experience has a structure. Despite individual uniqueness in how the world is experienced, there are common features in the experience of a given phenomenon. Through these features the structure of the experience is revealed.

This study found the earliest memory to be a special memory among all of the other memories belonging to an individual. In the dialogue the individual revealed a relatedness to this memory--sometimes as an intangible possession, sometimes as an inseparable part of him/herself. Remembering the earliest memory involved a certain way of thinking, perceiving, sensing, and feeling--that is, a special way of being-in-the-world. The earliest memory is meaningful and holds the possibility for greater self-understanding. The conceptualization of a basic structure, elaborated and qualified by dimensions, provides a means of describing a person's experience of his/her earliest memory in a way which offers the possibility of enhanced understanding of the phenomenon.

The Methodology

Earliest memories have been studied for a number of years using a traditional experimental design or a single case study method. An empirical phenomenological method of research has not been used before, and this provides the present study with a new and markedly different approach to the topic. Traditional experimental methods are designed to test hypotheses. In the present study the investigator sought to divest herself of previously held notions and hypotheses about the earliest memory in order to see and describe more clearly the lived experience. The goal was not to explain or make connections and causal inferences but rather to return to the basic experience which predates theory building and hypothesis testing. To accomplish this purpose, an attempt was made to provide an opportunity for individuals to remember and talk about their earliest memories. This approach took the form of a dialogical interview, in which the investigator and the participant entered a joint venture aimed at learning more about the latter's experience.

Embarking upon a project where the goal--to describe an experience--was so broad and general meant dealing with ambiguity and a lack of any knowledge of what would emerge. A basic faith in the power of dialogue in service of self-expression, self-discovery, and mutual sharing of insights, provided direction through uncharted areas. It was found that the dialogue, in the form of a semi-structured interview, was a successful means of gaining access to experience. The dialogue itself was an experience within which other experiences were

remembered and talked about. The investigator's aim was to follow the participant's lead, providing the structure of questions and observations in order to encourage more in-depth discussion.

Participants in the study were intelligent, well educated, articulate individuals who were able to talk about in detail and reflect upon their earliest memories. While such a participant population represents a special subset of the general population this limitation was accepted in light of the other advantages of using such individuals. It was thought that the initial approach of this kind to the study of the earliest memory experience would be served by increasing the likelihood of participants' self-awareness and ability to express themselves. The benefits and limitations of using this population will be discussed later.

The method of data reduction was effective toward realizing the goals of this study. The steps of the data analysis took into account not only the participants' words but also other cues such as emphasis on certain words, facial expression, and other subtle communications possible in dialogue. The aim was to describe the participant's experience as fully as possible and to remain true to this revealed experience throughout the phases of data analysis. The themes which emerged during data analysis were used to develop focal points for describing the person's experience. The descriptive dimensions were also seen as offering new avenues of approach for future studies of earliest memories.

The Structure of the Earliest Memory Experience

The earliest memory experience came to be described in terms of a three-fold structure, elaborated and qualified by seven dimensions. Orienting, which establishes the demographics of the earliest memory, encompasses the dimensions of Priority, History, and Source. Temporal Stance and Reality are dimensions of Recalling, which belongs to the experiential realm. Reflecting, the third structural aspect of the experience, is described by the dimensions of Significance and Meaning. Orienting, Recalling, and Reflecting, together with their related dimensions, are conceptualized as the structural invariants of the earliest memory experience. Description of an earliest memory by scoring along each of the seven dimensions shows differences between individuals in how they experience their earliest memory.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability checks were run to determine if the scoring system could be readily communicated to others and used by them. Overall agreement levels of 87% and 90% were reached. These levels were taken as an adequate indication of the reliability of the system developed and used in this research. The dimensions occasioning the greatest degree of disagreement in scoring were Temporal Stance and Meaning. It is thought that the subtle cues available only to one present with the participant accounted for much of this discrepancy. In contrast to other dimensions, Temporal Stance is discernable by cues in addition to verbal ones.

Effects of the Participant Population

Participants were selected for this study on the basis of articulateness and experience with the topic under investigation (Colaizzi, 1978), as well as in terms of sensitivity, capacity for introspection, and interest in the nuances of experience (de Rivera and Kreilkamp, 1981). Psychotherapists from the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and social work were assumed to have these desired characteristics. The ability of these individuals to talk about (and reflect upon) their experience while participating in the study made it possible to gather a body of data out of which a description of the phenomenon could be drawn.

It must be questioned whether results from such a specific group of participants could generalize to other individuals. This issue can be addressed by conducting similar studies with a broader segment of the population. The limitations based on the participant selection in this study are accepted at this point because a crucial factor in a study of this nature is the ability to produce the phenomenon as fully and richly as possible. Verbal expressive ability is crucial in this endeavor. The selection of participants was aimed at maximizing the chance of the phenomenon being presented in a way most clearly revealing its essential features and nuances.

Age. All participants in this study had reached mature adulthood. There was a wide age range, which indicates varying experience with adult developmental issues. A number of the participants were dealing with issues of professional advancement, such as building a practice,

establishing a home, raising young children, or deciding whether to have children. At the other end of the spectrum, some of the older participants were looking back over the course of their personal and professional lives, and deciding to devote their time primarily to those pursuits which gave them the greatest satisfaction, as opposed to the younger participants who were focused on hard work and sacrifice to reach personal and professional goals. Concerns associated with a particular adult developmental phase often came up in the course of talking about the earliest memory.

Age did not affect the ability to recall and talk about the earliest memory in this study. The meaning attached to the memory often reflected current issues, but there was evidence from some participants' reports that the memory remained the same even though it could take on different meaning in the course of one's development and maturation.

Intellectual and educational level. All the participants in this study had advanced degrees. From this, one could assume above-average or higher intellectual capacities. It must be questioned whether the same results could have been obtained from a group of people less well educated and of lesser intellectual capacity. Although this is an acknowledged limitation to generalizability, it is thought that issues articulated clearly by this select group might sensitize this investigator and other researchers or clinicians to the same issues in individuals whose verbal abilities and ability to communicate are less

well developed. Thus the findings of this study are thought to have value and usefulness extending well beyond the population represented by the participants.

Profession. All participants in this study were practicing psychotherapists. Most had some familiarity with theory and technique related to the earliest memory from their education and training. This undoubtedly had some effect on their experience of their own earliest memory. Several individuals observed that they first thought of their own earliest memory when studying Adlerian theory or when learning interviewing and diagnostic techniques utilizing earliest memories.

Knowledge of clinical implications of earliest memories might have affected how participants reported and talked about their earliest memory. Some may have taken a more guarded stance in revealing personal material to a colleague. Those individuals who declined to participate in the study because of the highly personal and sensitive nature of their earliest memory gave evidence to the power of this phenomenon. Some participants during the course of their interview expressed anxiety about what they were saying being taped and asked for reassurance about confidentiality. One participant at a later date admitted that he had omitted one of his earliest memories because of his discomfort with the idea of this memory being taped and transcribed. Although most participants appeared quite open and comfortable discussing their earliest memories, the above instances of concern suggest that censorship may have operated in some cases. Being in a profession where earliest memories are known to be used to

"diagnose" character pathology or indicate levels of adjustment or maladjustment would likely influence some to take a more cautious stance in revealing their own earliest memory, even when the purposes of the study were clearly stated.

A positive profession-related effect of using this participant group is that these individuals, as a rule, are skilled in recognizing and communicating their thoughts and feelings. Almost all had received personal psychotherapy; this was seen as increasing the likelihood of their being self-aware and reflective. Such attributes were of great value in the present study.

Marital and child rearing status. Seventeen of the participants were married, two were divorced, and one had never married. Participants sometimes referred to their spouses or other intimate relationships in the course of talking about their earliest memories. They sometimes saw repetitions of the early kinds of relationships or certain recurrent patterns of early interpersonal interactions in the course of their development and in their current lives. Making connections between earliest memories and the present, along with being aware of some of these connections throughout their development, were ways in which significance and meaning of the earliest memory were understood and expressed.

An interesting finding was that parenting sensitized some participants to certain issues in their own earliest memories. Of the eleven participants who had children, several mentioned gaining new

insights and understandings of their earliest memories in the course of dealing with their own child around issues similar to those in their memory.

Relevance to Theory and Previous Research

As mentioned earlier, the goals and the method of this research differed markedly from previous studies of earliest memories, which were explanatory and inferential in nature. Returning to the source of theories about earliest memories, i.e. Freud and Adler, we find experiential data. Freud gave illustrative earliest memories (thought by editors to be his own) to demonstrate unconscious operations. Adler talked about several earliest memories, admittedly his own, in his attempt to understand human functioning. In the present study, we stop short of theory building and seek to remain at the descriptive level. It could be said, however, that individual participants formulated their own "theories" about their earliest memories, either in the course of talking about these memories or in having thought about these earliest memories over the years. It is useful at this point to compare outcomes of this research, both experiential and structural, with existing theory and previous research. Manifest content will be addressed first. Then discussion will take place around each of the seven dimensions.

Manifest content of earliest memories. Previous research on the earliest memory has taken memory content as its unit of analysis. While the present study attempted to show the value of going beyond earliest memory content, it was useful to begin with content to see

what earliest memories were about. Fifteen different themes were found in participants' earliest memories, with an additional nine themes coming from next-earliest memories. These themes varied widely, covering a range of topics. Much of the previous research on earliest memories has utilized themes of the memories in making interpretations, particularly in hypothesizing thematic differences among various clinical and normal groups of subjects. It is useful to compare the themes which have appeared in previous research with those found in the data of this study.

Manaster and Perryman (1974) compiled a list of earliest memory themes mentioned in prior theoretical literature and research. Their comprehensive list is compared against the themes of the memories in this study in Table 7.

Inspection of the two lists of themes shows that all the themes listed by Manaster and Perryman (1974) could be matched to themes occurring in manifest contents of earliest memories and next-earliest memories reported in the present study. Thus it would appear that earliest memories discussed in this study are thematically typical of early memories gathered from diverse clinical and normal groups studied previously. In light of this thematic diversity of memory contents produced by healthy, well-functioning individuals who were the participants in this study, manifest content themes would not be indicated as a basis for distinguishing among various groups of subjects.

Previous research based on manifest content of earliest memories may have stopped short of obtaining critical data for understanding the

Table 7. Comparison of Earliest and Next-Earliest Memory Themes from the Present Study with Themes Compiled by Manaster and Perryman (1974)

Themes from Present Study	Manaster and Perryman Themes
<u>Earliest Memories</u>	
Traumatic, Frightening Experience	Fear or anxiety provoking threatening situation
Illness, injury, accident	Illness, injury
Separation, loss abandonment, death	Death
First-time experience	New or unfamiliar situation causing excitement
Special Occasion, holiday	- - - - *
Vividly pleasant experience	- - - - -
Mastery, competence	Mastery
Feeling alone, isolated	- - - - -
Shame, embarrassment	- - - - -
Comfort, security	- - - - -
Sibling rivalry, Competition, jealousy	Birth of a sibling
Cooperation, playing together	Mutuality
Relationship with parents	- - - - -
Conflict, fighting	Open hostility
Being given to, Being cared for	- - - - -
<u>Next-Earliest Memories</u>	
Accusation, punishment, abuse	Punishment
Rebelling	Misdeeds
Helping	Givingness
Exhibitionism, display	Attention getting
Being praised	- - - - -
Disappointment, failure	- - - - -
Vulnerability	- - - - -
Puzzlement, not understanding	- - - - -
Having magical powers	- - - - -

*- - - - indicates absence of similar or related theme in list

meaning and implications of earliest memories. The individual's thoughts and reflections about his/her earliest memory often expanded or changed the memory's meaning and implications. Interpreting earliest memory content without including the personal context and relatedness may be a factor in the largely inconclusive results of previous earliest memory research.

The present study was an attempt to describe and better understand the earliest memory by including the person as context. Remembering and talking about the earliest memory in dialogue revealed the memory in the context of the person. The seven dimensions elaborate upon and describe the memory as it belongs to this larger context.

