

# An Approximate Method for the Determination of Polymer–Polymer Interaction Parameters of Incompatible Polymers in Solution

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## Synopsis

A method is developed, based on Scott's equations for ternary systems of two polymers and a mutual solvent, for the calculation of values of the polymer–polymer interaction parameter,  $\chi_{23}$ , for systems in which both polymer–solvent interaction parameters  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$  are not known *a priori*. Equilibrium phase studies were carried out on ternary systems of polystyrene, polybutadiene, and tetrahydrofuran or toluene at 23°C and 1 atm. Typical interaction parameter values ( $\chi_{23}$ ) calculated by this new method were compared with the values of  $\chi_{23}$  determined earlier using standard equations and known  $\chi_{12}$  values for these systems, and were found to agree very well. It is concluded that the technique presented in this article can be used for mixed polymer systems in good mutual solvents where neither polymer–solvent interaction parameter is known, for determining an approximate value of the  $\chi_{23}$  parameter alone.

## INTRODUCTION

There has been an ever growing interest in the studies relating to polymer–polymer incompatibility and subsequent phase separation during the last four decades. Numerous investigations dealing with polymer–polymer incompatibility in a common solvent have been conducted.<sup>1–24</sup> In particular, phase separation between the two incompatible polymers, polystyrene (PS) and polybutadiene (PBD), has industrial importance and has been studied in solutions by several workers.<sup>11–14, 18–21, 24</sup> In our laboratories, gel permeation chromatography (GPC) using sequential differential refractive index (RI) and ultraviolet absorbance (UV) detectors has been successfully used to give the analysis of the composition of each of the conjugate phases in the incompatible system of PS and PBD with tetrahydrofuran (THF) or toluene as mutual solvent.<sup>21, 25</sup> A detailed discussion of the experimental procedures and of the determination of the tie lines, the binodal curve, and the plait point has been given in our earlier publications.<sup>20, 21, 26</sup>

In our earlier communications<sup>25, 27</sup> typical values of the polymer–polymer interaction parameter ( $\chi_{23}$ ) determined from the quantitative analysis of mixtures of PS and PBD in THF and toluene using GPC were presented. This parameter is useful in characterizing the incompatibility of the two polymers. It should be noted here that the value of one of the single polymer–solvent

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interaction parameters,  $\chi_{12}$ , for the binary mixture of PS and solvent was obtained from the literature<sup>28,29</sup> and used in the equations to determine  $\chi_{23}$ .

The object of the present work is to estimate  $\chi_{23}$  for any system for which both single polymer-solvent interaction parameters  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$  are unknown.

The theoretical basis for the determination of  $\chi_{23}$  from phase equilibrium data, without *a priori* knowledge of both  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$ , is discussed in the following section.

## THEORY

The Flory-Huggins expression for the Gibbs free energy of mixing,  $\Delta G_m$ , for a system consisting of two polymers and one solvent reads

$$\frac{\Delta G_m}{RT} = n_1 \ln \phi_1 + n_2 \ln \phi_2 + n_3 \ln \phi_3 + (\chi_{12}\phi_1\phi_2 + \chi_{13}\phi_1\phi_3 + \chi_{23}\phi_2\phi_3)(m_1n_1 + m_2n_2 + m_3n_3) \quad (1)$$

where  $n_i$  is the number of moles of  $i$ th component in the mixture,  $\phi_i$  is the volume fraction of  $i$ th component,  $\chi_{ij}$  is the Flory-Huggins interaction parameter, and  $m_i$  is the ratio of the molar volume of  $i$  to that of the reference component (solvent). Subscripts 2 and 3 denote polymers 2 and 3, and 1 denotes the solvent. The chemical potentials of each component, as discussed by Tompa,<sup>5b</sup> can be obtained by differentiation of the Gibbs free energy of mixing with respect to  $n$ . Three equations can be obtained by equating the chemical potentials of each component in the conjugate phases. These equations are then simplified to give the following equations as obtained by Allen et al.<sup>11</sup> Denoting the two conjugate phases by single and double primes, we have

