A VALIDATION STUDY OF THE
ROTTER INCOMPLETE SENTENCES BLANK:
HIGH SCHOOL FORM

by

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

It has become increasingly understood and accepted in recent years that education must concern itself with the development of the whole child. One of the most important functions of the schools, it is agreed, is guiding youth in the development of well-balanced, healthy personalities. There is a need for an efficient and economical personality test to aid school personnel in appraising the adjustment of pupils and discerning their individual needs and problems, so that these pupils can be given the most effective guidance. Objective personality inventories have not proved sufficiently valid for use with school children. Complicated projective techniques such as the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test are much too time consuming and expensive for broad usage, since they have to be administered individually and require highly trained personnel for their interpretation.

The sentence completion method is a group test that has many of the advantages of other projective techniques, and the additional advantage of being simple and economical to administer and score. It would seem to be especially suitable for schools, where a great number of pupils are to
be studied, both for screening purposes and for analysis of
problem areas of individuals.

The Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank has been tested
at the college level and found to be an efficient instrument
for screening out students who are in need of counseling help.
A high school form of the test has been tried out on the popu­
lation of one high school, and the results were found to be
promising, though not conclusive. Since it is important to
identify and help maladjusted youngsters as early as possible,
this test could be a valuable instrument for junior high
schools, if it should prove to be reasonably valid at this
level.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It is the purpose of this
study to determine the validity and probable utility of the
Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank, High School Form, in dif­
ferentiating maladjusted from well-adjusted pupils in a junior
high school population. Two null hypotheses will be tested:

1. There is no significant correlation between the
scores of ninth grade boys and girls on the Rotter ISB, High
School Form, and the ratings of these pupils by their coun­
selors as adjusted or maladjusted.

Hereinafter referred to as Rotter ISB.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the boys and girls of the ninth grade, and those of the sample of seventh grade boys and girls.

Importance of the study. The junior high school plan has been adopted in Sacramento, as in many other cities, to administer to the particular needs of children during the early adolescent years of 11 to 16 approximately. Most elementary schools do not have special counseling personnel, so that the junior high school is the first stage in the general school system in which counselors' services are provided to help pupils achieve satisfactory adjustment. This, then, is the earliest time when it is feasible to identify maladjusted youngsters, so that the counselors can give them the help and guidance they need. If the Rotter ISB should prove to do this efficiently, it could serve as a valuable tool for the counselors. It is a short test that requires only about thirty minutes to administer to a large group. The scoring system is fairly simple and objective, and counselors could become proficient in using it without extensive special training. It also has other advantages, as pointed out by Rotter (23):

In contrast to the usual objective tests the method has the distinct advantage of providing freedom of response; instead of forcing the subject to answer "Yes," "No," or "?," he can respond to the stimulus as he wishes. In addition, the nature of the test is somewhat disguised, and it is less clear
to the subject what constitutes "good" or "bad" answers, even though the intent of the test may be known or easily guessed.

Though the method offers such valuable possibilities, its validity and utility for the age range of early adolescence have not been tested. The use of an existing instrument would save much time and effort as compared to developing a new test. This study was undertaken, therefore, to investigate how the Rotter ISB, High School Form, functions for a junior high school population.

**Delimitation of the study.** This study was limited to the population of the California Junior High School in the city of Sacramento. The results obtained are relevant only for similar schools, having the same general organization of teaching and counseling service, and populations of similar socio-economic background. In this school there are four counselors for a population of about 1000 pupils, and each counselor is in charge of the same group of pupils during their three years of attendance at the school. It was possible, therefore, to obtain the counselors' ratings of pupils in the ninth grade (the final year) as adjusted or maladjusted, and to use these as a criterion of validity by correlating them with the scores obtained by these pupils on the Rotter ISB, High School Form. The test was also given to a random sample of low seventh grade pupils (the entering class).
The mean of these scores was compared with that of the ninth grade pupils to find out whether there was any significant difference between them, and thus whether the instrument was as feasible for use with seventh grade as with ninth grade pupils.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Origin and rationale of the sentence completion method.
The sentence completion technique may be considered an extension of the word association method, which is one of the oldest methods of personality study and is looked upon by many as the forerunner of modern projective techniques. Bell (1) says:

No one will challenge the position of the word association test as the progenitor of the majority of our modern non-questionnaire type of personality tests. Although new blood has been brought into the family by many other techniques, so that the present generation may appear to be quite remote from its ancestor, traces of the word association method and of its underlying rationale are still present and apparent.

The word association or, as it is sometimes called, the free association method, consists of presenting a series of single words to a subject and having him respond to each word quickly with the first word that comes to his mind. Personality is studied in this method by analyzing the stimulus words and the responses to them on which the subject manifests emotional disturbance, by comparing the responses to them on which the subject manifests emotional disturbance, and by comparing the responses to those found to be usual or unusual. Galton, Wundt, and Kraepelin were among the early
names in psychology connected with the method. Clinical studies of association grew mainly out of the psycho-analytic movement. Jung (1) was the first to utilize free association in a test procedure, though Freud had already begun to use it in therapy. In 1906 Jung used the method to study complexes. He standardized the methods of administration and interpretation of the test with a list of 100 words, irregular responses to which indicated areas of common emotional disturbance.

There have been various approaches to the use of the word association method, but because of certain inherent deficiencies, the method will probably never attain the usefulness of the newer projective techniques which have since been developed, such as the sentence completion method. Bell (1) points out the deficiencies of the word association method as follows:

1. It leaves untapped too variable or too unknown an area of the subject's life space or behavioral world.

2. Its single word responses are often difficult to analyze.

3. It is impractical for large scale use, since it requires individual administration.

4. It may not provide information that cannot be more readily secured by other means.

In the sentence completion method, the subject is asked to complete a number of sentences, the first word or words of which are presented to him as a stimulus. This technique is
similar to the word association method in that there is a tendency to personalize the meaning of the stimulus word or words. It differs from the word association method in that immediate association is not usually demanded, and the speed of reaction is not measured.