Priority. Literature on this topic refers to "early childhood memories," "earliest childhood memories," and "the earliest memory." Freud (1899/1950) referred to "earliest childhood memories," but he did not single out any one as more important. Adler (1931) gave special emphasis to the earliest memory: "most illuminating is the way the individual begins his story, the earliest incident he can recall (p. 75)." While Adler saw all early memories as illuminating, he saw the earliest as offering the most crystallized and succinct statement of the person's life style. Interestingly, research, whether coming out of a Adlerian or a psychoanalytic orientation, has consistently specified "the earliest memory" in the research procedure; this is often followed by asking subjects for more early memories, usually next-earliest. Little has been made in the literature about the difference between earliest memories and the earliest memory, and only one study (Purcell,

1952) investigated and found no difference dynamically between the earliest memory and other early memories. It would seem from the above that researchers and clinicians implicitly accept the earliest memory as special for their starting point, but this is not elaborated. Furthermore, no mention is made of subjects expressing any difficulty in giving their earliest memory.

In the present study, participants varied considerably in their experience of "the earliest" or, "one of the earliest" of their memories. A number of participants responded without hesitation to the request for their earliest memory. This seemed to be implicit acknowledgement that one memory was experienced as earliest. Some participants gave reasons for their certainty that one memory was earliest, while others went through a decision--making process and arrived at one memory with reasonable certainty. It is of interest, however, that a small percentage of participants felt they did not have one earliest memory; they remembered instead a group of earliest memories, and they experienced their selection of one memory to be arbitrary, based on the dictates of this study rather than on a single experience of "firstness." Theories and previous research would likely deal with this by saying that what was seemingly "arbitrary" was an unconsciously motivated selection. Thus such memories probably would have been considered no different from those expressed with certainty.

In this study with its focus on experience, the participants' markedly different manner of responding to a request for their earliest memory is considered quite significant. It would seem that experiencing one memory as the earliest is not a universally

experienced phenomenon. Whether a memory was experienced as "the earliest" or "one of the earliest" did not seem to affect other qualitative aspects of remembering and talking about this experience.

History. History with an earliest memory has been alluded to only indirectly in the literature. The Adlerian notion is that the earliest memory, in expressing the individual's attitude toward the world or style of life, remains unchanged over time regardless of external events (Mosak, 1958). This stability and sameness refer to specific content as well as to attitude and affect expressed with the earliest memory. Clinical case studies have offered support to the early memory remaining the same over time since it presumably reflects the person's basic attitudes to life. On the other hand, as a result of psychotherapy which has accomplished major change, individuals have been found to (1) have new memories, (2) forget the original memory, (3) change the emotional tone of the memory, or (4) change the original memory in such a way that it conveys a different message (Mosak, 1958; Eckstein, 1976; Croake, 1975). The change coincides with the basic change in their style and attitude toward life.

When a memory has been known and thought about from time to time over the years, the way the person relates to and understands this memory has a chance to develop. Here the dimensions of History and Meaning become intertwined, for it is with History (time) that Meaning evolves and changes. History with a specific memory also offers the opportunity to see sameness and stability over time when meaning and

attitude toward the memory remain unchanged. The issues of change and sameness in terms of Meaning of an early memory will be addressed later.

Experientially, the earliest memory is about the self in time. Remembering the earliest memory, who one was at that time and what one's world was like, highlights continuities and changes in the experience of self as well as continuities and changes in the external world. Dapkus (1982) discussed change and continuity as part of an individual's experience of time. Remembering one's earliest memory is a special way of experiencing the self in time.

As illustrated by the experiences of some participants in this study, the earliest memory can serve to highlight identity themes. Identity involves self-definition. Referring back to an early memory from time to time can be an act in the service of self-definition. One participant, indicating the nature of the relationship to her earliest memory over time, stated, "I usually think back on this memory about once a year...when I accomplish something." This points to the enduring quality of the memory. There is also an implicit valuation of the memory as it relates to a positive attribute of the self.

Relevant to the domain of History with an earliest memory are what could be aptly described as "special memories." This is signified by one participant speaking about a memory of his father whom he had lost in early childhood: "That's the only thing I have of him. I have pictures. I have memorabilia...But this is the only substantive memory that I have of his presence." This memory, with the value sustained over time, had the quality of a special possession and would be

classified as a transitional phenomenon (Myers, 1985). The maintenance of this relationship, available only through memory, served the individual in negotiating various developmental milestones in accordance with Myers' (1985) extension of Winnicott's (1953) concept of the transitional object.

An individual's sense of History with an earliest memory is an additional consideration. Some of our experiences are clear and well-defined or articulated, while others are vague, seeming to occur at a level below direct conscious awareness. The examples given above illustrate a direct sense of experience with a memory over time. The following example given by one participant shows a less direct form in which the sense of history can be experienced: "I don't know when I've ever thought about this memory before, but I have a feeling it has always been with me." This experience points out the inseparableness of the memory and the person; in reflection, distance is taken to look at some aspect of the self.

History with an earliest memory can take the form of knowing about a memory over time, sensing the memory from a deeper store of experiences, or various gradations of these experiences. The dimension of History points to a complex interaction between the earliest memory and identity and sense of self.

While the majority of individuals in the study indicated a history with their earliest memory, those who reported a memory that they had not remembered before demonstrated another interesting possibility:

that is, there is always the possibility of discovering another aspect of the self, as expressed by an earliest memory. In this study, dialogue facilitated the actualization of this possibility.

Source. A sizeable proportion of participants implicitly expressed a sense that their earliest memory was their own, that is, a memory of something directly experienced. The observed effort demonstrated by some individuals, however, in distinguishing their own memory from what was told to them by others points to Source as an essential feature of the experience. In previous research, researchers have attempted to assure that this distinction is being made: "Recollections' which others have told the respondent may not be interpreted as recollections (Mosak, 1958, p. 304)." There is no mention in existing literature, however, of subjects spontaneously bringing up this issue.

The experience of "mineness," as well as the importance of affirming this experience in regard to the earliest memory, suggests the specialness of the earliest memory. It is noteworthy that all participants reported self as source in their earliest memory. Additional issues concerning identity and sense of self can be seen in this dimension. A mature sense of identity accrues, in part, from the integration of self perceptions and experiences with the way one is perceived and responded to by others. Adequate ego boundaries make it possible to distinguish oneself as separate from others as well as to reject others' perceptions of oneself which are incompatible with personal perceptions.

Differentiation as to the source of one's remembered past appears to be one manifestation of the degree of psychological differentiation, explained by Witkin (1965) in terms of the cognitive styles of field-dependence and field independence:

Persons with an articulated cognitive style give evidence of separate identity...that is to say, they have an awareness of needs, feelings, attributes which they identify as distinct from those of others....The less developed sense of separate identity of persons with a global cognitive style manifests itself in reliance on external sentiments and the view of themselves (1965, p. 320).

The firm conviction of self as source in relation to important earliest memories suggests the attainment of an autonomous sense of identity.

Looking at adolescent developmental tasks as described by Erikson (1950), we see the precursors to the attainment of mature adult identity.

In puberty and adolescence all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are more or less questioned again....The growing and developing youths, faced with this physiological revolution within them, and with tangible adult tasks ahead of them are now primarily concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are...(p. 261).

The experiences described by adult participants in the present study demonstrate a stage of maturity contrasting with and well beyond the adolescent "crisis" described above. Having experienced several years of adult life as well as commitment to and investment in an occupation, they also show an affirmation of and trust in their own perceptions and personal sense of who they are. This appears to be implicitly demonstrated around the dimension of Source of the earliest memory.

The above three dimensions, Priority, History, and Source, describe an individual's relationship to a memory as earliest memory. The earliest memory as it is experienced in terms of these dimensions has relevance as a vehicle for self-expression, self-definition, and affirmation of identity. The following dimensions of Temporal Stance and Reality refer to experience of the content of the earliest memory.

Temporal Stance. In this dimension we consider the world stance which the individual experiences during the act of remembering. In intentional remembering the person recalls an event. The memory begins as an objectified event with the person observing (remembering) the past from the present. Distance or objectivity is maintained. There is a possibility, however, that remembering engages an unintentional process where distance between person and memory dissolves. The person begins to live the memory; this experience is referred to as "reliving."

Most of the participants in this study could be described as maintaining an objective stance in the present as they recalled their earliest memories. The striking experiences of those who became caught up in the memory, however, pointed to reliving as a possibility in the course of remembering the earliest memory. This finding relates to Sardello's (1978) discussion of various qualitative possibilities of remembering. Remembering can have the quality of generating mental representations of the past as facts, i.e., that which is known. Remembering can also engage a feeling state which takes primacy over the factual. Sardello (1978) uses Bachelard's (1969) concept of the

"slope of memory" to describe progressive movement into the more distant past, finally reaching a timeless past. Time, as used here, does not refer to a linear concept but rather to an experiential time. Bachelard sees reverie as reaching the greatest depth on the slope of memory; here the experience is of timelessness, and the present temporarily gives way to experiencing a timeless past. Childhood past is considered to be less deep on the "slope of memory" than reverie:

Here, there is an opening to the timeless, the hint of an affective valorization, but these memories are still dated, and thus keep us attached to the perceptual present (Sardello, 1978, p. 148).

In terms of the experiences of participants in this study, it would seem that the earliest memory is at the brink of "the timeless." Most of the participants did remain attached to the present. The sensual and affective experiences of those who "left" the present, however, would appear to reach over into the realm of the timeless.

When we look at memory as encompassing a broader context than factual recall, other capacities must be engaged. Bachelard (1969) considers this crucial capacity to be imagination, defined as a process of "deforming" images or "liberating us from first images (meaning representations in perception)--it is the freedom from a mental imitation of reality (1943, p. 7)." Imagination implies transcendence; in terms of the dimension of Temporal Stance, the demands of the present are transcended, freeing the person to partake of another time. Bachelard also sees imagination as involving an excess in terms of the senses, and this excess leads to "affective valorization" of the remembered experience. The implication is that

the excess value is sufficient to pull the rememberer away from the present to the experienced past. This conceptualization would seem to fit the observed experience of those participants in this study who were described as "reliving" their earliest memory.

The issue of "reliving" or transcendence of present stance can be further understood in terms of Schacter's explanation of childhood amnesia (1959). Childhood experience is direct and sensual; there are as yet no concepts through which experiences is filtered. In the course of development and maturation, as well as social interaction, conceptual schema and values are formed which are now part of the experiencing person. The mode of childhood experiencing is no longer possible nor are there vehicles to facilitate intentional recall of the lost state. The possibility does remain, however, for spontaneous occurrence of the primal mode of experiencing, especially by way of the senses of smell, touch, and taste. Those participants in the present study described as "reliving" their earliest memory, often expressed a direct sensory experience: "I can smell the blossoms...I can feel the cool leaves." These proximal senses are considered to be primary in the earliest stages of infant development. Only later do the distal senses of sight and hearing assume a primary role. The spontaneous evocation of a memory associated with sensory intensity is a means by which we momentarily contact an earlier mode of experiencing and transcend the limitations of adult perception.

Apart from or together with sensory aliveness, affective intensity is a force sometimes overriding the individual's present considerations with the result that s/he seemingly lives the past event. The

emotional experience enlivens the known past, transforming it into a lived past. The capacity to modulate and control affect is considered a sign of psychological maturity and health (Rapaport, 1953). The experience of affect associated with a memory is seen as necessary in a therapeutic context for gaining insight (Devereux, 1966). For purposes of the present study, which is not clinical, it might be extrapolated that remembering one's earliest memory along with associated affect is a potentially richer and more meaningful experience than where affect is absent.

With the Temporal Stance of "reliving," we are dealing with excess of both imagination and affect. In healthy individuals this quality of excess suggests the temporary loosening or abandoning of control described by Kris (1936/1952) as "regression in service of the ego." The flexibility with regard to affective experience has implications for artistic, creative, and empathic capacity as well as for more enriched self understanding and vitality. In terms of the psychoanalytic concept of flexibility of ego functions involving regulation and control, as well as the phenomenological notion of "excess" of imagination, Temporal Stance is closely related to the dimension of Reality, as both of these dimensions describe a way of being in the world.

Reality. This dimension touches on cognitive aspects of remembering. The experiential range of this dimension extends from the objective and factual to the fantastic and magical. Unlike reference

to the reality of the early memory in previous research, the focus in this study was on the rememberer's experience. The Reality dimension is the described quality of reality that the earliest memory expresses.