$$\chi_{23}[(\phi_2' - \phi_2'') - (\phi_1'' - \phi_1')] - \chi_{13}[(\phi_2' - \phi_2'') - (\phi_1'' - \phi_1')] + \chi_{12}[(\phi_2' - \phi_2'') + (\phi_1'' - \phi_1')] = \ln(\phi_1''/\phi_1') - (1/m_2)\ln(\phi_2''/\phi_2') \quad (2)$$

$$\chi_{23}[(\phi_3'' - \phi_3') + (\phi_1'' - \phi_1')] + \chi_{13}[(\phi_3'' - \phi_3') - (\phi_1'' - \phi_1')] - \chi_{12}[(\phi_3'' - \phi_3') + (\phi_1'' - \phi_1')] = (1/m_3)\ln(\phi_3''/\phi_3') - \ln(\phi_1''/\phi_1') \quad (3)$$

Thus, we have essentially only two equations [viz. eqs. (2) and (3)] but three unknowns ( $\chi_{12}$ ,  $\chi_{13}$ , and  $\chi_{23}$ ) for a single equilibrium tie line. Hence the value of either  $\chi_{12}$  or  $\chi_{13}$  must normally be known in order to calculate  $\chi_{23}$ . Otherwise, some assumptions will have to be made.

One such approach, as described in the following paragraphs, is to solve for the three interaction parameters using the tie lines in adjacent pairs. Two adjacent tie lines were taken. Thus we have the compositions of four phases, four applicable equations, and six unknown interaction parameters. The assumptions made to reduce the six unknown interaction parameters to four were:

1.  $\chi_{12}$  remains essentially constant for the two adjacent tie lines.
2.  $\chi_{13}$  also remains the same for the two tie lines.
3.  $\chi_{23}$  varies, that is, the values of  $\chi_{23}$  for the two tie lines are different.

We let  $\chi_{23,A}$  and  $\chi_{23,B}$  be the values of the two polymer-polymer interaction parameters for any two adjacent tie lines A and B, respectively. Using the subscripts A and B to indicate the equilibrium compositions of the phases corresponding to tie lines A and B, we can write eq. (2) as

$$\begin{aligned} &\chi_{23,A}[(\phi'_2 - \phi''_2) - (\phi'_1 - \phi'_1)]_A - \chi_{13}[(\phi'_2 - \phi''_2) - (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_A \\ &+ \chi_{12}[(\phi'_2 - \phi''_2) + (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_A = \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_1}{\phi'_1} \right]_A - \frac{1}{m_2} \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_2}{\phi'_2} \right]_A \end{aligned} \quad (2a)$$

$$\begin{aligned} &\chi_{23,B}[(\phi'_2 - \phi''_2) - (\phi'_1 - \phi'_1)]_B - \chi_{13}[(\phi'_2 - \phi''_2) - (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_B \\ &+ \chi_{12}[(\phi'_2 - \phi''_2) + (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_B = \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_1}{\phi'_1} \right]_B - \frac{1}{m_2} \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_2}{\phi'_2} \right]_B \end{aligned} \quad (2b)$$

Similarly eq. (3) gives

$$\begin{aligned} &\chi_{23,A}[(\phi''_3 - \phi'_3) + (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_A + \chi_{13}[(\phi''_3 - \phi'_3) - (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_A \\ &- \chi_{12}[(\phi''_3 - \phi'_3) + (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_A = \frac{1}{m_3} \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_3}{\phi'_3} \right]_A - \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_1}{\phi'_1} \right]_A \end{aligned} \quad (3a)$$

$$\begin{aligned} &\chi_{23,B}[(\phi''_3 - \phi'_3) + (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_B + \chi_{13}[(\phi''_3 - \phi'_3) - (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_B \\ &- \chi_{12}[(\phi''_3 - \phi'_3) + (\phi''_1 - \phi'_1)]_B = \frac{1}{m_3} \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_3}{\phi'_3} \right]_B - \ln \left[ \frac{\phi''_1}{\phi'_1} \right]_B \end{aligned} \quad (3b)$$

Thus we have four equations to solve simultaneously for the four unknowns, namely  $\chi_{23,A}$ ,  $\chi_{23,B}$ ,  $\chi_{12}$ , and  $\chi_{13}$ .