Bell (1) finds that the sentence completion method seems to overcome some of the deficiencies of the word association method:

1. It can be administered as a group test.

2. By adaptation of its stimulus phrases to an immediate situation it can provide a personalized medium for projection of significant themes.

3. Its responses, being longer, provide more material for analysis.

Sacks and Levy (28) state:

Since the sentence completion test is a variation of the word association method, these two techniques have been compared frequently, generally to the advantage of the sentence completion test. It is claimed that the sentence completion test cuts down the multiplicity of associations evoked by a single word; that it is better able to suggest contexts, feeling tones, qualities of attitude, and specific areas of attention; that it allows greater individual freedom and variability of response; and that it taps a larger area of the subject's behavioral world.

According to Rotter (23):

Analysis is usually more similar to that used with the Thematic Apperception Test than with the word association method. As in other projective techniques, it is assumed that the subject reflects his own wishes, desires, fears, and attitudes in the sentences he composes, but this method differs in
that the subject's production does not depend so much upon his interpretation of the standard stimulus, as upon what he is able and willing to write. . . . It tends to give information of personality content rather than personality structure. It deals with feelings, attitudes, specific reactions to people and things, rather than providing a so-called underlying personality structure. However, analysis in terms of structure is possible from any kind of material.

A recent study made by Hanfmann and Getzels (8) had as one of its purposes an investigation of the range of material elicited by sentence completion tests, as regards depth or relative accessibility to consciousness. They found that the results support the general clinical impression that the personal material elicited is conscious or fairly easily accessible to consciousness. They also found that:

By and large, the personality sketch based on the sentence completion test showed remarkable congruence with the picture obtained by interviewers. Radical discrepancies were the exception, rather than the rule. . . . Material from the test served to verify and enrich conclusions from the more direct expressions of attitude with much greater ease and plausibility than did the results of other projective techniques.

Levy (14) suggests:

As compared with the Rorschach, the sentence completion method allows for much greater control on the part of the subject, since it deals with familiar words, feelings, objects, and situations. However, the sentence completion test is a multi-dimensional test, allowing interpretations at various levels, both conscious and unconscious, structural and expressive.

The consensus of these views on the rationale of the sentence completion method seems to be: (a) that it has
definite advantages over the word association test in provid-
ing more material; and (b) that while it does not attempt to
tap the deeper levels of personality, as the Rorschach and
Thematic Apperception Test do, it elicits a rich fund of ma-
terial for personality interpretation at various levels and
in many areas.

The adaptability of the sentence completion method has
been emphasized by many experimenters: Sacks and Levy (28)
point out that:

Sentences may be selected to explore significant
areas of an individual's adjustment, or in special
situations may be used for the purpose of investi-
gating some specific cluster of attitudes.

Shor (30) emphasizes the value the method has in per-
mitting adaptation of sentence stems to current situations
and various cultural backgrounds.

Levy (14) states:

In practical demonstrations of its flexibility,
the sentence completion test has been used for per-
sonality diagnosis, in mental hygiene clinics, for
investigating the attitudes of physically handi-
capped groups, for studying adolescent girls, for
exploring prejudice, and for assessing therapeutic
improvement in particular areas.

After a short history of the early development of the
test, some of the recent studies of the miscellaneous uses of
the method will be explored.
Early history of the sentence completion method. The first one to use the method for direct study of personality seems to have been Payne (1) who in 1928 developed a sentence completion test for use in vocational guidance.

In 1930 Tendler (33) published a report on "A Test for Emotional Insight," which was the first report to appear in the literature on the use of a sentence completion test for studying personality. Tendler's rationale for the test was very similar to that of more recent projective techniques. His purpose was to develop a test that would reveal "trends, fixed attitudes, attachments to persons, conflicting desires, satisfactions, and annoyances." His criteria for a test that would serve his purpose were that it should directly elicit emotional response, permit freedom of response, and not require choice. He chose the sentence completion method, because he found it best met these criteria. Tendler made a quantitative study, comparing favorable and unfavorable groups, as rated according to their adjustment on the Woodworth Blank. He found that his test revealed significant differences between the groups thus rated.

The next report in the literature on the sentence completion method was that of Cameron (2) in 1938, who used it to study the differences in the thinking processes of normals, schizophrenics, and seniles. He found important differences revealed, but he did not analyze the data quantitatively.
In 1941 Lorge and Thorndike (16) made a study using a method which was more similar to the word association test; and they concluded that the test was not useful for studying differences in personality.

Sanford (29) in 1943 described his use of the method for a specific purpose, to work out an analysis according to the Murray need-press system of personality description. This special use of the test is a good example of the ease with which the method can be adapted for specific purposes and situations. Sanford gave the test to only a small number of subjects and did not present any quantitative analysis.

In 1946 Rohde (20) reported on a study of a sentence completion test for high school pupils that she and Hildreth had published in 1940. This was a modification of the original Payne test and consisted of 64 short, rather unstructured items such as "I want to know," "My father," "My school work." Her criteria in selecting and constructing items were as follows:

(a) The range of stimuli must elicit information about all phases of personality; (b) the stimulus phrase must permit freedom of expression; (c) excessive time must not be required for the test.

She made a quantitative analysis of the responses, in terms of Murray's system of need, press, and inner states. Her validation was made on a sample of 50 boys and girls randomly selected from 670 ninth grade students. This grade was chosen because, as she stated:
The students are in a critical stage of personal adjustment, and understanding of the adolescent's personality, problems, conflicts, and aspirations is a highly important function of teachers and counselors.