Previous research literature makes only passing reference to the reality of the earliest memory. The point of view in judging this reality seems to be that of the researcher or clinician. Mosak (1958) states that

Our experience has indicated that recollections range from what are obvious fabrications, although rarely deliberate lies, to rather accurate portrayals of situations (p. 303).

He further notes that some earlier studies attempted to verify the actuality of events in the memory. As earliest memory research has evolved, however, there has been recognition from both Adlerian and psychoanalytic approaches that whether the memory event actually occurred is not important. It is rather the person's belief that these events did occur that make the earliest memory interpretable. The earliest memories serve as projective rather than historical data about the individual.

This approach implies that research subjects were naive, unknowing and unsuspecting about the nuances of their earliest memories. An important finding in the present study was that participants spontaneously addressed the reality of their earliest memories. Are we to assume that this is due to the special background and sophistication of this group of participants? Conversations with individuals not in the mental health field would suggest that this was not a special case. Instead it would seem to indicate that assuming the role of participant

with the investigator in exploring experience allowed participants an opportunity to present their experiences in a way which revealed the reality considerations.

The majority of participants in this study experienced their earliest memories as real, that is, as having actually occurred, or at least that they plausibly could have occurred. A small porportion of participants, remembered, as real, events of a nature which violated adult reason and logic. These individuals found themselves in the peculiar position of experiencing two kinds of reality simultaneously: the magical, fantastic, and totally illogical, alongside the awareness that these remembered events occured in a way which violates the rules of logic and possibility. This revealed, through the earliest memory, the human capacity for magical thinking within the realm of reality testing. Magical thinking and primary process were seen to take place, but not totally out of the range of an observing ego. Within such an early memory we see the prototype of a creative act, a work of art, which can enrich and expand previously existing limits of the experienced world.

Once again, Kris' (1936/1952) concept of regression in service of the ego can be applied to a description of "magical" earliest memories. There is momentary relaxing of the ego's demands, thus allowing fantasy-like experience to occur. Bellak (1958), enlarging upon this notion, conceptualized the degree of control exercised through the adaptive functions of the ego as ranging from vigilance to self-exclusion of its controlling functions. There is occillation along this continuum as to degree of control:

What happens is that cognitive, selective, adaptive functions are decreased; this weakens the sharply defined boundaries of figure and ground, of logical, temporal, spatial, and other relations, and permits them to reorder themselves into new configurations with new boundaries, under the scrutiny of the again sharply functioning adaptive forces (Bellak, 1958, p. 367).

It would seem that the ability to allow the fantastic, illogical and magical as memory is a sign of flexibility characteristic of creativity, whether through some external manifestation or through enhanced internal experience of self.

Schachtel (1959) discussed the creative act not as due to regression but rather to an openness toward the world like that of a young child encountering a fascinating object for the first time. This openness leads to the ability to see beyond "preformed clichés and 'angles' as make up the world of 'reality' seen by the family, peer group, and society in which he grows up (p. 238)." The tolerance for contradictions and violations of "reality" in one's earliest memory suggests such an openness to different modes of experiencing.

The work of Winnicott (1953) on the transitional object led to increased understanding of the nature of reality. From him we have the concept of an intermediate area between reality and fantasy from which spontaneity and creativity emerge. Rather than the opposing tension between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, or internal and external reality, we see in Winnicott a bridging of these poles; Deri (1978) states:

Winnicott delights in showing how well these two universes harmonize, intermingled within the same act, the same perception, or the same physical object. The word real is used by Freud only in referring to what is outside. The act of judgment, refers to something "real," i.e., to something

"out there," or to something "not real," to a product of the imagination (p. 46).

Accepting Winnicott's view, we are able to see primary and secondary process on a continuum, which seems to more accurately describe the ongoing experience of reality. Earliest memories of mature, healthy individuals where magical thinking and a fantasy world reveals itself, illustrate the dynamic and harmonious interplay internal and external reality.

As has frequently happened in this research, extreme cases pointed out phenomena found in all of the protocols. The striking magical thinking and child- world reality of a few earliest memories directed the research to a special quality of reality found in all earliest memories. Across the various theoretical orientations there is a consensus that the earliest memory is not of childhood but rather about childhood.

Of the participants in this study, it can be said that all experienced their earliest memories to be of actual events; that is, remembering seemed to be of an incident that had actually occurred. The acknowledgment by some that events in their memory did not belong to an objective reality would lead us to question the sense of reality of other participants whose memories did not violate adult logic. Since this aspect of early memories had not been formulated at the time participants were interviewed, there were no questions directed at ascertaining the quality of reality for each participant. We have only the spontaneous comments of those who considered the nature of their reality. After reporting a memory which was plausible and logical, one

participant added, "I have no idea whether this really happened or not. I asked my mother, and she said it was possible, but she does not remember." This participant had a long and valued history with his earliest memory. The questions he had had about its reality had no way diminished this experience for him. From his comments, we can see his experience of a quality of reality different from that of remembering an incident which happened yesterday. Reality, as portrayed by participants, ranged from what could be described as meticulously factual to dreamlike and magical. From this it can be concluded that it is a human possibility to experience a "different" reality in remembering the earliest memory.

Significance. This dimension deals with the way events in the earliest memory are remembered, from the perspective of the rememberer. This particular issue has been the subject of much speculation within the various theoretical frameworks. Freud (1899/1950) observed that some people had earliest childhood memories which appeared so trivial that they could not have made an emotional impact, while it was known that these same individuals had traumatic experiences to which they reacted but now had no memory. His formulation of the concept of the "screen memory" served to explain these indifferent memories on the basis of their association to repressed experiences of a disturbing or conflictful nature. The affect belonging to the repressed material was displaced onto another event which, with this investment, was memorable though seemingly unremarkable.

The explanatory point of view taken by Adlerians does not assume any connection with repressed or forgotten events. Dreikurs (1952) expresses the position of Individual Psychology:

From all the millions of experiences to which we are exposed in our early childhood, we remember only those which coincide with our outlook on life (p. 109). . . .

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It does not make much difference whether the recollection contains an actual event or a dream. It would not be remembered unless it fit into the general outlook on life (p. 115).

The position taken by ego psychology is that the content of the remembered event is salient because it expresses the basic coping mechanisms or conflicts (Burnell & Solomon, 1964). Mayman (1978) sees the earliest memory as representing characteristic self/other relationships. The level of object-relatedness expressed in the earliest memory was used as a gauge of the individual's psychological development from an object relations point of view.

The above theoretical viewpoints are presented here to point out their explanatory nature in contrast to the descriptive approach taken in this study. In terms of the dimension of Significance we are considering the human tendency to ask "why?" and to look for causal relationships between events in the world as well as within the self. Within this dimension are the speculations and reasons of individuals who attempt to know why their earliest memories are memorable.

Of the participants in this study, a small percentage expressed puzzlement as to why their earliest memory was memorable. A somewhat larger group saw in the specific memory content the reason for the

memory's survival; the content of these memories was usually of a dramatic or traumatic nature. The remaining participants viewed their memory as part of a larger context in which the memory either stood out in contrast, emerging as a figure from a ground, or expressed a continual or recurrent pattern or theme. The latter group tended to treat their memory in a more abstract and symbolic fashion, in some cases seeing the meaning as what made the memory "remember-able." When this occurred, the dimension of Significance and the dimension of meaning were not separate in the individual's experience.

Looking back to the major theories, there is no one approach capable of reconciling the differences in experience described by the participants. Individuals who could find nothing salient in the memory content but yet found meaning in the memory were closest to expressing a point of view similar to Freud's "screen memories." These participants related meaning through a quasi-associational process.

Those individuals whose memories were traumatic or striking, and therefor fixed in memory, presented reasons which confirmed the general principle of adult memory: that we remember the remarkable. Mosak (1958) made the following interesting clinical observation:

The more 'dramatic' an incident, the less significance is attached to the interpretation of the incident since the retention of the incident is at least partially dictated externally (p. 307).

In the present study the dramatic nature of the memory did not show any effect on the rememberer's ability to interpret the memory and find meaning for him/herself.

Participants who saw the significance of their earliest memories in terms of a larger context described experiences which fit theoretical approaches where memory is treated symbolically or as representational. Patterns and modes of interacting could be interpreted from the standpoint of ego psychology, Individual Psychology, or object relations theory.

It is not the purpose of this study to support or argue against any particular theory. The descriptive results here are not further enhanced by imposing a theoretical framework at this stage. Value is seen rather in allowing mystery and the unexplained to remain so, in order not to prematurely force closure where openness toward the phenomenon still leads to new perspectives.

Meaning. The aim of previous research and theory has been to find the meaning inherent in the earliest memory. Researchers and clinicians have attempted to interpret the memories or to draw connections between the memory and other characteristics or behaviors of the individuals studied. In the present study, individuals themselves were given the opportunity to talk about the personally experienced meaning related to their earliest memories.

Looking at the overall structure of the dialogue between participant and investigator, we see the dual modes of being: action and reflection. Remembering and telling the memory was characterized primarily as the active mode. It is out of this mode alone that the data of previous research has been gathered. In this study the addition of the reflective mode, prompted by dialogue about the memory

and remembering, provided rich and valuable material for expanding the view of the earliest memory. What sometimes appeared initially as a colorless fragment was developed into a work of art. The reflective, associational processes added a landscape or context which enhanced the initial presentation. Reflection took place within dialogue, which was dynamic and active. Out of this context, historically known meanings as well as fresh and surprising new insights were revealed.

The ways in which meaning was experienced were quite diverse. A small percentage of participants saw no meaning in their earliest memories. The larger percentage saw meaning and/or major life themes related to their earliest memories.

Identity and Self Experience. Some participants talked about meaning in terms of identity themes and feelings about the self. The earliest memory contained elements of "Who I am" or "Who I was as a child," including strong feelings about oneself and others. Feelings such as pride in accomplishment, mastery, competition, security, affiliation and love, as well as feelings of vulnerability, shame, loss, isolation, and anger were described. Meaning in terms of identity and self feeling were expressed through the integration of these feelings with present self experience and self feeling.

Some participants saw their memories as expressing acknowledged and accepted ongoing, durable, and stable traits. The meanings reflected a sense of self as constant and enduring over time and in the face of a changing external world. Other participants saw their memories as expressing characteristics which no longer described them

or which they had struggled to overcome or were struggling to overcome. Meanings expressed this way suggested the possibilities for growth and change, with the self experienced as emerging, evolving, and vital.

Individuals who found their earliest memories not to be meaningful sometimes qualified this by saying that the memory experience was alien to how they saw themselves as children or as adults. One might question whether these "alien" experiences, in their negative connotations for the individual, had been shut off from awareness rather than acknowledged and struggled against or worked through. Identity here was impelled through negation or "who I am not." In any event, the earliest memory is a vehicle for various ways of experiencing the complexity of the self, whether through acknowledgment and recognition or through negation.

Meaning and feeling for oneself as a child. Feeling for oneself as a child came to be seen as one important way in which meaning of the earliest memory was experienced. Participants who articulated a sense of "empathy" for the child they were as well as a sense of connectedness to this child were describing what is recognized as a hallmark of psychological well-being. Miller (1979) saw this feeling and understanding in relation to one's childhood as necessary for the emergence and expression of the "true self," described by Winnicott (1965). One participant, after recognizing his formerly unacceptable feelings of greed, rivalry, exhibitionism and a pervasive sense of vulnerability, spoke of wanting to take the small child in the memory in his arms and love him. This connectedness with the once isolated child of the past was experienced by this participant as freeing his

ability to "just be," to take in the richness of the world around him, to relate to others empathically, and to express himself creatively. The experience of continuity between child of the past and adult of the present, through meaning and feeling for self in the earliest memory, enlarged and enriched his experience of living. Powerful and mixed positive and negative feelings had existed and continued in relation to the events in his earliest memories, and these were available to him in accordance with the expression of his "true self."

This issue is further elaborated by Miller (1979), describing individuals who have not reached this degree of self feeling and understanding:

They bring their first memories without any sympathy for the child they once were....In general there is complete absence of real emotional understanding or serious appreciation of their own childhood vicissitudes with no conception of their true need beyond the demand for achievement (p. 48).