The assumption that  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$ , respectively, remain the same for two adjacent tie lines seems to be a reasonable one in light of the literature values for  $\chi_{12}$  as a function of concentration in the binary system PS-toluene.<sup>28</sup>

## EXPERIMENTAL

The polymers used in this study were obtained from commercial sources. These polymers were employed as received with no further purification or pretreatment. The characteristics of the commercial PS samples supplied by Pressure Chemical Co. are given in Table I, and those of the PBD samples supplied by Phillips Petroleum Co. are given in Table II. The PS and PBD samples used are of narrow molecular weight distribution.

Toluene and THF were used as mutual solvents in the various systems studied, while THF was also used as the GPC eluent. Both solvents were "Baker-analyzed" reagent grade, supplied by J. T. Baker Chemical Co., and used as received.

A detailed discussion of the experimental procedure adopted for the quantitative analysis of the conjugate phases of the incompatible system of PS and

TABLE I  
Characteristics of Polystyrene Samples

Sample	Supplier's data <sup>a</sup>			Calculated data <sup>a</sup>		
	$\bar{M}_w \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_n \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_w/\bar{M}_n$	$\bar{M}_w \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_n \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_w/\bar{M}_n$
PS 9000	9.18	9.17	< 1.06	—	—	—
PS 37,000	33.0	36.0	< 1.06	36.8	32.0	1.15
PS 100,000	100.0	100.0	< 1.06	87.3	70.7	1.23
PS 110,000	110.0	110.0	< 1.06	123.6	107.8	1.15

<sup>a</sup> GPC measurements.

TABLE II  
Characteristics of Polybutadiene Samples

Sample	Supplier's data <sup>a</sup>			Calculated data <sup>b</sup>		
	$\bar{M}_w \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_n \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_w/\bar{M}_n$	$\bar{M}_w \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_n \times 10^{-3}$	$\bar{M}_w/\bar{M}_n$
PBD 17 M <sup>c</sup>	17.0 ± 1.7	16.0 ± 1.6	1.06	—	—	—
PBD 170 M <sup>d</sup>	170.0 ± 17	135.0 ± 13	1.26	—	—	—
PBD 54941 <sup>e</sup>	161.0	150	1.07	1.30	115.0	1.13

<sup>a</sup> Supplier's data for PBD 17 M, PBD 170 M, and PBD 54941 were provided by Phillips' Petroleum Co.

<sup>b</sup> GPC measurements.

<sup>c</sup> 43.5% cis, 49.1% trans, 7.4% vinyl, 0.05% antioxidant.

<sup>d</sup> 47.1% cis, 44.5% trans, 8.4% vinyl, 0.4% antioxidant.

<sup>e</sup> 38% cis, 53% trans, 9.0% vinyl, 0.3% antioxidant.

TABLE III  
Interaction Parameters for the PS 110,000/PBD 170 M/THF System

Tie line no.	Wt % solvent (mean)	Volume fraction of conjugate phases						$\chi_{12}^a$	$\chi_{13}$	$\chi_{23}$
		$\phi_1'$	$\phi_2'$	$\phi_3'$	$\phi_1''$	$\phi_2''$	$\phi_3''$			
1	79.49	0.809	0.023	0.169	0.823	0.169	0.009	0.445	0.472	0.008
2	80.41	0.820	0.022	0.159	0.830	0.164	0.007	0.445	0.466	0.010
3	85.97	0.881	0.011	0.108	0.870	0.126	0.004	0.445	0.415	0.014
4	91.12	0.924	0.011	0.065	0.920	0.074	0.007	0.445	0.419	0.020
5	93.41	0.940	0.015	0.045	0.944	0.043	0.014	0.445	0.462	0.022