Rohde used as a criterion combined ratings for the 33 variables scored in the test items, obtained from teacher's judgments, the experimenter's interviews with the pupils and their parents, opinions of school administrators and guidance counselors, and school records. She obtained correlations of these ratings with ratings scored on the test of .79 for girls and .82 for boys, for all variables combined. For reliability of scoring on individual items she found 95% agreement between the experimenter and one other rater on 36 papers, and 78% agreement of five judges on 12 papers. On re-testing 21 girls and 23 boys after 8 months she obtained a correlation of .82 for girls and .76 for boys, and the greatest changes were found in those not well-adjusted emotionally and socially. The validity coefficients obtained by Rohde are very high for a projective test of this kind.

Rohde concluded that her test can be very valuable for personality analysis at the high school level. Levy (14) finds that:

Rohde's work is a significant contribution, both because it was a carefully planned research, and because it stimulated so much of the current work with the sentence completion test.
Recent studies of the sentence completion method. During the second world war there was a decided increase in the use of the sentence completion method, as the technique was found to be very useful in army medical installations. Reports appeared in the literature by Hutt in 1945, by Shor in 1946, and by Holzberg in 1947. Hutt (10) described the valuable use made of the sentence completion test, together with other tests, to enable the clinician to obtain rapid insight into the "ideational nature of the patient's mental life, and the character of his personality." He pointed out that in the army hospitals it was important to have such aids to rapid insight, since "neither the patient's nor the clinician's time can be expended as lavishly as more leisurely habits of civilian life would permit."

Shor (30) made extensive use of a test he devised which he called "The Self-Idea Completion Test." He revised and rearranged the list of stimuli for each of the five army hospitals at which he did his work. He studied about 1800 cases in all, but did not make any quantitative analysis of the results. He felt that clinical interpretation of such a test is the responsibility of the psychologist, and that through working with the instrument and relating it to other clinical data, patterns, and variables of interpretation become increasingly clear.
Holsberg (9) also used a test of his own in an army psychiatric hospital. His test included some items from the original Tendler (33) test and some from Shor's (30). He reported that in choosing the tools that would be most appropriate to help the psychiatrist in determining the diagnostic evaluation of patients, the minimum battery of tests selected included a sentence completion test. He found that the chief advantage of using a standard battery of tests was that, with increasing familiarity with the same instruments, the psychiatrist and psychologist built up a background of knowledge which helped to evaluate each new case with greater ease. With continued experience, the significance of variations in response and performance became greater.

The Office of Strategic Services Assessment Program also used an incomplete sentences test, which consisted of 100 items and was usually given in two sessions. Symonds (32) in 1947 reported on a study of 50 cases, comparing the test results with the office records. He tentatively concluded that the test cannot be used to differentiate good and bad adjustment by direct comparison or psychometric methods. He did find, however, that the test can help to illuminate reports by pointing toward possible underlying trends, drives, and mechanisms, which may have caused the subject's present personality, behavior, and attitudes.
Murray and McKinnon (19), under whose direction the 100 item test studied by Symonds was developed, reported that it was one of the projective tests used in the general program of judging the suitability of candidates for a proposed assignment overseas.

In the publication by the Office of Strategic Services, called *Assessment of Men* (34) it was reported that:

One of a number of projective techniques tried out in the program it [the sentence completion method] was the only one in use at the end.

For most members of the staff, the task of interpreting a Sentence Completion Test and of writing a personality sketch took no more than half an hour, a remarkably short time compared to that required for scoring the Rorschach or Thematic Apperception Test. . . . The prestige of the instrument grew steadily as the interpreters and interviewers gained experience and skill in its use. . . . Fortified with the preview of the candidate gained through a study of his responses, the interviewer was able to make more efficient use of the limited time at his disposal and not infrequently to confirm significant aspects of the candidate's personality which might never have been uncovered without prior study of the sentence completions.

Stein (31), who worked under Murray and McKinnon in developing the 100 item test, reported on a study he made of it. This test was adopted for use at the New York Mental Hygiene Clinic of the Veterans Administration. Stein found that the sentence completion method has certain definite advantages. It is simple to administer, and few subjects refuse to take it. It frequently yields valuable material in cases where unimaginative patients have difficulty with the
Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test, and yield sterile records. He also pointed out that the method does not require such special training for ability to analyze the results as the Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Test. He found it valuable in offering clues to critical areas in the personality and some knowledge of behavior dynamics. He listed seven important factors to be taken into consideration in evaluating the test responses: "significance, frequency and rarity of responses, reaction time, erasures, omissions, and intensity of language."

Stein used different types of items, some beginning with the first person, some with the third person, and others with a proper name. He concluded that people are more likely to reveal their feelings when talking about somebody else than when completing sentences beginning with the first person.

Sacks (27), however, who made a special study to compare the value of sentence stems beginning with the first person with that of third person stems, came to a different conclusion. He found five out of six significant differences between the two were in favor of the first person form.

Rosenberg (22) used the Stein test in a study of the relationship between attitudes expressed toward the parent in the test and case history data. He administered the test to 72 male patients diagnosed as psychoneurotic. Scores of attitudes toward the father expressed in the test agreed in 58%
of the cases with scores given to similar attitudes elicited by the therapist, and attitudes toward the mother agreed in 69% of the cases.

In the Army Air Force convalescent hospitals a serious need was felt for a screening test that could be given to large groups to evaluate their adjustment in terms of psychological fitness for return to duty. The structured tests, such as personality inventories, had not proved discriminative enough. Rotter and Willerman (26) developed for this purpose an incomplete sentences test which was a modification of the tests used by Hutt, Shor, and Holzberg. Their revision had as its purpose the most economical test possible that would produce the most discriminative responses. In its final form it consisted of 40 items as unstructured as possible, e.g., "I," "Sometimes." They also decided that it was more advisable not to instruct subjects to respond as quickly as possible, as had been done in the previous army tests, since such instructions tended to make the test more like a word association test, and they were more interested in producing responses with content about the individual's personal feelings and attitudes. They, therefore, gave only the following instructions: "Complete these sentences to express your real feelings. Try to do every one. Be sure to make a complete sentence." Finally, they devised a method of scoring that would give consistent results with relatively untrained scorers.
A scoring manual was worked out with examples of typical responses for seven categories of scoring, placed on a single numerical scale. To test the validity of the instrument, data from 200 unselected patients were used. One of the authors classified the patients into three groups:

(a) those psychologically fit for return to duty;
(b) those unfit for immediate return, but who should benefit from convalescent care; and (c) those too disturbed for further service and needing psychiatric attention.

