



Cephalometric Evaluation of Mandibular Relapse Following Bilateral Sagittal Split Osteotomy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	VII
LIST OF FIGURES	XI
SUMMARY	XV
STATEMENT	XIX
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	XX
I. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: Cephalometric evaluation of relapse following bilateral sagittal split osteotomy	2
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
CHAPTER 2: Relapse following bilateral sagittal split advancement	7
2.1. <i>Defining postsurgical relapse</i>	7
2.2. <i>Measurement of relapse</i>	7
2.3. <i>Early relapse</i>	11
2.4. <i>Intermediate and long term relapse</i>	15
2.5. <i>Summary</i>	20
CHAPTER 3: Factors associated with postsurgical relapse following bilateral sagittal split advancement	22
3.1. <i>Introduction</i>	22
3.2. <i>Orthodontics</i>	23
3.3. <i>Magnitude of advancement</i>	25
3.4. <i>Condylar position</i>	26
3.5. <i>Rotational effects</i>	29
3.6. <i>Method of fixation</i>	31
3.6.1. <i>Intermaxillary fixation without skeletal osteosynthesis</i>	32
3.6.3. <i>Upper border wiring</i>	35
3.6.4. <i>Lower border wiring</i>	36
3.6.5. <i>Skeletal fixation</i>	37

3.6.6. Compression (lag) screws.....	38
3.6.7. Non-compression screw fixation.....	39
3.7. Muscular interactions.....	40
3.8. Viability of the osseous segments.....	43
3.9. Growth and relapse.....	44
3.9.1. The effect of surgery on growth of the mandible.....	45
3.10. Summary.....	48
CHAPTER 4: Errors in cephalometry.....	49
4.1. Introduction.....	49
4.2. Errors of projection.....	50
4.4. Errors of landmark identification.....	51
4.4. Errors of digitising.....	53
4.5. Errors of measurement.....	54
4.6. Intra-observer and inter-observer variability.....	55
4.8. Errors of superimposition.....	56
4.9. The selection of a suitable line of reference.....	58
4.9.1. The Frankfort horizontal.....	60
4.9.2. The nasion-sella line and the SN-7 line.....	61
III. MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	68
CHAPTER 5: Evaluation of postsurgical relapse.....	69
5.1. Selection of patient records.....	69
5.2. Radiographic technique.....	71
5.3. Tracing and digitising procedure.....	73
5.4. Reference points and lines.....	76
5.4.1. Hard tissue points.....	76
5.4.2. Cephalometric lines.....	78
5.5. Calculation of linear and angular variables.....	80
5.5.1. Linear and angular variables.....	80
5.6. Statistical analysis.....	83
CHAPTER 6: Errors of the method.....	84
6.1. Materials and methods.....	84
6.2. Statistical analysis.....	87

IV: RESULTS	89
CHAPTER 7: Early, intermediate and long term dentoskeletal effects following sagittal split advancement	90
7.1. <i>Introduction</i>	90
7.2. <i>Analysis of variables by group</i>	91
7.2.1. <i>Mandibular movement</i>	91
7.2.1.1. <i>Horizontal advancement and relapse</i>	91
7.2.1.2. <i>Angle SNB</i>	95
7.2.2. <i>Proximal and distal segment alteration</i>	99
7.2.2.1. <i>Condylar displacement</i>	99
7.2.2.2. <i>Posterior facial height</i>	102
7.2.2.3. <i>Anterior facial height</i>	105
7.2.2.4. <i>Mandibular plane angle</i>	109
7.3. <i>Segmental inter-relationships</i>	113
7.3.1. <i>Gonial angle</i>	113
7.3.2. <i>Ramal angle</i>	116
7.4. <i>Dentoskeletal changes</i>	119
7.4.1. <i>Maxillary incisal angle</i>	119
7.4.2. <i>Interincisal angle</i>	122
7.4.4. <i>Overjet</i>	127
7.4.5. <i>Overbite</i>	130
CHAPTER 8: Analysis of variables by method of fixation	133
8.1. <i>Mandibular movement</i>	133
8.1.1. <i>Horizontal advancement and relapse</i>	133
8.1.2. <i>Angle SNB</i>	134
8.2. <i>Proximal and distal segment alteration</i>	136
8.2.1. <i>Condylar displacement</i>	136
8.2.2. <i>Posterior facial height</i>	137
8.2.3. <i>Anterior facial height</i>	139
8.2.4. <i>Mandibular plane angle</i>	140
8.3. <i>Segmental inter-relationships</i>	143
8.3.1. <i>Gonial angle</i>	143
8.3.2. <i>Ramal angle</i>	144
8.4. <i>Dentoskeletal changes</i>	145
8.4.1. <i>Maxillary incisal angle</i>	145
8.4.2. <i>Interincisal angle</i>	146