In speaking of further consequences of this state, Miller says:

They have all developed the art of not experiencing feelings, for a child can only experience his feelings when there is somebody there who accepts him fully, understands and supports him (p. 49).

As expressed poignantly by some participants in this study, this "somebody" had to be themselves. In these cases the earliest memory oftentimes had remained the same over the years, but the feelings and meanings attached to it had evolved and changed over time, allowing for a fuller experience of self as child through the empathic adult.

Ivimey (1950) sees the experience of "truth" in the present as a stimulant for enhanced understanding and connection with self as a child:

In functioning in tune with the real self in the present, a true perspective on the past emerges, and as perspective gets clearer the sense of the inner reality of the self gets stronger (p. 46).

As one gains a truer perspective of early childhood experience and empathy for self as a child, there comes an important development in relation to one's parents. Ivimey describes this in a way which accurately represents the meaning and insight some participants in this study had drawn from their earliest memories:

When one becomes real to himself, one of the most relieving and rewarding benefits is a sense of human fellowship, a sense of being on common ground with others. As a human being in one's own right, parents can be seen in their own right. Having a feeling for the nature and extent of our own disturbances in human relations and how they could not have been otherwise under the conditions existing within us, we look at our parents with eyes that see, likewise, that it could not have been different for them in their relation to members of the family, including oneself as a child (p. 46).

One way meaning had changed over time for individuals in this study was through the development of greater understanding of the child and parents in the memory.

Meaning and developmental issues. Meaning and/or the evolution of meaning of an earliest memory was found by some participants to coincide with the negotiation of adult developmental stages. Some thoughts brought up by participants in discussing their earliest memory were trying to decide whether to have children; seeing oneself differently in the earliest memory as a result of having a child; observing one's role evolve from "the youngest" in the earliest memory to "becoming one of the elders," whom others looked up to in the

extended family; and looking back over one's life, and taking stock as one approaches later adulthood. These represent a range of concerns associated with various stages of adult development.

Perhaps one of the most powerful adult experiences for evoking early childhood memories and feelings is having a child of one's own. Participants in this study who had a child the age they were in their earliest memory reported new insights and understanding as well as intensified feelings in relation to their earliest memory. Benedek's (1959) concept of "parenthood as a developmental stage" describes the reworking and resolution of one's own residual childhood conflicts through the process of being a parent. In the present study, some participants saw in their own child issues operating in their earliest memory. There was a sense of self-recognition which coincided with understanding one's own child. Accompanying the enhanced perception and understanding of the child in the memory was a new perception of the parent in the earliest memory. One participant described her mother as changing from rejecting and stern to comforting and soothing through the changed perception of her earliest memory, brought about by the experience of being a parent.

In regard to parenthood and the experience of earliest memories, Peskin (cited in Rosenberg & Medini, 1978) observed that new mothers who reacted positively to the birth of their child remembered their earliest memories differently and with greater affective intensity than previously. He saw that motherhood, an important aspect of

self-definition, stimulated recall of early memories and the capacity to feel the pain associated with these memories. Referring to Peskin's findings, Medini and Rosenberg (1978) stated that:

It is not the reworking that changes memories or their emotional ties, but rather the impact of certain kinds of external events in releasing painful emotional associations to memories and the retention of this new whole. One result is a deeper sense of feeling of self, of a greater contact with pain and a greater capacity to mobilize energy for more creative, nurturant living (pp. 425-426).

It is possible for an individual to observe his/her own developmental progression as an adult by observing the evolution of meaning found in his/her earliest memory.

Special memories. Some memories were experienced as meaningful because they captured a special moment in a significant relationship. Such memories have the quality of a special possession, described by Myers (1985), in that they represent a significant relationship between self and other over time. Although memories are intangible, these special memories were experienced as more valuable than tangible objects representing the significant person. A warm, loving experience with a later-unavailable parent generally characterized these memories. The meaning of these memories lay in the individual's recognition of present personal values which were linked to the experience in the valued special memory.

Constancy and change and the issue of stability. Throughout the discussion of Meaning and its manifestations in the earliest memory, the issues of constancy and change have appeared. They are considered once again here in relation to the issue of stability, a major tenet of Adlerian and psychoanalytic theories about early memories. Research

has supported the stability of the earliest memory, i.e. that individuals maintain the same earliest memory over time and in spite of external circumstances (Hedvig, 1963; Langs, 1967). The present study was not designed to test stability, but individuals who were asked whether their earliest memory had remained the same gave mixed answers. More important were the experiences of change and constancy around the meaning of their earliest memories. For some participants, the focus was on constancy and sameness; for others the focus was on change and new understanding in terms of meaning. For most participants, the earliest memory was a complex phenomenon in which the experiences of change contained a stable core of "me-ness." The new understandings which emerged during the dialogue point to the ever present possibility of discovery through the earliest memory.

Interrelatedness of the dimensions. Although the dimensions were presented and discussed as separate entities, it must be emphasized that they are meaningful in their interrelatedness. For example, Meaning, the most complex of the dimensions, often merged with the dimension of Significance. Considered with the dimension of History, it is possible to see change and constancy in Meaning. The dimensions represent a unified attempt to describe a phenomenon which blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy.

Clinical Implications

A good deal of previous research as well as the major theories about earliest memories have focused on their clinical usefulness (Adler, 1931; Dreikurs, 1952; Binder & Smokler, 1980; Eisenstein &

Ryerson, 1951; Mayman, 1978). The implications of the present study extend the possibilities of the clinical utility of the earliest memory. A major finding was that individuals themselves were able to find meanings in their earliest memories and to use this meaning for their psychological growth and development. It would seem that a clinically useful starting point with a patient would be not only to ask for his/her earliest memory but also to continue to question and encourage self-questioning about the feelings, meanings and significance of this memory. The therapist, in learning more about the patient's life, also would be able to see the patient's ability to integrate past and present, to work symbolically, and to gain insight from the recognition of recurrent patterns and themes.

Another significant finding of this study was that memories often took on a different tone and coloration as the individual talked about and reflected upon them. What sometimes appeared to be a bland, indifferent memory to the listener emerged in bold relief when the place that memory had in the individual's life context was discussed. The obvious implication for the clinician is that much valuable material for understanding the patient is not only in, but also just beyond the report of the earliest memory.

After therapy has progressed and likewise during the termination phase, it would be useful to return to the earliest memory experience to see if additional or new meanings have come about. The capacity for empathy for oneself as a child as well as the attitudes and feelings

toward other significant figures in the memory can signal release from an overly harsh and punitive superego and the attainment of an enhanced sense of vitality of the self.

In working with a patient around his/her earliest memory or any memory, the integration of affect and cognition is important in gaining growth-inducing insight. The dimension of Temporal Stance, with the consideration of "reliving" or "reporting," can indicate the patient's relative flexibility or rigidity in experiencing affect--both in regard to his/her memories as well as in the therapeutic context.

It is thought that considerations related to the Reality dimension could be seen as an indication of the capacity for distinguishing different realities. Individuals in this study, considered to be emotionally healthy and well-adjusted, were able to experience and report memories of a "magical" nature while simultaneously recognizing that the reality of their memory was different from the reality of the functional adult world. It is suggested that the psychotic patient or patient with a thought disorder might lack the capacity to make such discriminations. Assessing issues of reality in the course of the patient's telling or talking about his/her earliest memory could offer an indication of disturbance in the thinking processes and reality testing or, on the other hand, the presence and operation of an observing ego.

It has been noted earlier that attempts to diagnose psychopathology or to discriminate healthy, "normal" groups from patient groups on the basis of the earliest memory have not been successful to any significant degree. It is thought that the addition

of the reflective process to the report of the earliest memory would markedly increase the amount of clinical data and increase the likelihood of more accurate assessment of the individual's strengths and weaknesses.

Some research has suggested that schizophrenics or psychotic individuals produce different kinds of earliest memories than do "normal" individuals (Hafner, 1979). To one unfamiliar with this area of research, it might seem logically feasible that disturbed individuals would have the more disturbing, traumatic, or unpleasant earliest memories, while healthy individuals would have more pleasant and happy early memories. In the present study, the variety of kinds of earliest memories, ranging from traumatic to warm, happy, and euphoric, would indicate that this is not the case. This result would suggest rather that individuals who have attained emotional well-being and the attendant personal and work achievements and satisfactions, in spite of traumatic or highly negative earliest memories, were able to draw the needed "nutrients" from their environment in order to grow and develop, even in the face of limitations. Further research is needed into the nature of this capacity. Exploration of the context of and reflections upon earliest memories might provide direction in this endeavor.

Suggestions for Future Research

The aim and focus of this study was markedly different from previous studies on the topic of the earliest memory. In delineating

the structural dimensions of the experience of remembering and talking about the earliest memory, this study opens new avenues for future research. Each dimension becomes an area for added exploration.

It would be useful to conduct a similar study using a non-specific participant population to see what qualitative differences occur along each of the dimensions. Studies of earliest memory experiences of special groups are also indicated. Some of these special groups might be of individuals entering a new stage of adult development. Peskin (cited in Rosenberg & Medini, 1978) reported that new mothers experienced their early memories differently and more intensely. We might also propose a study of new fathers' earliest memories. Directly indicated in the findings of the present study was that having a child the same age as the participant in his/her earliest memory was experienced as stimulating new feelings and understandings. A study using parents of children of ages two to four or five could further explore the experienced effects of parenthood on one's own earliest memories and their meaning.

A similar study comparing different adult age groups might further investigate the kind of meanings and the ways these meanings express themselves at various stages of adult development. For example, how would a person in his/her 70's experience and talk about earliest memories as compared to a person in his/her 30's.

Findings of this study suggested that the earliest memory partakes of a different reality--somewhere between fantasy and reality. We lack the language to aptly describe this kind of experience, which seems similar to that which Winnicott called the "third area of experience

(1953)." The movement to include experience as an appropriate topic for investigation should ease the way to our learning more about this kind of reality. The individuals in this study who were able to allow "magical" material as part of their earliest memories seemed to have a kind of cognitive flexibility associated with creative potential. Thus a study exploring the relationship between the Reality dimension and creativity would be warranted.

Self representation and self feeling expressed through the medium of the earliest memory provide a means of studying self development from a number of theoretical perspectives. The kind of descriptive, experiential data derived through the approach used in this study would lend itself to the investigation of normal and pathological development using an integration of an ego psychology and object relations perspective (see Wagner and Fine, 1979).

The study of the earliest memory from an experiential, phenomenological standpoint represents a new approach to a topic which has been investigated through traditional methods for many years. This study of the earliest memory is a study of possibilities, the range of which extend along each of the seven dimensions which elaborate the basic structure of remembering and talking about the earliest memory. Speaking of "possibilities" admits to questions which are raised but not yet answered. It is hoped that this research will stimulate future investigations of the earliest memory which include the person's experiential context--thus extending the possibilities of further understanding this human phenomenon.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE:

- I'd like for you to think back as far as you can and tell me your earliest memory. Visualize, if you can, a specific event and describe it for me in as much detail as possible.
 - Supplemental questions - for material not covered spontaneously:
 - What was your age at the time?
 - Who else was there?
 - Where did this take place? What did this place look like?
 - What were you feeling or how did you feel at the time?
 - What was that experience like for you?
 - What do you think it is about this memory that makes it stand out for you now as your earliest memory?
 - What do you think and feel about this memory, this early event, as you recall it now?
 - Have you thought about this memory before?
 - Have you identified this as your earliest memory before?
 - If so, when did you identify this as your earliest memory?
 - As far as you can remember, was this always your earliest memory or has there been a change?
 - Has your feeling about this early experience changed over time?
 - What would you say is the theme of your earliest memory?
- The same questions are to be asked about the second and third earliest memories respectively at this point.
- How do you relate your experience of yourself as you were in your earliest memory to who you are today? How does this memory fit with how you experience yourself as an adult?
 - Do you see any connection between your earliest memory and later events or interests in the course of your life? Also second and third earliest memories?
 - Can you see a relation between your earliest memory and your choice of profession? Your second and third earliest memories?
 - How do you recall the process of deciding to enter this profession?
 - What do you see as significant life events leading to your choice of profession? When did you make this decision?
 - How would you describe the work that you do as a psychotherapist?
 - What kind of satisfactions do you find in this work?
 - What frustrations?
 - What kind of patients do you work best with, generally?
 - After talking about your work, have you had any further thoughts about a relationship between your earliest memories and your work?
 - What has it been like for you to talk about your earliest memories?