The classification was based on case history information, health and personality inventories, admission diagnosis, a test of mental disfunctioning, and a psychological interview. The author who classified the cases did not take part in scoring the test, in order to avoid bias. Interscorer reliability was tested by having seven psychology assistants score the same fifty records. The average correlation coefficient between scores given by pairs of raters was .89, which indicates that the test may be reliably scored by individuals without extensive training. Reliability was estimated by equivalent halves and was .85. The validity triserial coefficient was .61, indicating that the test provides an effective means for estimating the severity of the patient's psychological condition. Since the test can be administered to large groups and scored semi-objectively, it offered a valuable means for screening patients in need of psychiatric attention soon after their entrance. It also helped to throw
light on the patients' attitudes toward the hospital and the army.

In 1949, Rotter, Rafferty, and Schachtitz (25) adapted the army test of Rotter and Willerman for use with college students. Using the same general methods of scoring by example, they developed a manual for numerical scoring of the degree to which the individual was in need of personal therapy or counseling. The authors decided to use as a criterion group for the manual, fewer cases carefully selected and studied, rather than a large group which could be only poorly classified. Experienced psychologists were asked to classify each of 53 men and 58 women students as maladjusted, normal, or questionable. On the basis of the responses of these subjects, and the experience of one of the authors with the army test, the scoring weight of each example response was determined.

For validation of the test and the scoring manual, the records of 82 female and 123 male students were studied. Of the males, 78 were rated by their instructors as adjusted or maladjusted, and 45 were referrals for treatment. Of the females 72 were rated by their instructors and 10 were known to be maladjusted. These records were scored blindly by scorers who had no previous familiarity with the papers. For interscorer reliability, two scorers familiar with the method scored the same 50 male and 50 female records, and a coefficient
of .96 for the females and .91 for the males was obtained. These coefficients are very similar to that obtained for the army test, which was .89. For test reliability the equivalent halves method was again used, and the correlations of .84 and .83 were almost identical with that obtained in the army test, which was .85. The validity coefficients for biserial correlation were .77 for the males and .66 for the females, which were higher than the triserial correlation coefficient for the army test, which was .61. A cutting score of 135 correctly identified 68% of the maladjusted females and 80% of the adjusted, and 69% of the maladjusted males and 89% of the adjusted. The results justify the conclusion of the authors that this test appears to be promising for use with college students for a variety of screening and experimental problems. The similarity of the results with those obtained by Rotter and Willerman (26) suggests that this method of scoring by example can be put to good use. They also found that in general, maladjusted individuals take the test seriously, and it gives these individuals an opportunity to express their feeling of need for help. Thus the test provides significant material for clinical evaluation of individual subjects as well as serving as a screening device. The authors also emphasize the flexibility of the technique and the possibility of adapting it for use in industry and schools and various other situations.
Another study of the reliability and validity of the Rotter ISB for college students was made by Churchill and Crandall (3). Their purpose was to determine: (a) What is the interscorer reliability among scorers with limited psychological experience, not trained by the authors of the test? (b) How consistent is performance on the test over varying periods of time? Does it measure relatively stable personal characteristics, so that its use as a screening instrument is justified? (c) Are the normative data presented in the manual applicable to other colleges? (d) How well does the test identify adjusted and maladjusted students? Do students who score high in the maladjusted category later manifest difficulties in adjustment?

The results of this study were as follows:

1. Three scorers, none of whom had had graduate training or extensive experience, scored 40 randomly chosen records of freshman women. The scorers were trained by one of the authors, using the directions and examples given in the manual. The interscorer correlation compared favorably with that reported by Rotter, Rafferty, and Schachtitz (25). The authors concluded, therefore, that high interscorer agreement can be obtained with minimal psychological training.

2. Test re-test performance showed no consistent pattern of difference, and the indications were that the Rotter ISB
measures more than "momentary moods or reactive states."

3. The norms presented in the manual may be found to be applicable in a variety of college settings.

4. The test given at college entrance did differentiate students who sought psychological counseling within a period of two years after entrance, from those who did not. Moderate screening validity was indicated.

These results confirm the conclusions of Rotter, Rafferty, and Schachtitz.

Morton (18) used the Rotter ISB, College Form, to measure improvement in therapy. He compared a group of 19 who were tested for improvement after three months of therapy, with a matched control group not given any treatment. The biserial correlation between incomplete sentences and treated or untreated groups was .50. Rotter (23) comments as follows on this study:

Since the tests were scored blindly by someone other than the investigator, these results suggest a profitable employment of the incomplete sentences method for appraisal of degree of maladjustment and efficacy of treatment.

In 1948, Kline (13) reported on the use of a sentence completion test for screening applicants for vocational advice. On the basis of the sentence completions the subjects were divided into two categories, adjusted and maladjusted. Four criteria of adjustment were used for comparison, and high correlations between the criteria set up and the adjusted
group were obtained. An interscorer reliability coefficient of .86 among several examiners scoring the test was reported.

In 1949 Hadley and Kennedy (7) investigated the relationship between conflict as measured by a sentence completion test and academic achievement. Their hypothesis was that conflict as measured by the test would be significantly different in two groups of college students of equal ability but markedly divergent scholastic achievement. They used part one of the test described by Stein (31), and scored the responses according to the method of Rotter and Willerman (26), which they modified by using only three categories of responses. Their results indicated a relatively high degree of agreement between two scorers in estimating the conflict reflected by the responses. They concluded that the use of a sentence completion test to identify students who may do poorly in college course work because of emotional immaturity seems promising.