8.4.3. Lower incisal angle.....	147
8.4.4. Overjet.....	147
8.4.5. Overbite.....	148
CHAPTER 9: Correlations.....	150
9.1. Age of patient and relapse at B point.....	150
9.1.1. Subjects.....	150
9.1.2. Females.....	150
9.1.3. Males.....	153
9.1.3.1. Wire fixation.....	155
9.1.3.2. Screw fixation.....	155
9.2. Magnitude of advancement.....	156
9.3. Gonial arc radius.....	159
9.3.1. All Patients.....	159
9.3.2. Screw fixation.....	161
9.3.3. Wire fixation.....	162
9.4. Posterior facial height.....	163
9.4.1. Screw fixation.....	163
9.4.2. Wire fixation.....	164
9.5. Preoperative mandibular plane angle.....	165
9.5.1. All patients.....	165
9.5.2. Screw fixation.....	165
9.5.3. Wire fixation.....	167
9.6. High versus low relapse.....	168
CHAPTER 10: Errors of the method.....	171
10.1. Errors of the method.....	171
10.2. Errors for linear and angular variables.....	179
10.3. Comparative errors for computer and manual mensuration.....	180
V. DISCUSSION.....	182
CHAPTER 11: Selection of patient records.....	183
CHAPTER 12: Factors in early relapse.....	185
12.1. Magnitude of advancement.....	185
12.2. Condylar displacement.....	186
12.3. Facial height.....	188

12.4. <i>Preoperative mandibular plane angle</i>	189
12.5. <i>Method of fixation</i>	189
12.6. <i>Muscular interactions</i>	192
CHAPTER 13: Factors in intermediate and long term relapse	193
13.2. <i>Magnitude of advancement</i>	194
13.3. <i>Condylar position</i>	195
13.4. <i>Facial height</i>	196
13.5. <i>Preoperative mandibular plane angle</i>	196
13.6. <i>Method of fixation</i>	199
13.7. <i>Bony healing</i>	200
CHAPTER 14: Errors of the method	203
VI. CONCLUSIONS	
CHAPTER 15: Conclusions	209
VII. APPENDIX	
APPENDIX 1: Bilateral sagittal split osteotomy: operative procedure	216
VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY	224
AUTHORS' INDEX	225
BIBLIOGRAPHY	228

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1.	Superimposed tracings showing the use of gonial arc radius (HA-Go).....	27
Figure 3.2.	Intermaxillary fixation only and no osteosynthesis.....	33
Figure 3.3.	Intermaxillary fixation with circumferential wire osteosynthesis.....	33
Figure 3.4.	Intermaxillary fixation with upper border wire osteosynthesis.....	33
Figure 3.5.	Intermaxillary fixation with Epker's "high-low" modification (1980).....	33
Figure 3.6.	Intermaxillary fixation with lower border wire osteosynthesis.....	34
Figure 3.7.	Intermaxillary fixation with lower border wire osteosynthesis.....	34
Figure 3.8.	Typical location of screws for tripod screw fixation	34
Figure 3.9.	Compression lag screws.....	34
Figure 3.10.	Non-compression bicortical screws	34
Figure 3.11.	Average growth curves for males and females.....	46
Figure 4.1.	Reference lines referred to in the text.....	59
Figure 4.2.	Sagittal section showing contributing structures in the line connecting sella and nasion	63
Figure 5.1.	Calculation of the enlargement factor for points lying on the mid-sagittal plane	72
Figure 5.2.	Hard tissue points listed in the order of digitising sequence	74
Figure 5.3.	References lines referred to in the text.....	78
Figure 5.4.	Angular and linear variables used to evaluate dentoskeletal changes following bilateral sagittal split advancement.....	80
Figure 6.1.	Hard tissue points listed in the order of digitising sequence	83
Figure 9.1.	Correlation between age and movement at B point in males 12 months after surgery.....	152
Figure 9.2.	Correlation between age and movement at B point in males 24 months after surgery.....	152