APPENDIX B
BACKGROUND DATA SHEET

BACKGROUND DATA SHEET

Sex: Male _____

Birth Order _____

Female _____

Age: _____

Marital Status _____

Discipline: Psychology _____

Psychiatry _____

Social Work _____

Training: Graduate Degree(s) received: _____

Post Graduate Training _____

Certificate Awarded: _____

Have you had personal psychotherapy or psychoanalysis?

How many years? _____

Times per week? _____

What is your theoretical orientation?

Psychoanalytic _____

Behavioral _____

Existential _____

Client Centered _____

Electic _____

Gestalt _____

Other (specify) _____

Approximate number of hours per week doing psychotherapy _____

How many years have you been a psychotherapist? _____

APPENDIX C
INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I am currently conducting research for my doctoral degree in clinical psychology, and I am requesting your participation in this project. The purpose of this research is to study how different people, who are psychotherapists by profession, experience their earliest memories. Memory of one's past is an important aspect of identity and sense of self. Examining specific earliest memories may provide insight and greater understanding of who we are today, both as unique individuals and as psychotherapists.

The study will be conducted in two parts:

First, the subject will be interviewed about his or her experience of earliest memories. In addition, the subject will be asked about his or her work as a psychotherapist. The interview will require approximately 30 minutes to one hour. It will be audio-taped to eliminate the need for note-taking.

The second part of the study will be conducted at a later date. The subject will be contacted for a brief follow-up. At this time he or she will be given feedback from the first interview. In addition, the subject will be given a chance to make any additions or changes.

All information from the interview will remain confidential. There will be no record of names or identifying information about subjects. All audiotapes will be erased upon completion of the project.

If you choose to participate in this study, it is with the understanding that you are free to withdraw from participation at any time. It is hoped that you will find the questions and discussion interesting and thought provoking and that the experience will be a positive one.

Janice Young
Psychology Doctoral Student

I have read the above information and consent form, and I agree to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

As I discussed with you, I would like to include some verbatim examples from the research interviews in my study of earliest memories. I feel these examples will illustrate the various aspects of individuals' experiences which I wish to discuss.

I am enclosing some verbatim excerpts from our interview on earliest memories. Any potentially identifying information has been deleted in my continuing effort to insure the privacy and confidentiality of the material received from all research participants. Please read the enclosed excerpts to see if you have any reservations about their reproduction within the body or appendices of my dissertation. Note and mark any omissions or changes you would like.

If, after reading the enclosed excerpts and making any changes, you are willing for this material to be reproduced in the dissertation, please sign below and return the excerpts and one copy of the signed consent form in the enclosed envelope. There is an additional consent form which you may keep.

If you are not fully comfortable with reproduction of the excerpt(s) for the above-stated purpose, feel free to indicate that, and the material will not be included.

Again, thank you for your participation and valuable assistance in my research on earliest memories.

Janice Young
Doctoral Student in Psychology
University of Tennessee

I have read the above information and consent form, and I agree to reproduction of the approved examples in Janice Young's dissertation on earliest memories.

(Date)

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

As I discussed with you, I would like to include a verbatim transcript of a participant's interview as an appendix in my dissertation on earliest memories. Making a verbatim interview transcript available to readers of my dissertation will illustrate and convey some of the richness and complexity of the experiences that I have been studying.

Enclosed is a typed transcript of our interview. Any potentially identifying information has been deleted in my continuing effort to insure the privacy and confidentiality of the material received from all research participants. Please read the transcript and mark any portions you wish to have omitted or changed. The transcript will be used only with your approval and only in the form you have indicated. If you agree to reproduction of the transcript, please sign the information and consent form and return one copy with the transcript in approved form. An additional consent form is included for you to keep.

If, after reading the transcript, you are not completely comfortable with its reproduction in the dissertation, please feel free to indicate that to me and the transcript will not be included.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or comments at any time. Again, thank you for your valuable contribution to my research.

Janice Young
Doctoral Student
in Psychology
University of Tennessee

I have read the information and consent form and I agree to have my interview transcript reproduced in Janice Young's dissertation on earliest memories.

(Date)

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

R: I'd like for you to think back as far as you can and tell me your earliest memory.....

S: The earliest really clear memory that I have occurred when I was I think four years old. And there are a lot of memories around that time so I'm not sure of any memories that happened before that ...partly because my mother's always telling us stuff. So I'm not sure what's a memory and what's just a story that I've heard. I have lots of memories around the time when we lived in a certain house in Ca. And around that time I was around four. I remember having my fifth birthday in that house, and I don't know chronologically which things come first. I clearly remember being in the house in the back hall - it was a big house - we lived on a airforce base that was well-known for being a beautiful place. And the house we lived in was a very nice house - it was on base housing. I was in the back hall, and there was a cardboard box in the back hall, and I can remember writing the number 4 -whether I was copying it off the box or not, I'm not sure. But I remember writing and being - with a crayon - I remember that as a memory, as a flash, but I also remember being so pleased that I had written that number. My mother was not into teaching us how to do numbers. They read to us, but this was before real early childhood education was such a big deal. And I remember being very pleased. And I think I may have done it with my left hand, because at that time I was primarily left handed. In the same house out in the backyard there was a beautiful rose garden that had been planted by the previous owner, I can remember being out in the rose garden another time - the sun coming down, and it was warm. And the rose garden went down a hill, and being on a hill the grasses were kind of high because they didn't get mowed much. And I remember how wonderful it smelled in the sunshine. I remember there being a crisis one night where my brother had gotten a cherry pit in his nose. My brother is about 15 months younger than I am, so if I was four, he was two-and-one-half or three. And my parents had some friends on the base, and one of the friends was a doctor, and the doctor came over and removed the cherry pit. It was a big crisis. I remember it being night time, and for some reason I was in my parents' room during this crisis. I remember sitting or lying on the bed. My brother and I shared a room, so I obviously was disturbed when this whole event happened. I remember eating canteloupe in the breakfast room at this house. It's supposed to rain around San Francisco, but I don't remember rainy days when we were living there. I remember the day when they tarred the street out in front of the house. And my brother and I of course got a little bit into the tar, and my mother was furious because we had tar on our shoes. And I can remember that this was a kind of colonial style house that had a center stairway going from the front hall upstairs. And my brother and I always had to go to bed very early, and my parents would sit in the living room. If you were coming into the house the living room was on the right and the dining room was on the left. And my parents had a couch on a wall that was nearest to the stairs, and I can remember coming down the stairs and sitting on the stairs one stair at a time. We used to call that "sitting down the stairs".

So that I could know what was going on with my parents....when it was real late at night - you know - like 7:30, 8:00.

R: Let's go back to the first one? What do you think it is about that memory that makes it stand out for you as your earliest memory?

S: I think it was the affect that went with it. I was so pleased. I was so proud of myself. And it was almost a kind of of experiment for me that worked out right. What it may have been was that I was copying the four from the cardboard box. It was the experience of doing something that I had never done before; it was new, and no one was helping me with it. And it was the sense of trying out something and it's working out. I don't remember any previous attempts to do that. I don't remember the time my mother tells up we wrote all over the floor of the playroom with a crayon. I don't remember that as an experience myself. It was something exhilarating about that, and I did it by myself. And it was a success, because it was a God-damn four. It was a real four and nobody helped me with it. I don't remember any other things before or after that, and I never asked my mother if she remembers that or if there was some other event going on that I was remembering that event in place of. Maybe that event was connected with the time we wrote all over the floor. And actually I got into a lot of trouble and she made us clean it up. So it may have been connected with that, because I don't specifically remember writing on the floor with the crayons. My mother was really fit to be tied. When you visualize that, is it just you

R: When you visualize that, is it just you in the memory?

S: Yes.

R: As you look back on that now, how do you feel about that memory?

S: Oh, I still like it (laughs). In fact I think of it in connection with occasionally other things that I've done that I figured out myself and it worked out - that I tried myself, and it turned out okay.

R: Have you identified that as your earliest memory before?

S: I don't think anybody has ever asked me about my earliest memories. I know that in my own mind I thought of that as probably one of the earliest. And I've been a little bit distressed that how come I don't remember things when I was three, because there was a lot going on then too. Well, now that I think of it, I do have...there are some less well-defined memories that are earlier than that. And I think I have an image of them, but it's not that snapshot quality - not as clear. For example, at some point earlier than that, I fell on the floor furnace in my aunt's house and burned my leg, and that I'm pretty sure was earlier than the four-year-old memory. And I think I have a flash of remembering burning my leg. You know it's really hard!

when you live in a family where people tell you these things. I did this, you did that. I flew on an airplane when I was maybe two-and-one half, and I've heard the story so often that it's almost as though I can remember it, or how I wouldn't eat scrambled eggs because my aunt wanted to put a bib on over my dress to keep it clean, so when we met my parents, I'd look nice. Before my father went off to war, it was this big emotional wartime kind of thing. I can almost remember things that happened during the war, when we lived with my grandmother and my father was overseas, but that's influenced, I know, by all the pictures my mother took. My mother wrote my father every day, and would more often than not include snapshots of my brother and me doing things. It's hard for me to be able to distinguish what I really remember and what is motivated by the snapshots. Although I have a memory ofthat must have occurred around that time too, of being on a bridge walking with this old black lady that used to take care of my brother and me. But I can't place it precisely and sometimes it's hard for me to know whether that actually was just a dream, cause it's not got enough things around it to make it really clear.

R: Do you think that was before four?

S: That might have been during the war. The memories of being four occurred after the war when my father came back from the war - this was in 1944, when my father came back from being overseas. And he was then sent to in California. It's hard for me to be clear about what happened, although I do have... I think I can remember during the war, living with my grandmother... when my father went overseas, my mother took my brother and me back to Oklahoma to live with my grandmother. My father was gone about 18 months. And I seem to remember sitting out in the back yard where my mother had gotten these huge loads of sand, and my brother and I would sit playing in the sand with a hose going. There would be little trickles of water. I do have some memory of that. But see, we did that later too, and so it's hard to be clear about whether it really happened before. But the first real good batch of memories that I'm clear about occurred at . I know I was four, because I can remember my fifth birthday. It was a big hairy occasion. I still have the dress that I wore. My kids were never able to wear it because they were much too big. It was a little....my mother had been given some silk with a blue background and little pink roses on it, and she had it made into a dress that was very popular then with puffed sleeves and a square neckline, and the lady made the dress with a full skirt and then sewed bands of pink satin ribbon outlining the neckline and hem, and on the side made bows. My kids have never had a silk dress. Not only are they very expensive, but you have to wash them and iron them, or send them to the dry cleaners. But the memories before age four are much less clear. I seem to remember a car trip which may have occurred before then, but again I heard my mother talk about those things.

R: So the "4" memory was one that you are sure of.

S: Yeah. Isn't that handy.

R: That was a very private memory.

S: That's right. I'm not even sure I showed my mother, although I can't believe that I didn't. Either that's a memory - and I think that it is because I can feel it - or it was a wonderful dream that I remember. At any case, I have a real clear image of that. If I thought about it long enough, I might be able to remember what I had on. I know the weather was warm. I remember the big snails, huge snails in that part of California.

R: Have you thought about this memory from time to time?

S: I suppose I flash on it once a year. Something like that. It's not something that I regularly think about, although I must admit that I thought about it more today.

R: I'd like to talk about your second memory now. Which one do you want to say is your second?

S: I suppose the one....being in the rose garden and out on the slope was a very pleasant memory. Eating canteloupe and sitting down the stairs - those are kind of nice. I think the memory of my brother and the doctor in the middle - what seemed to me to be the middle of the night - I'm sure it wasn't the middle of the night - was a much more unpleasant memory. It was kind of scary. Cause it was a crisis. And the images are a lot less clear with that memory. I know my parents bed was just huge. I'm sure it wasn't, it was a standard double bed. They didn't have queen sized beds then. And the room seemed enormous.

R: When you were in the room, was anybody else around?