Costin and Eiserer (4) constructed a 40 item test for the specific purpose of eliciting students' attitudes toward school life. They tried it out on 74 eleventh grade pupils and found that the sentence completion method has significant possibilities as a technique for investigating "school morale."

Wilson (35) attempted to construct a sentence completion test that would have value as a screening devise to select maladjusted high school pupils who were in need of personal help,
and potential well adjusted leaders. She made a study of a
test of 40 items suggesting feeling tones and attitudes, but
the number of subjects she used was very small (22 pupils).
On the basis of her very limited data she found that the test
was not very useful as a screening instrument, but was very
valuable as an aid to understanding adolescents. She sug-
gested that one of the difficulties in trying to validate
such a test is that "opinions differ as to what constitutes
maladjustment in a secondary school pupil."

Kimball (13) in 1952 used the sentence completion tech-
nique in a study of scholastic underachievement. She used a
test of 50 items, some original and some not, and her subjects
were 17 adolescent boys at a private preparatory school, who
were of high intelligence, but failing in their school work,
and a control group of 100 subjects, randomly selected from
the total school population. In her summary the author states:

The study suggests that the sentence completion
technique is helpful for testing hypotheses raised
as a result of more complete personality studies.

In the particular experiment, two hypotheses
were examined, using the Sentence Completion test,
with the following results:

1. A significantly higher number of under-
achievers revealed an essentially negative rela-
tionship with their fathers than did a control
population.

2. Aggressive feelings were a source of guilt
and anxiety more frequently among the underachievers
than in the total population, and the underachievers
were less able to give direct, effective expression
to their negative feelings.
Lindgren (15) made an exploratory study of the value of an incomplete sentences test for college instructors to find out whether they are making any real changes in the students' attitudes. He chose the method as the most appropriate projective test from the "standpoints of convenience of administration, lack of threat to the subject, and the ease with which the stimulus materials could be related to the course." He concluded that the data lend support to the hypothesis that projective techniques such as the incomplete sentences test can be used to elicit attitudes normally suppressed or repressed in response to conventional questionnaires.

Luft (17) took part in a study to measure the adjustment of patients to hospital environment. The experimenters sought a projective technique that would find out how the patients really feel in the areas of attitudes to general hospital conditions, to the staff, to other patients, and to their own diseases, in order to test the hypothesis that adjustment of patients to hospital environment varies according to their illness. They selected the sentence completion procedure as the most practical, efficient method for this purpose. They found that incomplete sentences can be structured so that attitudes on fairly specific topics can be elicited, and that responses can be reliably scored by clinical psychologists working independently.
Friesen (6) made a careful study of the use of an incomplete sentences test in measuring employee attitudes. He used a test of 81 items, 18 of which were taken from the Rotter ISB, College Form. The findings of this study suggested that attitudes measured by the test are related to actual behavior, and that the method can be used to study the reasons for employee behavior.

In the Michigan study of prediction of performance in clinical psychology described by Kelley and Fiske (11), a form of sentence completion test was developed by Bronfenbreuner and Hutt to elicit information in various areas of personality, such as parents and home, guilt, hostility, etc. The following was reported:

Predictions based on individual projective tests as well as those based on an integration of data from all four projective tests (Rorschach, Thematic Apperception Test, Bender Visual Motor Gestalt, and Sentence Completion) yielded relatively low correlations with the rated criteria. Interestingly enough, the one showing the most promising validities is a sentence completion test, with which our projectivists had had but little previous experience. Furthermore the Sentence Completion and Thematic Apperception Test were administered in groups and were interpreted "blind," whereas the Rorschach and the Bender-Gestalt were interpreted by the person who administered the technique individually to the candidate.

In 1954 Cromwell and Lundy (5) carried out a research study to devise a sentence completion test with stems consistently most productive for use in neuro-psychiatric hospitals of the Veterans Administration. They investigated
various factors in relation to their effect on the productivity of the hypotheses for the test as a whole. They tried out 65 stems, 40 of which were taken from the Rotter ISB, Adult Form. They dropped 20 items which showed the poorest productivity. The final selection of 45 stems was a compromise between the goals of high productivity and optimal test length, and was considered most appropriate for the purpose. Among other results, they found that instructions emphasizing the expression of real feelings showed no significant difference in productivity from those emphasizing speed. While no single factor was found to differentiate the most productive from the poorest stems, a few patterns were noted. (a) Many of the good stems referred to the first person, and many of the poor stems had third person or impersonal reference. (b) Poor stems often referred to activities with little emotional involvement, and good stems were built around hostilities, worries, troubles, and fears. (c) Poor stems referred more often to past situations, and good stems dealt more with the present and the future.

The most recent publication on the subject of the sentence completion method is a book by Rohde (21) published in 1957. She describes the present version of the Rohde Sentence Completion Method which was developed as a result of fifteen years of clinical use of the original 1940 Rohde test (20). It consists of 65 items,
... utilizing those stimulus phrases from the previous form which have been found valuable, modifying or discarding those which had a tendency to produce stereotypic and/or insignificant responses, and adding new items to elicit information from areas of behavior reactions which appeared to have been insufficiently stimulated.

A detailed description is given of the methods of analysis, scoring, and interpretation used, and of the standardization of the original test. A new study is also reported, made in 1953, of seventy ninth grade pupils in a Los Angeles junior high school. From this study norms were obtained for the present version of the test by comparing results with those of the New York ninth grade pupils used in the original study.

The latter part of the book seeks to demonstrate the differentiation of well-adjusted, psychoneurotic, and psychotic subjects by means of the Rohde Sentence Completion Method.

Rohde pointed out that all but four of her original 64 items were used, either in identical or similar form, in one or more of various versions of the sentence completion method, including those of Shor (30), Stein (31), Rotter and Willerman (26), the 0.S.S. (34), and the Michigan Study (11).