Figure 9.3.	Correlation between age and % relapse at B point in males 12 months after surgery.....	153
Figure 9.4.	Correlation between age and % relapse at B point in males 24 months after surgery.....	153
Figure 9.5.	Correlation between advancement at B point and backward movement at B point after 12 months (N = 40).....	155
Figure 9.6.	Correlation between advancement at B point and relapse after 12 months for the screw fixation group (N = 18).....	156
Figure 9.7.	Correlation between advancement at B point and relapse after 12 months for the wire fixation group (N = 22).....	156
Figure 9.8.	Correlation between change in gonial arc radius (< 0.4 mm) and % relapse at B point during the first six weeks for all patients.....	158
Figure 9.9.	Correlation between change in gonial arc radius (> 0.4 mm) and % relapse at B point during the first six weeks for all patients (N = 26).	159
Figure 9.10.	Correlation between change in gonial arc radius (> 0.4 mm) and movement at B point during the first 12 months for all patients (N = 26).	159
Figure 9.11.	Correlation between change in gonial arc radius (> 0.4 mm) and movement at B point during the first 12 months for the screw fixation group (N = 12).	160
Figure 9.12.	Correlation between change in gonial arc radius (> 0.4 mm) and % relapse at B point during the first six weeks for the wire fixation group (N = 14).	161
Figure 9.13.	Correlation between altered posterior facial height and percentage relapse at T4 for females in the screw fixation group (N = 14).....	162
Figure 9.14.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and subsequent relapse after 6 weeks (N = 40).....	164
Figure 9.15.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and subsequent relapse after 12 months (N = 40).	165
Figure 9.16.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and subsequent relapse after 12 months for the screw fixation group (N = 18).....	165
Figure 9.17.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and subsequent relapse after 12 months for the wire fixation group (N = 22).....	166

Figure 9.18.	Correlation between altered gonial arc radius and subsequent relapse after 12 months for patients with less than 10% relapse (N = 8).....	167
Figure 9.19.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and surgical advancement for patients who displayed between 10 and 25% relapse at T4 (N = 10).....	168
Figure 9.20.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and postoperative change at B point for patients who displayed between 10 and 25% relapse at T4 (N = 10).....	168
Figure 10.1.	Distribution of differences for ANS x and S y for 10 sets of double determinations.	171
Figure 10.2.	Differences between digitised double determinations for sella (S) and nasion (N).....	173
Figure 10.3.	Differences between digitised double determinations for porion (Po) and orbitale (Or).	173
Figure 10.4.	Differences between digitised double determinations for hinge axis (HA) and condylion (Co).	174
Figure 10.5.	Differences between digitised double determinations for articulare (Ar) and gonion (Go).....	174
Figure 10.6.	Differences between digitised double determinations for menton (Me) and pogonion (Pg).....	175
Figure 10.7.	Differences between digitised double determinations for A point (A) and B point (B).....	175
Figure 10.8.	Differences between digitised double determinations for anterior nasal spine (ANS) and posterior nasal spine (PNS)	176
Figure 10.9.	Differences between digitised double determinations for upper incisal tip (IS) and upper incisal apex (AS).....	176
Figure 10.10.	Differences between digitised double determinations for lower incisal tip (II) and lower incisal apex (AI).	177
Figure 10.11.	Differences between digitised double determinations for upper molar crown (MS) and lower molar crown (MI).....	177
Figure 12.1.	Correlation between advancement at B point and backward movement at B point after 6 weeks (N = 40).	185
Figure 13.1.	Correlation between advancement at B point and backward movement at B point after 12 months (N = 40).....	195

Figure 13.2.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle and postoperative movement at B point during the first 12 months for the screw fixation group (N = 18).....	197
Figure 13.3.	Correlation between preoperative mandibular plane angle	198
Figure 13.4.	Correlation between age and movement at B point 12 months after surgery for males (N = 11).....	201
Figure 14.1.	Distribution of differences for ANS x and S y for 10 sets of double determinations.	205
Figure 14.2.	Hand measurements tended to underestimate the angle NPgFH (facial axis) compared to the computer.....	206

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1.	Relapse % in the early postoperative phase.....	12
Table 2.2.	Relapse % in the intermediate and long term.....	19
Table 3.1.	Methods of osteosynthesis	31
Table 3.2.	Advantages and disadvantages of lag screw fixation.....	38
Table 5.1.	Age and sex distribution of patients undergoing surgery	70
Table 5.2.	Distribution of patients assigned by method of fixation and surgical procedure.....	70
Table 5.3.	Distribution of patients assigned by method of fixation and surgical procedure.....	71
Table 5.4.	Statistical analysis.....	81
Table 6.1.	Statistical analysis of the experimental error.....	85
Table 7.1.	Horizontal advancement (T1-T2) and relapse pattern (T2-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	90
Table 7.2.	Horizontal advancement (T1-T2) and relapse pattern (T2-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	92
Table 7.3.	Changes in the angle SNB for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	94
Table 7.4.	Changes in the angle SNB for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	95
Table 7.5.	Changes in gonial arc radius for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	98
Table 7.6.	Changes in gonial arc radius for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	99
Table 7.7.	Changes in posterior facial height for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	101
Table 7.8.	Changes in posterior facial height for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	103
Table 7.9.	Changes in anterior facial height for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	104
Table 7.10.	Changes in anterior facial height for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	106