S: Oh, yeah. I have the image of myself being on my parents bed, and then over here, the doctor - whose name was Pierre - by the way - his first name was Pierre, I can't remember his last name. I have an image of my mother and my father and Pierre.... the really peculiar thing is that I don't know where my brother is - yet he was the one...It may very well be that I've connected or condensed two separate incidents. Because I don't see my brother in the picture and he was the patient, I may very well have condensed an episode of his coming and my....maybe I wasn't really in the room. Maybe what I was doing was peeking around the corner or something, but that I have other memories of being in my parents' room and sitting on the bed or lying on the bed. It occurs to me that because I don't see my brother - although my sense of it is that the grownups are all clustered together, and maybe they've got my brother with them, and I just can't see him. That may be. That memory's not so pleasant. It was a crisis.

R: You were very aware of the immenseness of the room - were you aware of any other feelings - how you were feeling at the time?

S: I think I'm feeling kind of anxious. You know how parents never tell you what's really going on. And I may have thoughtI may have had some anxiety that after they finished with my brother, they were going to start on me, or something. Although I certainly wasn't aware of there being anything the matter. Mildly overwhelming, I think. It was out of the routine, and my parents were very much people who kept ot a routine. It was very regular. Think of all the thousands of nights that my brother an I went to bed at 7:00 or 6:30 or whatever. Regular as clockwork. My father was always home for dinner. My mother very much believed that kids did best when things were regular. And I think she's right, you know. I think I also have a memory we were going to go out to the club or something, we were all dressed up. My father was smoking a cigarette. And I was really attached to my father. And I remember putting my hand and taking his hand. But it was the hand that had the cigarette in it. And we were standing near the front door of the house. And that was very distressing and scarey. I didn't really get hurt or anything, but it was such a peculiar thing. Here I was making this gesture of affection....and I remember thinking about it that way - I want to hold Daddy's hand - and he must have been holding a cigarette cupped in his hand and I didn't notice it. He felt terrible of course. I wish I could remember what I think of as the Pierre episode better. Because when I think about it, I'll bet you anything I've condensed a couple of memories in that, or I couldn't see what they were doing to my brother. Although I imagine what they were doing to my brother now that I know about it was that Pierre probably had a pair of nasal forceps and just reached in and pulled out the cherry pit - right. (laughs) And for all I know, it may not have even been night. But my memory of it is at night. My brother and I always used to make fun of Pierre. We thought Pierre was a really funny name - kind of like Pee Pee.

R: What would you say is the theme of that memory?

S: Oh, I think it's very much connected with excretory functions. Or some kind of bodily integrity sort of things or attack or something like that. I think that my anxiety about it - things were always happening to my brother, and I was always the bystander - partly because we were very close in age, and when we had our tonsils out, we had them out together. And I had mine out because my brother had to have his out. And that may have been a little bit before...I don't know if that was before my dad came home from the war or after. But I remember the tonsilectomy deal with my brother, who started bleeding a lot got everybody all upset. It was my brother who had the difficult recovery, because we had to share a room, and we were always together. I always was there on the fringes...watching everything, generally pretty safe from all of these activities, but always kind of wondered am I really safe or is something going to happen to me. I was never very sick as a kid, but my brother did have all these events going on. Yeah. If I think about it, I suppose I have to think "Was that...was my wanting to become a doctor a kind

of mastery?" Was that a kind of way to really find out what was going on? In all the events where I was the bystander and supposed to stay out of it, but was in the room.

R: Had you thought about that connection before?

S: No. Not in that way. Although I certainly had thought about the fact that in growing up, there wasn't an enormous amount of illness in my family, there was enough of it in which I was not included in the details but heard about, that medicine was one way to really find out what the secret was - what was really going on. What was really happening. I suppose in those medical events that took place extraneous to me, and also whenever my own understanding about the secrets of my own body, no one in my family was a doctor. Doctors were someone that you knew. They were friends, but there was no...there were no doctors in the family if you wanted to find out anything from them. My husband, whose father was a doctor, used to look at all his anatomy books, or surgical atlases. He could find out the secret more easily than I could find out the secret.

R: Let's go back to the first memory. How do you relate your experience of yourself in that first memory with how you experience yourself today?

S: I'd like to have a lot more of those experiences of "Boy, I can do it." by myself. It's the feeling of successful independence in that memory that is so pleasant, and it's occurred to me that in four years of analysis and I haven't thought of it very much in that way. In that memory I'm a really competent, energetic, sharp little kid in my own mind. Anyway I wish that....I don't always feel like that kid. I wish that I did, I think. I wish that I felt like by myself I can have control and do it and have it work. That feeling of conquering something.

R: Can you think of having that feeling since?

S: I was trying to think about that. That's happened sometimes when something will be broken and I'll fix it, orsee, one of the things about making the 4 was that it seemed easy. Not that it didn't require some effort, but it, in my memory it seemed easy, and I did it myself. Not nine thousand errors, not a lot of disappointments about it, but it seemed easy. Almost in an aha experience. Oftentimes it's a concrete kind of problem where I break something, and then I fix it. Then... and I can work it out without too much hassle. Sometimes something will break and it'll be a real pain in the neck to fix it. Sometimes it's a job that takes longer than I had intended it would take, and it wasn't like that four-year-old experience of getting it right the first time. It probably wasn't the first time, but I have the sense of it's not being a real struggle, and I did it by myself.

R: Do you see any connection between that memory and your eventually coming into a field where you are a therapist?

S: NO. I think I probably should have gone into surgery or something. (laughs) If I think of making that 4 with making a decent interpretation to a patient, that's timely,, and then I realize that it almost never happens that way. I have sort of a wish that doing psychiatry was smooth and uncomplicated as making that 4 was.

R: How about your decision to go into medicine in general in connection with that memory?

S: Well, I suppose in the sense that it was an independent, self-assertive kind of thing. I think medicine was that. I'm not only the first woman doctor in my family, I'm the first doctor in my family. All the women in my family get married and have lots of kids.

R: When did you decide to become a doctor?

S: Between my junior and senior years.

R: What was that process?

S: I went to college thinking that I wanted to be a lawyer, but I didn't want to do traditionally pre-law kinds of things - like history, English, etc. And I had....was taking a basic chemistry course as a freshman and got a job working in a lab. And all of a sudden, chemistry was incredibly interesting. I think it had something to do with, if you wanted to set yourself a really difficult task, you could be a chemistry major, a biology major, a math major. Chemistry majors have more labs and more work to do. It's the hardest major in the school. So that's why I took it. And there were a couple of women in my class who were pre-med, which kind of surprised me, because I had never known any women who were pre-med before. I had never even thought about it. And these were young people who had been thinking about it for years. It wasn't just something that popped into their brains. I did well in chemistry, and I liked it. I got a job in the summer - the first time I got a job working as a secretary in the lab at the city hospital. And then the next summer I got a job working as a laboratory technician, which in a bigger hospital made you have a lot of contact with patients. You went around and drew all the bloods and came back and did them. And medicine seemed more like a possibility then. By the time I graduated from college, the only ones who were in pre-med were majoring in chemistry. And there were only two of us. Of course, there were only 8 chemistry majors out of a class of 140 or so.

R: It sounds like there was definitely the element of challenge there.

S: Pick something hard, why don't you.

R: How did you decide to go into psychiatry?

S: I graduated from medical school and did an internship in pediatrics. My husband was already in a psychiatry residency. When I did my internship, I wasn't interested in psychiatry. We had one more year in New Haven so I decided to take courses for a masters in public health. And then that was the year that we had our first kid. And we left N.H. that summer.... I didn't do anything professional for a couple of years.... and then after we moved back to M. that was when I started doing work with my husband. He was the single biggest influence. He liked psychiatry, he liked to talk about it, he liked to do it, he enjoyed. So I think it was osmosis. It didn't have any connection with teachers I had in medical school, because I don't remember anything about my psychiatry lectures in medical school. I have fewer memories about that than I do about when I was four years old. But I'm sure it was the influence of him. He was my first psychiatry teacher, supervisor, etc.

R: In terms of being a therapist, do you see any connections with any of your earliest memories? How you experience yourself in the memory and how you experience yourself as a therapist.

S: Well, I think that the memory of writing the 4 - I can't think at the moment that that's connected, but in terms of being the voyeur, in some ways that's kind of similar, because some people tell you worse things than sticking cherry pits in their nose. I think there may be some connection there. Just the wish to know more. First, as a kid, about my parents and other people. And then the longer that I've been involved in it, then I get an interest in my own secrets. What goes on in my own mind. The way in which I react to what people tell me. The way I feel about what they're saying. It's a dual kind of thing. One isn't supposed to use one's own patients to treat oneself, but in some ways it's unavoidable - in coming to terms with helping the patient to understand what's going on. I don't know how you can help it. (Details of work with patient) In order to be therapeutic with _____ I have to first be able to understand my own discomfort with it to the extent that then I can make an interpretation that is not harmful or cruel, or too much of a narcissistic wound. This is a fragile person.

R: How would you describe how you work in therapy?

S: I try to be neutral. I try to listen, to understand, sometimes I ask questions - not a lot of questions though. And then I try to communicate what it is that I've understood. Some patients are hard, because they don't listen. So sometimes I don't say much. I try to communicate my understanding to the patient.

R: What kind of patient do you feel you work best with?

S: Someone just like me. (laughs) I don't know. The time when I was seeing most patients in therapy was at a time when I didn't know a lot about therapy. But I was in analysis myself. Since I was a resident, I've seen a lot of psychotic people, or character disorders or whatever. I think what my fantasy is is to see men or women, I've had more experience with women in outpatient therapy and with men as inpatients, I'd rather see the not too god-awful distressed patient who likes to talk and likes to think about what's going on. Every once in a while, though, I see a patient who does not have all those wonderful qualities, but can still get something out of therapy and is enormously satisfied with that. I don't....now that I know more, I don't see enough patients to know what I would like to treat. It was in my own analysis that I understand how seductive therapy is and how therapists have to resist temptation. I cannot seek my own gratification in what my patients do or don't do. That's not fair to them.

R: What have you found most satisfying about being a therapist?

S: I suppose that I get to know that person. That may be what is most eternally interesting about it. To get that opportunity to understand that person. It's nice if they get better and develop insight and use the insight to make the changes they want to make, but I don't think I've seen anyone in therapy long enough to see that happen.

R: What do you find most frustrating?

S: When I can't get involved with what a patient is saying. Especially at those times when I wish I was anywhere but here. It says to me that I'm bored or I'm anxious and there's something that I'm not attending to here, and that's what's making me want to get out of there. If I can slow down enough to look at it and examine it and make an intervention that's appropriate, then that's nice, but sometimes you don't get a chance. What's also frustrating is that doing therapy is so impractical. People can't afford it. So you won't be able to do it intensely enough or long enough for people to change. (Details about patient) I think I'll feel a little better about it when I feel that we share the control of this therapy. And if I had more patients, I'd be.....I'm out of practice. The most satisfying thing that sometimes happens in therapy is when you're working with a patient, and I can say "NO" and not have the patient feel rejected and not feel myself as rejecting. And obviously be able to explore what they bring in and make therapy out of it.

R: After talking about your work, have you had any more thoughts about connections between your earliest memories and who you are today?

S: It seems to fit actually. There simply aren't enough writing 4's and too much of sitting on the stairs (laughs). I can certainly see how a kid who sat on the stairs....I also was one of those kids who would sit around, I could be very quiet if I needed to be, when adults were talking and I could hear a lot of stuff - right - which I, of course, was never supposed to repeat. It certainly goes back to doing therapy and being in therapy. I had never thought about that before, but I - it seems like the same person who did all those things. Four years of analysis didn't change that. Only certified the activity. One thing I found when I was in therapy was that I didn't like to do therapy. I didn't like to listen to other people. I couldn't wait to get to my own hour.

R: The memory of the roses and the tall grass stands out in my mind - and you didn't talk very much about that.