A number of recent studies have been reviewed here illustrating the extensive use and possibilities of the incomplete sentences method for a variety of purposes. Since the present study is particularly concerned with the use of the
Rotter ISB, High School Form, the review of the literature will be concluded with the validation study of this test made by Rotter, Rafferty, and Lotsof (24) in 1954.

In adapting the Rotter ISB for high school pupils, a few of the items were changed from the college form (25), and scoring manuals were developed in a similar manner. The reliability and validity of the test were investigated, using one-half of the population of a high school in Columbus, Ohio. These subjects were randomly selected, with equal representation from each grade. For test reliability study, an odd-even reliability estimate was made, using 50 male and 50 female cases, randomly selected. The coefficients obtained were .74 for boys and .86 for girls. These are minimal estimates, since odd-even halves are not truly matched halves. Interscorer reliability was estimated by having the two junior authors score 50 female and 50 male records. The coefficients were .96 for girls and .97 for boys, which are very similar to those obtained for the college form (25). For test validity, three measures were applied: (a) The test scores were compared to ratings of adjustment made by the examiners on the basis of interviews with students and teachers. It was pointed out, however, that the interviews were collected slowly over a long period of time, so that many were given more than a year later. The ratings thus made could not be expected to correlate very highly with the test scores. (b) The test scores
were correlated with scores on sociometrics administered on the same day to the same population. (c) Additional samples of children known to be maladjusted were collected from three sources. These had all been referred to psychological clinics for serious disturbances. The mean scores for these groups, 55 boys and 33 girls, were compared to those of a randomly selected sample of the same number of boys and girls from the normal high school population.

The results of the first two measures of validity were low but positive correlations. For 45 subjects on whom interview material was available the coefficients were .20 for boys and .37 for girls. The correlation of sociometric scores with test scores for 68 boys was .20 and for 70 girls, .32. The sociometric scores and the adjustment ratings based on interviews correlated with each other more highly than the scores on the Incomplete Sentences Blank with either of these. The authors' opinion is:

It seems likely that both adjustment ratings and sociometric scores tend to be biased in terms of objective evidences of accomplishment, while the Incomplete Sentences Blank assesses primarily the subjects' perceptions of his adequacy and potential satisfaction.

The third measure of validity indicated that the test discriminated with high efficiency between selected groups of maladjusted cases and a random selection of high school pupils.
The authors concluded that the results were promising but not conclusive. The low correlations within the high school population were attributed to the weakness of the criteria.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Description of the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank, High School Form, and scoring method. The Form used in the present experiment is a slightly modified version of the college form (25). Several of the stems were changed to be more suitable to the age level of high school pupils. It consists of 40 unstructured sentence stems, such as "I . . . ," "A mother . . .," "Boys . . . ." The directions on the blank are:

Complete these sentences to express your real feelings. Try to do every one. Be sure to make a complete sentence.

The test is suitable for administration to groups and in writing, although in special cases it may be administered individually and orally.

The scoring system is that of scoring by example. Since no manual has been published for this form of the test, a copy of the examples for scoring developed in the validation study reviewed above (24) was obtained from the senior author, Dr. J. B. Rotter. A numerical weight from 0 to 6 is assigned to each sentence and the total of these is the overall score for the record. The scoring examples illustrate
sentence completions of all weights for each item, and represent common responses, to guide the assignment of weights. Scoring principles are also given to aid the scorer in assigning the correct weight when similar statements cannot be found in the scoring examples. These principles are as follows (24):

(a) Omissions and incomplete thoughts are not scored, since from the experience of the authors, it was found that omissions appear as frequently in the records of adjusted subjects as in those of the maladjusted. After the total score is obtained for the completed sentences, the unscored items are prorated by the formula \( \frac{40}{(40 - \text{omissions})} \) times the total score. If there are more than 20 omissions, the paper is considered unscorable.

(b) Conflict responses are those indicating a maladjusted frame of mind. These are characterized by "expression of social, sexual, physical, or intelligence inadequacy; over-attachment to, over-concern about, or hostility toward parents, expression of neurotic symptoms, social withdrawal, concern over moral standards." Responses range from \( C_1 \) to \( C_3 \) according to the severity of the maladjustment expressed, and the numerical weights assigned are \( C_1 = 4, C_2 = 5, C_3 = 6 \).

(c) Positive responses are those indicating a healthy frame of mind. They include "expression of self-acceptance, social adequacy, wide interests, humor, participation in social activities." Responses are scored according to the degree of
adjustment expressed: $P_1 = 2, P_2 = 1,$ and $P_3 = 0.$

(d) Neutral responses are those not falling clearly into either of the above categories. These include "cliches," stereotypes, factual statements, responses given with equal frequency by adjusted and maladjusted. These "N" responses are scored 3.

(e) Each response is scored independently of all others, except when there is a clear-cut reference to a previous statement. Such independent scoring is necessary in order to avoid "halo" effect and bias, since there is a tendency to rate all responses in accordance with the over-all picture of adjustment or maladjustment.

(f) Unusually long responses are given an additional point in the direction of "C," since it was found that the "maladjusted individual often writes long, involved sentences, as if compelled to express himself fully and not be misunderstood."

**Administration of the test.** The test was administered to all the ninth grade pupils (299) and all the low seventh grade pupils of the California Junior High School who were present on the day of administration. The pupils were assembled in two group sessions, the high ninth grade at one time, and the low ninth grade and low seventh grade, two days later. They were seated in the assembly room in alternate seats, with writing boards attached.
Directions were given by the experimenter as follows:

This is an experiment I am trying out in connection with my studies at Sacramento State College. I need your cooperation so that I can find out whether a sentence completion blank is useful for helping pupils of your age. You will be given a paper with a number of beginnings of sentences, and you are asked to complete them all, and to express your real feelings. I need your names on the papers for study purposes, but they are only for my use. The papers will not be seen by your teachers, or counselors, or anyone else.

Let me assure you that this is not a test in grammar or spelling, and any mistakes you may make will not concern me. I am interested only in the ideas and feelings you express, so please try to express your own thoughts.

