

TITLE: The Use of Early Recollections to Predict Leadership Traits

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OBJECTIVE: To determine if early recollections (ERs) can predict leadership traits as well as existing instruments measuring leadership; that is, are ERs a valid technique in identifying leadership?

METHODOLOGY: The sample consisted of 15 men and 15 women. All participants were Caucasian, born and raised in the U.S., middle-classed, college-educated, and held positions that involved managing others for five or more years. They ranged in age from 38 to 58 years and their managerial experiences varied across disciplines and industries. Each respondent was asked to submit in writing at least three childhood memories that occurred before the age of ten. These were subsequently blindly scored by three raters using Gushurst's methodology (1971). Respondents also completed the Leadership Practices Inventory. In total 181 ERs were collected, 78 from males and 103 from females, with an average of six per respondent.

KEY FINDINGS: Forty-six percent of the ERs contained one or more of the five leadership practices. Males were somewhat more likely to provide ERs with leadership practices than females (53% versus 42%), although no statistically significant differences were found. Within these ERs, 234 leadership traits were identified, with Challenging the practice most often found. When leadership practices were present in a memory, 58% of the time it was likely to be Challenging the Process, with Modeling the next most frequently mentioned (22%), followed by Enabling (13%), Inspiring (5%) and Encouraging (3%).

No significant differences were found between males and females on the LPI. Comparisons, by categorizing responses on the LPI and ERs into high, moderate, and low groups, revealed an overlap in 37% of the respondents (N=11), which supports the null hypothesis of no relationship between ERs and the LPI.