S: Actually, that's interesting. Those were very sweet smelling roses and pungent, sweet smelling grasses. And everything was very fresh, but warm because the sun was shining down on the grass. The smell was very strong, and very clean - very nice. Ever after, I always wanted to have a rose garden. And when we lived in M. I had my own rose garden, but never quite as wonderful as the rose garden out in back of the house. And there's a connection between the roses in the garden in M and being in analysis. Because my analyst was also a vigorous gardener. I could tell, because his office was in his house - and he used to cut flowers from the garden and bring them into the room. He used to cultivate columbines. And I remember the first time I went to see him, he had an arrangement of columbines in the office. Those roses when I was a kid - the lushness - I've always had a thing about flowers and wanting to grow my own flowers and have them in the house. I really like that. And it's not an area where I go in and make the mark on the cardboard box. Every flower garden I've ever had has been very hard. I do not have a green thumb. My grandmother was a florist and she could grow anything. It's the abundance that I want. I want to go out and pick flowers and there still be flowers. (details) My memory of that flower garden at field was that there must have been 20 or 30 bushes, but that's just not logical. The grass - you can almost hide in the grass - it's that tall. If you lay down, no one could see you. And I don't have a sense of sharing that with my brother. I think this must have been a nice time for my family. I know it was a nice time for my parents, because it was just after the war, and they hadn't been together for a year and a half.

R: It occurs to me that the two most pleasant memories, or the memories that you get the most pleasure out of are where you are alone.

S: Yes. Which is a little puzzling because I always thought of myself as a very gregarious person. But there's no doubt about it. Those are real pleasant memories. I know what it is. I

wasn't sharing. I didn't have to share. For as long as I can remember, my brother has been around. I was 15 months when he was born, and my parents were very big on sharing. We shared a room, we shared toys, we shared everything. My mother was very careful to give us presents that were equal. You weren't supposed to want more than your share. That's probably why I react to my patients' greediness. Then when I was alone, I didn't have to share with anybody. It was all mine. My brother and I shared a room - until I was 8 years old, when we moved again and I had my own room - which in a sense I had to share with my own mother the way she wanted it kept. It wasn't really my room - you know. Isn't that interesting. There are some very pleasant moments that I can think back on when I was alone. And I like that. I used to play dolls alone, and I was more than content to play dolls by myself. I alone could make up the stories and didn't have to share the doll clothes or anything.

R: What has it been like for you to talk about your earliest memories?

S: Oh, that's FUN. I really enjoyed it. It's like talking about your dreams. I don't know how you can stand to listen to other people's earliest memories. Because I can see it so clearly, and you have to imagine. (more memories in the house at Hamilton field) You ask questions that I hadn't thought of before.

APPENDIX E
SCORING MANUAL

SCORING MANUAL

Introduction

Remembering and talking about one's earliest memory is a process which involves the relationship of a person with his/her earliest memory, a way of being in the world, and reflection--understanding the earliest memory within the context of one's experience and relating this to the sense of who one is as a person. In allowing an earliest memory to reveal itself in the course of a dialogue aimed at gaining further understanding of this phenomenon, seven dimensions emerged as essential descriptive features. These dimensions will be elaborated and discussed below. They are as follows:

1. Priority - whether the memory is experienced as preceding all other remembered events.

2. History - whether there has been an awareness of the memory over time.

3. Source - whether the memory is experienced as a personally remembered event or, whether it was told to the rememberer by another in such a way that it seems like a memory of the actual event.

4. Temporality - whether one becomes caught up in the memory to the extent of appearing to transcend the present and live at least for a moment in another time and place, or whether the rememberer reports the memory from a stance in the present.

5. Reality - whether the memory contains some elements of magical thinking, characterizing the world of the child, or whether it is totally logical and rational, belonging to the world of the adult.

6. Significance - whether the person has some understanding of why this memory should stand out as his/her first rather than any other of the many possible events that could have been remembered from his/her store of experiences of childhood.

7. Meaning - the individual attaches some meaning to this memory in terms of the current context of his/her life.

Each of these dimensions is described below. After all the dimensions have been presented conceptually, directions are given as to how excerpts from interview transcripts may be scored using the dimensional system.

Priority

The earliest memory is special in that nothing is remembered prior to this memory. In the awareness or recognition of the ordinal position of a memory as earliest memory, a certain relatedness can be conceptualized between person and memory. There is the possibility for a connection with that memory which is different from that with other significant childhood memories or other memories which one may view as influencing the course of his/her life.

A major consideration within this dimension is the degree of certainty the person feels as to whether this is his/her earliest memory. Some people have an unquestionable sense that a certain memory is their earliest. Others feel some hesitation in definitively establishing one memory in this position, and yet they are able to do this with some degree of certainty. Still others are unable to select one memory as clearly preceding all others, and their experience is to

seemingly arbitrarily select one memory from among several early memories without any conviction that this is their earliest memory or that it would be possible for them to select one earliest memory. The qualitative distinction within this dimension is whether a person does have a memory which s/he feels fairly certain to be the earliest, or whether the person lacks any sense that the early memory s/he chooses to talk about is earlier than other memories.

Source

The sense of oneself as a child grows out of one's own childhood memories as well as what s/he was told about him/herself by someone else. Oftentimes the distinction between these two sources is blurred when one thinks back on early childhood experiences. In reflecting on the earliest memory, a person may consider both sources of memories of childhood. The issue here is whether there is the conviction that the memory is one's own, i.e. personally remembered, or told to him/her by someone else.

History

This dimension has to do with a person's awareness of a memory over time. Some people have been aware of a particular memory as their earliest memory for many years, and they may have thought about it from time to time. Others may find that the memory they select to talk about as their earliest is one that they have thought about in the past but did not identify as earliest. In this case the person has a history with the memory but not as earliest memory. It is also possible that a person has never given thought to an earliest memory

before and that s/he is not aware of remembering this memory prior to the interview or being asked to participate in the study. A person's history or lack of history with his/her earliest memory affects his/her experience of some of the other dimensional aspects of the earliest memory.

An additional consideration is the possibility that a new memory, experienced as being even earlier, may emerge during the interview. This potential for new and greater self-awareness exists in the process of remembering and talking about one's earliest memories.

Temporal Stance

Temporal stance has to do with one's sense of time as part of the context of his/her experience. Although we can never physically be in a moment other than the present, we have the capacity through memory and imagination to journey to times distant from the Now. Remembering and telling one's earliest memory draws on this capacity.

Where one is in time experientially can be deduced through qualitative aspects of remembering and talking about earliest memories. It is possible to remember and tell about the past from a stance or context of the here and now. This has the quality of a reporting of events in a manner which appears to be objective, factual, and emotionally detached. On the other hand, it is possible in remembering to become so immersed or caught up in the memory that one appears to transcend the bounds of the present and live in the past which s/he has created for a moment. The experience here is of "reliving the past." Even if only for a moment, there is the sense

that one is experiencing a time which has a greater attraction and pull than the present situation. Qualitative features which suggest "aliveness" of the past for the rememberer may be tone of voice, facial expression, emotional investment, the intensity with which one speaks of the experience, as well as statements one makes during the process of remembering and telling. When a memory is thus enlivened, the temporal stance is other than the present. The past as past lives in the present with the experience being that one has left the present for another time during some moments of remembering.

In describing the phenomenon of the earliest memory, the temporal dimension points to whether another time in terms of being in the world has been experienced in the remembering and telling of the memory. The qualitative distinction is between reporting, or temporal stance in the present, and reliving, or temporal stance in the past.

Reality

One's earliest memory is experienced as real, that is, as having been a real event. In reflecting on this memory, one may or may not be faced with a reality somewhat different from the objective reality of his/her everyday life. The reality dimension has to do with whether the content of the earliest memory--its setting, characters, and action--conforms more to adult logic and perception or more to the magical thinking of childhood.

When the earliest memory fits with the thinking, logic, and understanding of the adult world, it has the quality of actuality. There is nothing about the content of the memory which strains the

adult way of being in the world. Memory content is logically possible, and it is feasible in terms of the facts one has regarding his/her life.

Sometimes the memory strains the sense of what could have been possible or logical as viewed from an adult stance in the world. We do not have to sample childhood memories extensively to realize that it is possible to remember something which did not "really" happen, at least in terms of our objective, adult understanding of the world. The earliest memory potentially can be made up of content which one can experience very vividly as a memory while knowing that this did not actually happen. How can we account for the experience of remembering something which from our adult stance we know was not real?

Perhaps we can further our understanding by considering the world of a child. In observing young children at play, one can see evidence of a subjective experience of reality which is quite different from what we as adults might see in a given situation. A mundane object to an adult may be a source of wonder and magic to the child. Likewise, through fantasy, a child can assume other identities and physical capacities. Adults may retain remnants of this reality of the child in their capacity to fantasize, dream, or become engrossed in science fiction; in addition, for some people, this quality of the magical or the fantastic exists in their earliest memory. The earliest memory provides a special way of allowing the possibility for two worlds of experience to co-exist--the world of the child and the world of the adult.

The magical, supernatural, or illogical may appear in various forms in an earliest memory. Characters or setting may have magical qualities; supernatural characteristics may be attributed to oneself or to others; or events may be inconsistent with the facts one has verified to his/her satisfaction about this period of his/her life. In this mode of experiencing, which we term the world of the child, there is the quality of fantasy and a playful suspension of the boundaries of adult logic. Something can happen which is logically impossible. The memory harkens to a world where one's thinking and perception have not been reined in by secondary process and awareness that logical impossibilities exist.

The qualitative distinction within the Reality dimension has to do with whether the content of one's earliest memory tends toward the adult way of thinking and perceiving, the actual, or whether toward the magical, allowing some aspects of a child's way of experiencing the world.

Significance

Why some things are remembered and others are not has long been a question addressed by psychology and related fields. When we consider that people have relatively few memories of their early childhood, we are led to question what it is about these few memories that they stand out from the many possibilities one could have remembered from childhood. The earliest memory is significant in that it is remembered and that it is first. To understand the nature of this significance, we must understand what this memory is to the person in terms of his/her personal history and experience.

This dimension involves conceptualizing one's childhood as a ground from which potential figures may emerge. The figure, in the case of the earliest memory, is distinguishable in some way that makes it memorable or remember-able. Some of what might make an event memorable would appear to be rather obvious. Traumatic content, special occasions, first time experiences are happenings which people speak of as "making a lasting impression." Some earliest memories have obvious qualities which appear to explain why they are remembered. The earliest memory does not always have such remarkable and salient content, however. Its significance might not be obvious from the content alone, and one may need an understanding of the larger context or ground to see why such an event would stand out.

The significance of the earliest memory may be apparent to the rememberer on the basis of its salient content or from its part in the larger context of his/her experience. Previous thinking, reflecting, or talking about the memory may have articulated memorable features for the rememberer. If not, there is the possibility that the significance will become apparent through reflection and dialogue. In some instances, a person may experience his/her earliest memory as trivial or insignificant. Even though it is remembered, its significance or what makes it memorable is not apparent. The potential exists for its significance to show itself and become known.

This dimension has to do with whether a person knows why s/he remembers this earliest memory. In his/her experience, past and present, the significance is either apparent or not apparent.

Meaning

Developing out of a person's relatedness to a memory as earliest memory can come a relationship to the particular content of that memory in terms of what it means in one's life. People can find meaning in their earliest memory related to understanding who they were as a child and who they are as an adult.

Earliest memories hold the possibility for greater self-understanding and self-awareness. In remembering and talking about one's earliest memory, it seems that there is always more that can be illuminated. Individuals frequently make new discoveries in the course of thinking and talking about their earliest memories.

The meaning that an early memory has for a person is highly individualized. The seemingly infinite number of possible meanings coincides with the complexity of the self. Among those who have a history with their earliest memory, that is, they have known their earliest memory over a period of time, a person may be aware of the meaning changing over time in the ongoing unfolding of self and self-understanding; another person may experience the meaning associated with his/her earliest memory as remaining the same over time, possibly reflecting stability of some aspect of self and experience. When a person has not thought about his/her earliest memory before, the recognition of meaning, if it occurs, is spontaneous, new and alive, marking the beginning of a history or relatedness. Meaning may not always be evident in an earliest memory. The person's experience holds the key to meaning and only s/he can find this meaning.

SCORING THE INTERVIEWS

In the process of reading an interview protocol, various dimensional features will become figural throughout the text. The dimensions do not appear in any particular order. They can be scored when they appear in the text. By referring to the Scoring Criteria, the decision can be made as to how that dimension may be most accurately qualified by assigning a score. The dimensions belong to the total context of the dialogue in the protocol. The general attitude and/or key statements made by the participant provide the cues necessary to give a score. Examples follow illustrating each dimensional score after a brief explication of the scoring criteria.