The intent of these directions was obviously to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of the pupils, and to minimize any anxiety or constraint that might prevent them from revealing their real feelings. The same goal could be achieved when the test is being used for school purposes, by administering it in the homeroom classes and not requiring the pupils to sign their names, but using a coding system for identification.

Validity and reliability measures. The test blanks were scored by the examiner, who had no previous knowledge about the pupils.

The four counselors in the school were then requested to rate the ninth grade pupils in their charge as well-adjusted or maladjusted. It was left to the counselors to use whatever
sources were available to them to help them make these judgments. The ninth grade pupils assigned to each counselor had been in his or her charge since they entered the school as seventh grade pupils. The homeroom system in the school provided that the same homeroom teacher also had the same class for all three years. It was expected that the counselors would consult with the homeroom teachers in making their judgments. The counselors also had at their disposal the cumulative records of their charges, and the results of a battery of tests administered to all ninth grade pupils, including various aptitude tests and the California Test of Personality. In accordance with the school program, the counselors had also had an individual interview with each ninth grade pupil during the year. It therefore seemed reasonable to expect that the counselors could give a fairly valid rating of the pupils' total adjustment as either positive or negative. These ratings were used as a criterion with which the scores of the test blanks were compared, to determine the validity of the test in differentiating maladjusted from adjusted pupils. A bi-serial correlation was computed between the ratings of the counselors and the scores.

Thirty boys' and thirty girls' records, randomly selected from the low seventh grade papers, were used as a sample to compare the distributions of seventh grade scores with those

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2Willis W. Clark, Ernest W. Tegs, and Louis P. Thorpe, California Test of Personality, Intermediate, Form AA, 1953 Revision (Los Angeles, California: California Test Bureau).
of the ninth grade. The means of the two sets of scores for boys and girls were compared statistically to determine whether there was a significant difference between them. If no significant difference were found, the possibilities that the test was as practical and feasible for use with seventh grade as with ninth grade pupils would be increased.

For testing interscorer reliability, 50 boys' and 50 girls' blanks, randomly selected with approximately proportionate representation from the high ninth, low ninth, and low seventh grades, were independently scored by two other competent scorers. One was the Test Officer at Sacramento State College and the other the psychometrist in the same office. Correlations were computed between scores given by pairs of scorers.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. RESULTS

Of the 299 ninth grade papers turned in, 13 were discarded as unscorable because there were more than 20 omissions. The number scored was thus 286, 143 boys and 143 girls. Of the boys, 39 of the 143 were rated by their counselors as maladjusted, and 22 of the 143 girls were so rated. The biserial correlations between the ratings and the scores were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ninth Grade Boys and Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Null hypothesis 1 cannot be rejected. The biserial correlation coefficient for the boys was positive but low, and for the girls, positive but very low. The test did not prove to be valid for differentiating maladjusted from adjusted ninth grade pupils, under the conditions of the present experiment.

The comparison of the means of ninth and seventh grade pupils produced the following results:
Null hypothesis 2 cannot be rejected. The differences found between the means of the seventh and ninth grade scores were not significant. The indication is that the test would probably be no less feasible for use with low seventh grade pupils than with ninth grade pupils.

Interscorer reliability was tested by comparing the scores obtained by the experimenter with those given by two independent scorers for a random sample of 50 boys' and 50 girls' records. Correlations were computed between scores given by pairs of scorers as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimenter and Scorer I</th>
<th>Experimenter and Scorer II</th>
<th>Scorer I and Scorer II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. DISCUSSION

There are several possible factors to consider in accounting for the low correlations found between the counselors' ratings and the scores on the test for the ninth grade pupils.
1. The weakness of the criterion is probably the most important factor. Since the means and standard deviations of the girls' and boys' distributions were very similar, the great discrepancy between the correlation coefficients of the boys and girls must be attributed to some factor in the judgments of the counselors. Since of the boys 39 were rated as maladjusted, and of the girls only 22 were so rated, the indications are that the girls were less apt to show aggression in behavior so that their maladjustment was not evident to the counselors.

The problem of finding a good criterion is a very common and troublesome one in attempting to validate personality tests. As Wilson (35) suggests: "One of the difficulties in trying to validate a test as a diagnostic instrument is differing opinions as to what constitutes maladjustment in a secondary school pupil."

Rotter, Rafferty, and Lotsof (24) also pointed out the difficulty they encountered of "discriminating between individuals whose test responses seem to indicate considerable disturbance, and yet are not easily discriminable from other boys and girls in terms of their behavior." An example can be cited from the present experiment to illustrate this difficulty. Among the boys whose scores on the test were extremely high, indicating considerable maladjustment, there were four boys of Oriental parentage; yet none of these was rated as
maladjusted by the counselors. The explanation that seems obvious is that these boys, because of cultural factors, do not "act out" their conflicts. Some of the responses of one of these boys are quoted here:

My mind ... is a confused membrane.
I wish ... I were dead sometimes.
Sometimes ... I feel like being unborn.

It is evident that this boy needs help.

2. The age level investigated in the present study seems to be a factor in accounting for the lack of validity found here, as well as in the preliminary study of the high school form (24). For the adult (26) and college (25), (3) forms of the test were found to be valid and reliable instruments for discriminating maladjusted subjects.

As Rotter, Rafferty, and Lotsof (24) pointed out:

The concept of maladjustment in an adolescent is still one which requires considerable investigation, probably of longitudinal nature, before sensitive tests may be devised to select maladjusted individuals in a presumably normal population.

3. The scoring system used with the Rotter ISB may not be sensitive enough for the adolescent age range. Rotter (24) emphasizes the importance of scoring each sentence independently, to avoid rating all responses in accordance with the over-all picture of adjustment or maladjustment. Rohde (21), on the other hand, suggests for her test that

... analysis of test responses be made in view of the paper as a whole, rather than in a sentence to sentence approach. This results in greater
validity, since every response is necessarily interrelated with every other response in an individual's formulation.