<sup>a</sup>Schulz and Bauman.<sup>29</sup>

TABLE IV  
Interaction Parameters for the PS 37,000/PBD 170 M/THF System

Tie line no.	Wt % solvent (mean)	Volume fraction of conjugate phases						$\chi_{12}^a$	$\chi_{13}$	$\chi_{23}$
		$\phi_1'$	$\phi_2'$	$\phi_3'$	$\phi_1''$	$\phi_2''$	$\phi_3''$			
1	79.16	0.817	0.014	0.170	0.809	0.185	0.006	0.428	0.40	0.023
2	78.97	0.810	0.013	0.177	0.812	0.184	0.004	0.428	0.412	0.024
3	79.94	0.816	0.021	0.163	0.825	0.174	0.001	0.428	0.44	0.024
4	86.59	0.877	0.021	0.102	0.886	0.112	0.003	0.428	0.44	0.029
5	88.18	0.887	0.024	0.089	0.905	0.092	0.003	0.428	0.471	0.026

<sup>a</sup>Schulz and Bauman.<sup>29</sup>

PBD in the presence of a mutual solvent, using GPC, has been given in our earlier publications.<sup>20,21</sup>

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The values for  $\chi_{12}$ ,  $\chi_{13}$ , and  $\chi_{23}$  calculated using adjacent tie lines (we call it the "two-tie line method") for different systems are presented in Tables III–IX. Also given in those tables are the  $\chi_{23}$  values calculated using known  $\chi_{12}$  (PS–solvent) values and presented earlier,<sup>25</sup> for the purposes of comparison.

There is a very good agreement between the  $\chi_{23}$  values calculated by the two different methods. In general, the  $\chi_{23}$  value calculated by the two-tie line method is slightly higher.

The  $\chi_{13}$  and  $\chi_{12}$  values, however, are greater than 0.5 and hence will have to be ignored. This higher value is perhaps related to the slightly higher

TABLE V  
Comparison of Interaction Parameters PS 110,000/PBD 170 M/THF

Wt % solvent (mean)	$\chi_{23}$	Two-tie line method		
		$\chi_{23}$	$\chi_{12}$	$\chi_{13}$
79.49	0.008	0.010	0.63	0.63
80.41	0.010	0.011	0.59	0.60
85.97	0.014	0.016	0.80	0.85
91.12	0.020	0.021	0.55	0.54
93.41	0.022	0.024	0.55	0.54

TABLE VI  
Comparison of Interaction Parameters PS 37,000/PBD 170 M/THF

Wt % solvent (mean)	$\chi_{23}$	Two-tie line method		
		$\chi_{23}$	$\chi_{12}$	$\chi_{13}$
79.16	0.023	0.023	0.63	0.62
78.97	0.024	0.024	0.67	0.65
79.94	0.024	0.024	0.38	0.40
86.59	0.029	0.029	0.57	0.56
88.18	0.026	0.033	0.57	0.56

TABLE VII  
Comparison of Interaction Parameters PS 100,000/PBD 170 M/Toluene

Wt % solvent (mean)	$\chi_{23}$	Two-tie line method		
		$\chi_{23}$	$\chi_{12}$	$\chi_{13}$
82.00	0.010	0.015	0.61	0.62
87.43	0.019	0.020	0.61	0.60
90.36	0.023	0.024	0.57	0.56
90.68	0.021	0.024	0.57	0.56

TABLE VIII  
Comparison of Interaction Parameters PS 37,000/PBD 170 M/Toluene

Wt % solvent (mean)	$\chi_{23}$	Two-tie line method		
		$\chi_{23}$	$\chi_{12}$	$\chi_{13}$
77.91	0.026	0.028	0.68	0.67
81.39	0.029	0.029	0.71	0.69
84.10	0.030	0.030	0.57	0.55
88.41	0.026	0.038	0.57	0.55

TABLE IX  
Comparison of Interaction Parameters PS 100,000/PBD 54941/Toluene

Wt % solvent (mean)	$\chi_{23}$	Two-tie line methods		
		$\chi_{23}$	$\chi_{12}$	$\chi_{13}$
79.82	0.004	0.015	0.63	0.63
81.97	0.013	0.017	0.63	0.63
82.85	0.016	0.017	0.58	0.58
85.91	0.019	0.020	0.58	0.58
88.96	0.025	0.026	0.58	0.58

values of  $\chi_{23}$  itself. It is also interesting to note that for a given tie line the values of  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$  are very close. At any rate, for this PS-PBD system with toluene or THF as mutual solvents, the two-tie line method yields good approximate values for  $\chi_{23}$ . This method should find use in mixed polymer systems in a good mutual solvent where neither polymer-solvent interaction parameter is known.