Orienting: Establishing the Demographics of the Earliest Memory

1. Priority

Certainty (C). The person expresses some degree of certainty that this is his/her earliest memory. This may be explicit or implicit.

Examples:

"I have a very clear memory that I've had for many years. I'm in the kitchen of an apartment that I have no other recollection of...It's the earliest thing that I remember."

Score C

"My earliest memory is....." (Here the participant begins without hesitation. The attitude is one of certainty.)

Score C

"Several memories come to mind, but I'll tell you what I think is first."

(Here the participant is less certain than in the above examples, but he is able to come to a decision with a fair degree of certainty.)

Score C

Uncertainty U. The person is uncertain of any one memory as first.

Example:

"I'm not sure I have an earliest memory. I have memories which belong to a whole group of earliest memories. Shall I pick one of these?"

Score U

2. History

History with earliest memory (H). The person is aware of this memory over time as his/her earliest memory. S/he has a history with this memory.

Example:

"I've thought about this before...at various times in my life, I've had occasion to reach back for early memories and when I have, I've come up with this one."

Score H

History with the memory but not as earliest memory.

If the person has a history of awareness of this memory but has not specifically defined it as the earliest memory the score is [H].

Example:

"I haven't necessarily identified this as my earliest memory, but I've thought about it from time to time."

Score [H]

No History (nH). The person is not aware of thinking about this memory prior to the interview or before being asked to participate in the study.

Example:

"I hadn't really thought about it, to tell you the truth. We're in the business where people are always asking about earliest memories, but I just never thought about it."

Score nH

3. Source.

Self. (S). The person remembers the events of the memory him/herself. Self as source

Example:

"My mother's always telling us stuff. So I'm not sure what's a memory and what's just a story I've heard...(but)....I clearly remember..."

Score S

Note: Participants who do not engage in a process of distinguishing source as self or other are implicitly indicating their experience of self as source.

Other (O). The person was told of events of the memory by another. Other as source

Example:

"I flew on an airplane when I was maybe two-and-one-half, and I've heard the story so often that it's almost as though I can remember it."

Score 0

Recalling: The Memory Itself and the Immediate Experience of Remembering

4. Temporal Stance

Reliving (Rel). Events in the memory are remembered and experienced in such a way that the quality is that of reliving the event. This may be apparent to the observer by the rememberer's tone of voice, facial expression, emotional investment, or intensity with which s/he speaks of the experience.

Example:

"I remember vividly the pachysandra; I can even smell the pachysandra. I can feel the cool leaves against my face."

Score Rel

Reporting (Rep). Events in the memory are presented as a factual account with the quality of reporting. The rememberer maintains a detached and objective stance in telling about the event.

Example:

"I don't really have a feeling...I can certainly try to recollect what my feelings were at that time...But what I think about it now, I can't relive those feelings. I'm pretty detached from that at this point."

Score Rep

5. Reality

Actual (A). Memory content conforms to the adult sense of reality, i.e. what actually could have happened as viewed from an adult perspective.

Examples:

"I've wondered if this really happened...I've asked my mother about, and she has no recollection of that...She thinks it's possible, but she doesn't recall."

Score A

"I remember finding out how to get the rails of the crib down and getting out of bed."

Score A

Magical (M). The memory contains elements which one knows could not have really happened, even though the experience is that the memory is real.

Examples:

"I used to have a conviction that it happened, even though I know it couldn't have...I raised my arms to the ceiling and started to rise up."

Score M

"I looked through the bars of my crib and saw the sandman standing there. He was about this high."

Score M

Reflecting: Looking at the Earliest Memory as it Belongs to the Larger Context of One's Life

6. Significance

Apparent (App). The individual has some sense of what is memorable about this event. The figural quality or significance is apparent.

Examples:

"I think if I hadn't gotten sick, I wouldn't remember...I kind of remember things according to their injury quotient."

"It was the experience of doing something that I had never done before; it was new, and no one was helping me with it."

Score App

Not Apparent (nApp). The individual has no sense of what about this memory stands out to make it "rememberable."

Example:

"It's the kind of thing that I think children will experience very often. I don't see it as a unique experience to have someone do that...I don't know why something like that would be my earliest memory."

Score nApp

7. Meaning

Known (K). The person is able to integrate the memory into his/her sense of personal history or into the sense of who s/he is. The meaning of the memory is known.

Example:

"It's still an issue. It's an issue for me and my relationships. Professionally, I'm afraid to compete, and I'm always expecting to be bypassed or not be able to hold onto the position that I have."

Score K

Not Known (nK). The person is unable to draw any meaning from his/her earliest memory or to relate it in any meaningful way to the course of his/her life or to who s/he is.

Example:

"Obviously, if we're talking about social and non-social memories, maybe we could stretch it and say that caused me to be interested in people...Beyond that, I think the links would be tenuous. I don't know how much of the adult I'm imposing on those early memories. I think I'd be stretching it to say I see any connection to that memory now."

Score nK

New (N). New meaning emerges during the course of thinking about or talking about one's earliest memory.

This meaning, insight, understanding, and/or discovery is new. The score of N may be applied to memories score either K or nK. Scored only when it occurs, this accounts for the possibility that new meaning may be found at any time.

Example:

"I know what it is! I wasn't sharing...For as long as I can remember...we shared toys, we shared everything. My mother was very careful to give us presents that were equal. You weren't supposed to want more than your share. That's probably why I react to my patients' greediness...Isn't that interesting...You ask questions that I hadn't thought of before."

Score N

APPENDIX F

DIMENSIONAL SCORES OF PARTICIPANTS' EARLIEST MEMORY
AND NEXT-EARLIEST MEMORIES

Table F.1. Dimensional Scores of Participants' Earliest Memory

Participants	Dimensions										Meaning (K)(nK)(N)	
	Priority (C) (U)	History (H)IH1(nH)	Source (S)(O)	Temporal		Reality (A) (M)	Significance (App) (nApp)					
				Stance (Rep)(Rel)								
1	C	H	S	Rep	A	App				nK		
2	U	IH1	S	Rep	A	App				K		
3	C	nH	S	Rep	A	App				K		
4	C	nH	S	Rep	A	App				nK		
5	C	H	S	Rep	M	App		nApp		K		
6	C	H	S	Rep	A					nK		
7	C	H	S		M	App				nK		
8	C	H	S	Rel	M			nApp		K		
9	C	IH1	S	Rel	A	App				K		
10	C	H	S	Rep	A	App				K		
11	C	H	S	Rep	M	App				K		
12	C	IH1	S	Rel	A	App				K		
13	C	nH	S	Rel	A	App				K		
14	C	H	S	Rep	A	App				K		
15	U	H	S	Rel	A	App				K		
16	C	H	S	Rep	A	App				K		
17	C	H	S	Rep	A	App				K		
18	C	H	S	Rep	A	App		nApp		K		
19	C	H	S	Rep	A	App				K		
20	U	IH1	S	Rel	A	App				nK		
Total N	17	3	13	4	3	16	4	17	3	15	5	8
Percent	85	15	65	20	15	80	20	85	15	75	25	40

Table F.2. Dimensional Scores of Participants' Next-Earliest Memories

Participants	Memory Number	History (H)(nH)	Dimensions					Significance (App) (nApp)	Meaning (K)(nK)(N)
			Source (S)(O)	Temporal Stance (Rep)(Rel)	Reality (A) (M)				
1	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	4	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
2	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	4	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	5	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	6	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	7	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
3	8	nH	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	2	nH	S	Rep	A	App	K		
4	3	nH	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	2	nH	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3	nH	S	Rep	A	App	K		
5	2	nH	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	4	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	6	H	S	Rep	A	App	N		
6	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	nK		
	3	nH	S	Rep	M	App	K		
	4	H	S	Rep	A	App	nK		
	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
7	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
8	2	nH	S	Rel	A	App	K		
	3	H	S	Rel	A	App	N		
9	2		S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3		S	Rel	A	App	K		
10	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	K		
	3	H	S	Rel	A	App	K		

Table F.2. (Continued)

Dimensions								
Participants	Memory Number	History (H)(nH)	Source (S)(O)	Temporal		Reality (A)(M)	Significance (App)(nApp)	Meaning (K)(nK)(N)
				Stance (Rep)(Rel)				
11	2	H	S	Rep		A	App	K
	3	H	O	Rep		A	App	nK
	4	H	S	Rep		M	App	K
	5	H	S	Rep		A	App	K
	5	H	S	Rep			App	K
12	2	H	S	Rel		M	App	K
	3	H	S	Rep		A	nApp	K
	4	H	S	Rel		M	nApp	K
	4		S	Rep			App	K
13	2	nH	S	Rep		A	App	K
	3	nH	S	Rel		A	App	K
	4		S	Rep		A	App	K
	4		S	Rep		A	App	K
14	2	H	S	Rep		A	K	N
	3	H	S	Rep		M	K	K
	3	H	S	Rep			App	K
15	2	H	S	Rep			App	K
	3	H	S	Rel		A	App	
	4	H	S	Rel		A		
	5	H	S	Rep		A		
	6	H	S	Rep		A		K
	7	H	S	Rel		A	App	
	8	H	O	Rep		A	App	
	9	H	O	Rep		A	App	
	10	nH	S	Rep		M		
	11	nH	S	Rep		A	App	
	12	H	S	Rep		A	App	
	12		S	Rep			App	
16	2	nH	S	Rel		M	App	K
	3		S	Rel		A	App	K
	3		S	Rel			App	K

Table P.2. (Continued)

Participants	Memory Number	History (H) (nH)	Source (S) (O)	Dimensions				Significance (App) (nApp)	Meaning (K) (nK) (N)			
				Temporal Stance (Rep) (Rel)	Reality (A) (M)							
17	2	H	S	Rel	A	App	K					
	3	H	S	Rep	A	App	nK					
	4	H	S	Rep	A	App	K					
	5	H	S	Rep	A	App	K					
	6	H	S	Rep	A	App	K					
	7	H	S	Rep	A	App	K					
	7	H	S	Rep	A	App	K					
18	2	H	S	Rep	A	App	K					
	3	H	S	Rel	A	App	K					
	4	H	S	Rel	M	App	K					
19	2	H	S	Rel	A	App	K					
	3	H	S	Rel	A	App	K					
20	2	H	S	Rel	A	App	K					
	3	H	S	Rel	M	App	K					
	3	H	S	Rel	M	App	K					
Total		49	13	47	19	56	10	56	2	54	4	7
Percent		79	21	71	29	85	15	97	3	93	7	12

APPENDIX G
RELIABILITY RATINGS

Table G.1. Reliability Ratings

Scores	Percent Agreement			Average Reliability
	*I/A	I/B	A/B	
C/U	80	95	85	87
H/1H1/nH	90	90	90	90
S/O	100	100	100	100
Rep/Rel	75	95	70	80
A/M	90	80	75	82
App/nApp	95	90	90	92
K/nK	85	80	75	80
<u>Average</u>				
<u>Reliability</u>	87	90	84	87

Overall Reliability: 87%

*I = Investigator

A = Rater A

B = Rater B

VITA

Janice Gayle Young was born in Florence, Alabama on September 28, 1946. She attended elementary and junior high schools in that city and graduated from Coffee High School in June 1964. The following September she entered the University of Alabama where she was a music major. She transferred to the University of Florida in 1967 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in August 1968.

For the next five years she taught music in the public and private schools in and around New Orleans, Louisiana. After moving to Johnson City, Tennessee in 1973, she taught piano and organ lessons privately for the next four years.

In September 1974 she enrolled in East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, to work toward a Master's Degree. The Master of Arts degree with a major in Psychology was awarded in August 1977. She entered the doctoral program in Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in September 1977. She completed a year of internship training from July 1981 through June 1982 at Nassau Country Medical Center in East Meadow, New York. Dissertation research continued over the next four years.

In November 1982 she was employed by Westchester County Medical Center in Valhalla, New York, where she worked on the Mobile Crisis Intervention Service until October 1984. Since that time she has been a Staff Psychologist on the Adult Inpatient Service of Westchester County Medical Center. In December 1985 she was appointed to the faculty of New York Medical College.

In December 1986 she was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Psychology. After graduation she plans to remain in the Psychology Department at Westchester County Medical Center and continue in her duties as Instructor at New York Medical College.