Table 7.11.	Changes in mandibular plane angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	108
Table 7.12.	Changes in mandibular plane angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	109
Table 7.13.	Changes in gonial angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	112
Table 7.14.	Changes in gonial angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	113
Table 7.15.	Changes in ramal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	114
Table 7.16.	Changes in ramal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	116
Table 7.17.	Changes in maxillary incisal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	118
Table 7.18.	Changes in maxillary incisal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	119
Table 7.19.	Changes in interincisal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	120
Table 7.20.	Changes in interincisal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	122
Table 7.21.	Changes in lower incisal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	123
Table 7.22.	Changes in lower incisal angle for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	124
Table 7.23.	Changes in overjet for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	126
Table 7.24.	Changes in overjet for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	127
Table 7.25.	Changes in overbite for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw fixation.....	128
Table 7.26.	Changes in overbite for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with wire fixation.....	130
Table 8.1.	Relapse patterns (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	132
Table 8.2.	Changes in SNB (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	133
Table 8.3.	Changes in gonial arc radius (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	134

Table 8.4.	Contribution of altered gonial arc radius (GAR) at surgery (T1-T2) to relapse tendency during the early postoperative period (T2-T3).....	135
Table 8.5.	Changes in posterior facial height (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	136
Table 8.6.	Changes in anterior facial height (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	137
Table 8.7.	Changes in mandibular plane angle (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	138
Table 8.8.	The relationship between preoperative mandibular plane angle and relapse tendency	139
Table 8.9.	Comparison between high and low mandibular plane angle cases by surgical procedure.....	140
Table 8.10.	Changes in gonial angle (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	141
Table 8.11.	Changes in ramal angle (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	142
Table 8.12.	Changes in maxillary incisal angle (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	143
Table 8.13.	Changes in interincisal angle (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	
Table 8.14.	Changes in lower incisal angle (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	145
Table 8.15.	Changes in overjet (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	146
Table 8.16.	Changes in overbite (T1-T5) for bilateral sagittal split advancement (BSSA) with screw and wire fixation.....	147
Table 9.1.	Correlation between relapse and selected variables (all patients).....	149
Table 9.2.	Correlation between relapse and selected variables (screw fixation patients).....	149
Table 9.3.	Correlation between relapse and selected variables (wire fixation patients).....	150
Table 9.4.	Correlation between relapse and selected variables (<10% relapse patients).....	150
Table 9.5.	Correlation between relapse and selected variables (-10 - -25% relapse patients).....	151

Table 9.6.	Correlation between relapse and selected variables (>-25% relapse patients).....	151
Table 10.1.	Error for 20 hard tissue points (horizontal axis) by double determination.....	171
Table 10.2.	Error for 20 hard tissue points (vertical axis) by double determination.....	172
Table 10.3.	Total errors of the method for thirteen angular and linear variables (N = 20 double determinations)	178
Table 10.4.	Analysis of differences between computer and manual measurements for 13 angular and linear variables.....	179
Table 13.1	Relapse % in the intermediate and long term.....	193

SUMMARY

A retrospective cephalometric investigation was performed to evaluate early, intermediate and long term postsurgical relapse following mandibular advancement by the modified bilateral sagittal split osteotomy.

The investigation involved a detailed assessment of 40 serial cephalometric records. Twenty patient records had longitudinal radiographs which had been taken a minimum of two years after surgery. This subset was investigated for long term relapse.

The forty records were assigned to one of four groups. Group 1 consisted of bilateral sagittal split osteotomy stabilised with screw fixation. Group 2 were cases with bilateral sagittal split and Le Fort I osteotomies stabilised with screw fixation. Group 3 consisted of bilateral sagittal split osteotomy stabilised with wire fixation. Group 4 were cases with bilateral sagittal split and Le Fort I osteotomies stabilised with wire fixation.

Relapse was measured over the short, intermediate and long term and correlated with selected cephalometric variables. The results of the short term study showed that there were no significant differences between sexes for any of the variables studied. In addition, no statistical differences were shown between groups 1 and 2, nor between groups 3 and 4. Therefore, the screw fixation and the wire fixation subgroups were combined. When the groups were examined according to the method of fixation, relatively minor differences between the screw (SF) and wire (WF) fixation groups were evident in the first 6 weeks following surgery. Relapse appeared to be associated with the amount of surgical advancement but this correlation could have arisen through topographical associations independent of a true biological effect.