This method was applied to the systems of PS-PBD-THF in this study. The bimodals for six of the PS/PBD/THF systems studied are given in Figure 1.

The use of this approximate method ("two-tie line method") was felt to be better for obtaining  $\chi_{12}$  values for very low molecular weights of PS than extrapolating the second-virial coefficient ( $A_2$ ) values of the PS-THF binary system<sup>29</sup> to higher concentrations or taking higher order virial coefficients. The values of  $\chi_{23}$  obtained for the different systems are plotted against total solvent concentrations in Figure 2. There seems to be a linear increase in  $\chi_{23}$  with increasing solvent concentration (or, in other words, with decreasing total polymer concentration). This increase in  $\chi_{23}$  appears to have a common slope for the different molecular weight combinations studied. These lines follow the same order in which their positions of the bimodals and plait points are found in Figure 1.

Since the different lines appeared to have a common slope, the data for the different systems were treated in a fashion to force a common slope for all the systems (Fig. 2). For this purpose an algorithm by Fletcher<sup>30</sup> was used. Thus the equation of the lines is

$$\chi_{23} = mC + b_i$$

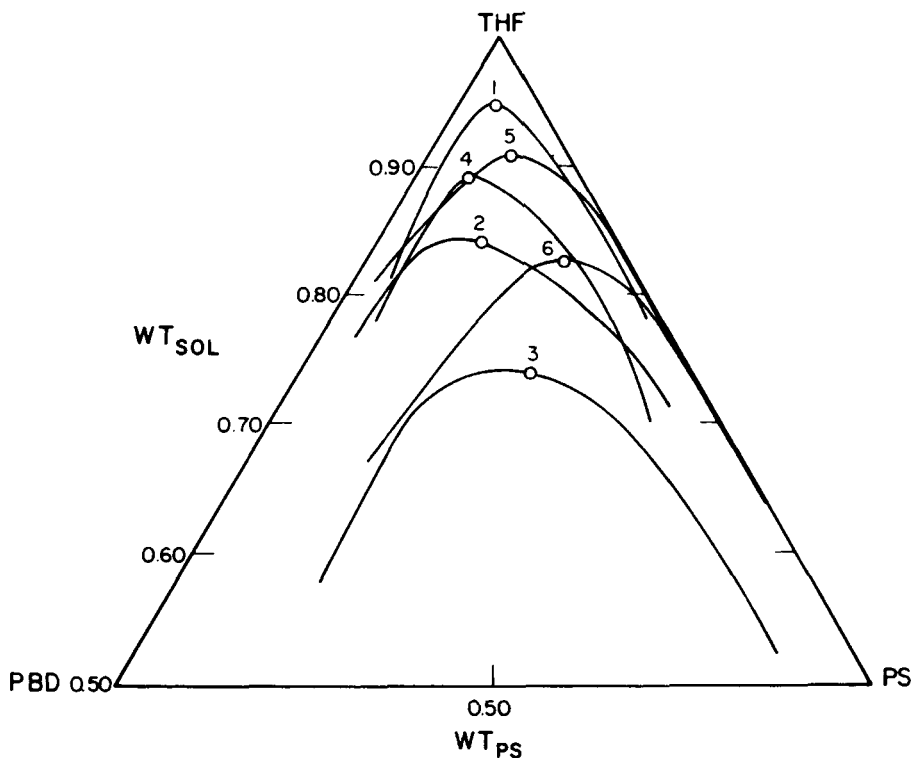


Fig. 1. Phase diagrams of the ternary systems studied at  $23 \pm 0.4^\circ\text{C}$  and 1 atm. Binodal curves: (1) PS 110,000/PBD 170 M/THF; (2) PS 37,000/PBD 17 M/THF; (3) PS 9000/PBD 17 M/THF; (4) PS 110,000/PBD 17 M/THF; (5) PS 37,000/PBD 170 M/THF; (6) PS 9000/PBD 170 M/THF. (○) Plait points.