She feels that interpretation cannot be achieved "by consulting a handbook of scores, without genuine understanding of the theory of personality and psychopathology." While her system of scoring by analysis of personality variables is more complicated than Rotter's and requires more psychological training and understanding for competency in scoring, it suggests that it may be necessary to sacrifice some simplicity and ease for the sake of more sensitive assessment of adolescent personality.

Although the Rotter ISB, High School Form, has not been proven to be a valid screening instrument for adolescents, the indications are that it is a very valuable instrument for analysis and interpretation of individual records. On the whole, the responses of the pupils in the present experiment appeared to be candid expressions of their true feelings and offered a rich fund of material for analysis in understanding individual personality problems. As Rotter points out in the Manual for the College Form,

The sentence completions can be interpreted from a common sense point of view or at a symbolic psychoanalytic level; they can be analyzed according to the Murray system of needs and pressures or by the Social Learning system of hierarchy of goals. 3

School counselors could gain much information from responses of pupils which would be very valuable in helping students who appear to be in need of guidance.

Some apparently significant responses from a few records will serve to illustrate the kind of material revealed.

One boy whose score was among the highest, indicating severe maladjustment, and who was also rated by the counselor as maladjusted, gave the following responses:

Other kids ... do not seem to appreciate my great and efficacious principles.
I suffer ... because I am not endowed with sufficient earthly power.
Sometimes ... people mock me, but I do not care, for I know that I am better than they are, at any rate.
I hate ... all people.
I ... am very conceited and proud of myself and my attributes.

Another boy whose score did not indicate maladjustment, and who was not rated as maladjusted, revealed in several responses exaggerated concern with the problem of health.

The best thing ... in the world is health.
I hate ... surgery.
I wish ... I could have a strong body.
My father ... has good health.

On girl whose score indicated a healthy adjustment and yet was rated as maladjustment gave the following responses:

The happiest time ... is with my friends and family.
I am very ... independent, me.
I ... want to get a lot out of life.
At school ... I have a B average, but I don't like to take orders.
These suggest that she came into conflict with authority because of her independent spirit, but that on the whole she is a happy, well-adjusted person.

Another girl whose score showed maladjustment gave the following responses:

I need ... someone to understand me.
Sometimes ... I feel that no one wants me.
I suffer ... because I'm smarter than most people.
At school ... people think I'm a trifle wacky.
I am best when ... I'm in class because they make me study.
I ... am lazy; I could do so much, if I tried.
The future ... troubles me greatly, but I put it out of my mind.

These illustrations demonstrate that by studying the records, without attempting to score them, counselors could learn a great deal about their charges, that they otherwise have very little opportunity of finding out, and could gain understanding of how the pupil functions as a unified personality.

The correlations obtained for interscorer reliability were somewhat lower than those found in the college (25) and high school (24) validation studies. However, considering that the scorers in the present experiment were guided solely by the scoring principles and examples provided by the author of the test, the correlations are sufficiently high to indicate that the scoring system is reasonably objective.

In comparing the three pairs of scores, it may be noted that the correlations for the first pair for both boys
and girls are the highest, and that of the other two pairs, those for the girls are the lowest. These differences may be accounted for by the fact that the experimenter and scorer I are female and scorer II is male. Evidently the scoring system does not completely preclude individual bias.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

The Rotter ISB, High School Form, was administered to all the ninth grade pupils and a sample of the seventh grade pupils of the California Junior High School in Sacramento. The scores of the ninth grade pupils were correlated with ratings of these pupils as adjusted or maladjusted, made by the counselors. The purpose was to determine whether the test was a valid instrument for differentiating maladjusted pupils in a junior high school population, so that they could be given the counseling help they were in need of as early in their school career as possible.

II. CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of this experiment, the Rotter ISB, High School Form, could not be recommended for use in the seventh grade of a junior high school, to differentiate maladjusted from well-adjusted pupils. Since the Adult Form and the College Form of the Rotter ISB were shown to be reliable and valid instruments as indicators of maladjustment, the lack of validity appearing for the High School Form in the present
study may be attributed to the weakness of the criterion, and/or the difficulties involved in assessing adolescents.

The consensus of findings of many of the studies reviewed in this paper suggests that the sentence completion method is a very valuable and useful one for adult screening purposes, and as an aid to clinical interpretation in varied situations.

The indications of the present experiment are that, although the Rotter ISB did not prove to be valid as a screening instrument, it offers considerable value as an aid to understanding individual problems of adolescent youth and to fruitful counseling and guidance.


APPENDIX
INCOMPLETE SENTENCES BLANK – HIGH SCHOOL FORM

Name................................................................................................................................. Sex........... Age

School......................................................................................................................... Grade........... Date

Complete these sentences to express your real feelings. Try to do every one.
Be sure to make a complete sentence.

1. I like ........................................................................................................................................

2. The happiest time ........................................................................................................................

3. I want to know ............................................................................................................................

4. At home ........................................................................................................................................

5. I regret ........................................................................................................................................

6. At bedtime ....................................................................................................................................

7. Boys ...........................................................................................................................................

8. The best ........................................................................................................................................

9. What annoys me ............................................................................................................................

10. People .........................................................................................................................................

11. A mother ....................................................................................................................................

12. I feel ............................................................................................................................................

13. My greatest fear ............................................................................................................................

14. In the lower grades ......................................................................................................................

15. I can’t ...........................................................................................................................................

(TURN PAGE OVER AND CONTINUE)
16. Sports
17. When I was younger
18. My nerves
19. Other kids
20. I suffer
21. I failed
22. Reading
23. My mind
24. The future
25. I need
26. Dating
27. I am best when
28. Sometimes
29. What pains me
30. I hate
31. At school
32. I am very
33. The only trouble
34. I wish
35. My father
36. I secretly
37. I
38. Dancing
39. My greatest worry is
40. Most girls