Early relapse was not correlated with the preoperative mandibular plane, altered posterior facial height or gonial angle. A clear association between condylar displacement and early relapse tendency was not shown in either group. It was found that gonial arc radius increased for both groups in 26 of the 40 (65%) cases but returned by 6 weeks, including those patients in intermaxillary fixation. The high rate of condylar displacement may have been the result of a limitation in surgical technique or a cephalometric misinterpretation.

Both groups had comparable mean mandibular advancement but the relapse tendency was higher in the SF group (-20.3%). This level of relapse conflicts with previous investigations on the stability of screw fixation. Early relapse in the WF group was -13.6% but this difference, compared with the SF group, did not reach statistical significance.

The most significant difference ($P < 0.005$) between the fixation groups was the surgical increase in gonial angulation for the WF group. This was almost double the change recorded for the SF group. The increase in gonial angle for the WF group related more strongly to increased anterior facial height with a lesser contribution from proximal rotation. Despite this difference, no association with relapse was noted. Dental compensation during the first six weeks (T2-T3) was not conspicuous in either group.

In view of the finding that condylar position was not a primary determinant of relapse, it would appear that other factors encourage early relapse. It is possible that the introduction of a new surgical technique, such as screw fixation, inevitably involves a learning phase where intraoperative compromise may occur. Thus the consequences of accepting small compromises in occlusion may not be apparent until cephalometric studies are embarked upon.

The results at 12 months confirmed the findings of previously published research that mandibular relapse continues into the intermediate period. In the long term, stability was observed for all variables implying that 12 month's observation is a minimum requirement for long term studies.

The data from this study showed a mean percentage relapse of -32% after one year. Approximately half of the relapse (-17%) occurred in the first six

weeks and the remainder occurred over the next ten months. Intermediate relapse appeared to be correlated with the amount of surgical advancement in the mandible when all subjects were included. This association was slightly stronger in the wire fixation group compared to the screw fixation group. Notwithstanding specious associations, a biological effect appeared to be involved, supporting the contention that the greater the initial surgical advancement, the greater the likelihood of postsurgical relapse within one year.

No single factor, with the possible exception of magnitude of advancement, was consistently responsible for intermediate relapse. The commonly discussed factors such as preoperative mandibular plane angle, altered posterior facial height and altered gonial arc radius did not appear to influence the amount of relapse when the total sample was assessed.

An interesting trend was observed between chronological age for males and intermediate relapse at B point. It is postulated that the compensatory effect of growth in the small male sample helped to mask postsurgical relapse. This aspect could be confirmed by a cephalometric study of males aged by hand-wrist radiographs, to determine whether this trend represents a true association with decreased relapse tendency.

The validity of these results was confirmed by quantifying the error of the method. Double determinations were carried out on 10 cephalograms from 3 randomly selected cases. Under standardised conditions, twenty hard tissue points and 2 fiducial points (x and x') were digitised on a *Hewlett Packard 9874A* digitiser configured to an *Apple IIe* computer.

The results were expressed as the mean of the differences, the standard error of the mean differences, the standard error of a single determination and the error variance per cent. A rank order based on the standard error of a single determination was assigned to each variable in the x and y plane. Scattergrams were compiled to illustrate the differences between the first and second determinations and each cephalometric point demonstrated a characteristic distribution around origin. The results of this investigation showed that the mean differences and total errors of the method were small. When these were expressed as a percentage of the error variance, errors contributed less than 2 per cent of the observed values.

The total error for 9 angular and 4 linear measurement was established using a modification of the method described by Will et al. (1984). Ten films were traced, superimposed and digitised on 4 occasions giving 20 double determinations. Investigation of the total error for the 13 variables showed that five angles and two linear values differed at the 5% level of probability. However, the mean differences and standard error of the mean differences were small and none of the angles or distances exceeded 1° or 1 mm for the standard deviation of a single determination. The percentages of the observed variance attributable to errors were low for all angular variables. Of the linear variables, overjet and overbite displayed the largest values of 4.52% and 2.55% respectively. It was concluded that the total experimental error was small and was therefore unlikely to contribute significantly to the observed results.

STATEMENT

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Dental Surgery. I declare that the text of this thesis has not been previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made. The findings are the result of my personal investigations. No part of this work has been previously submitted for a degree in any university.

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