where  $\chi_{23}$  = polymer-polymer interaction parameter,  $C$  = % solvent concentration (mean),  $m$  = common slope = 0.980, and  $b_i$  is the intercept which is different for each system. The calculated values are

$$b_1 = -0.068 \pm 0.004$$

$$b_2 = -0.036 \pm 0.023$$

$$b_3 = -0.012 \pm 0.007$$

$$b_4 = -0.046 \pm 0.019$$

$$b_5 = -0.053 \pm 0.032$$

$$b_6 = -0.027 \pm 0.038$$

The standard deviation of the slopes  $\pm \sigma_{mi}$  found for  $i = 1, \dots, 6$  were, respectively,  $0.46 \times 10^{-4}$ ,  $0.30 \times 10^{-3}$ ,  $0.11 \times 10^{-3}$ ,  $0.24 \times 10^{-3}$ ,  $0.39 \times 10^{-3}$ , and  $0.53 \times 10^{-3}$ .

The  $b_i$  values were plotted against the reciprocal of the molecular weight of the corresponding PS (Fig. 3) and two nearly parallel lines, one for each



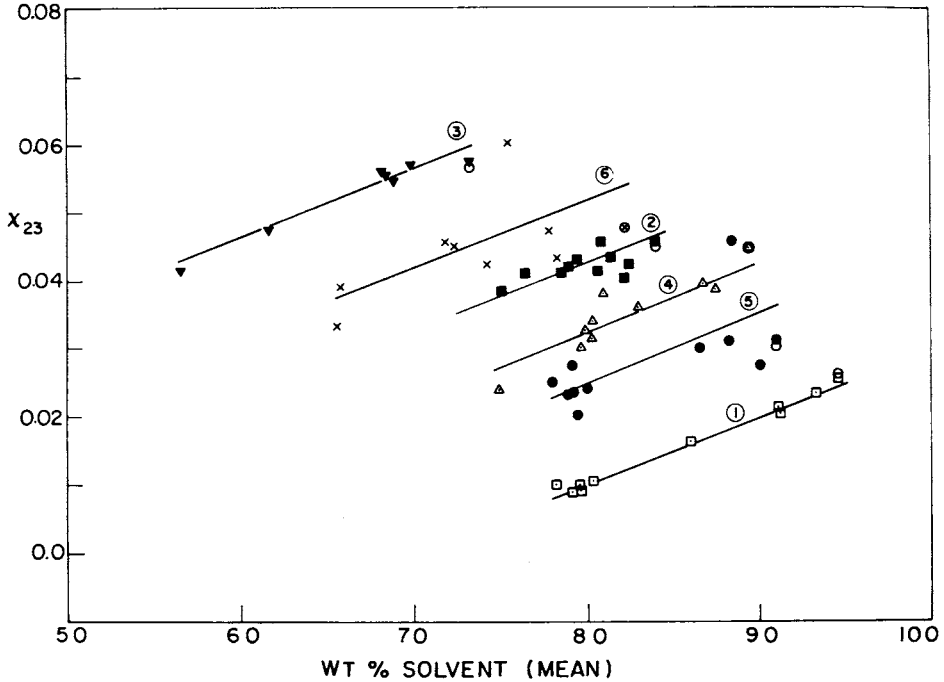


Fig. 2. Polymer-polymer interaction parameter  $\chi_{23}$  as a function of mean solvent concentration at  $23 \pm 0.4^\circ\text{C}$  and 1 atm. (1) PS 110,000/PBD 170 M/THF; (2) PS 37,000/PBD 17 M/THF; (3) PS 9000/PBD 17 M/THF; (4) PS 110,000/PBD 17 M/THF; (5) PS 37,000/PBD 170 M/THF; (6) PS 9000/PBD 170 M/THF.  $\odot$ ,  $\nabla$ ,  $\bullet$ ,  $\blacksquare$ ,  $\square$  and  $\odot$  are values of  $\chi_{23,\text{crit}}$ .

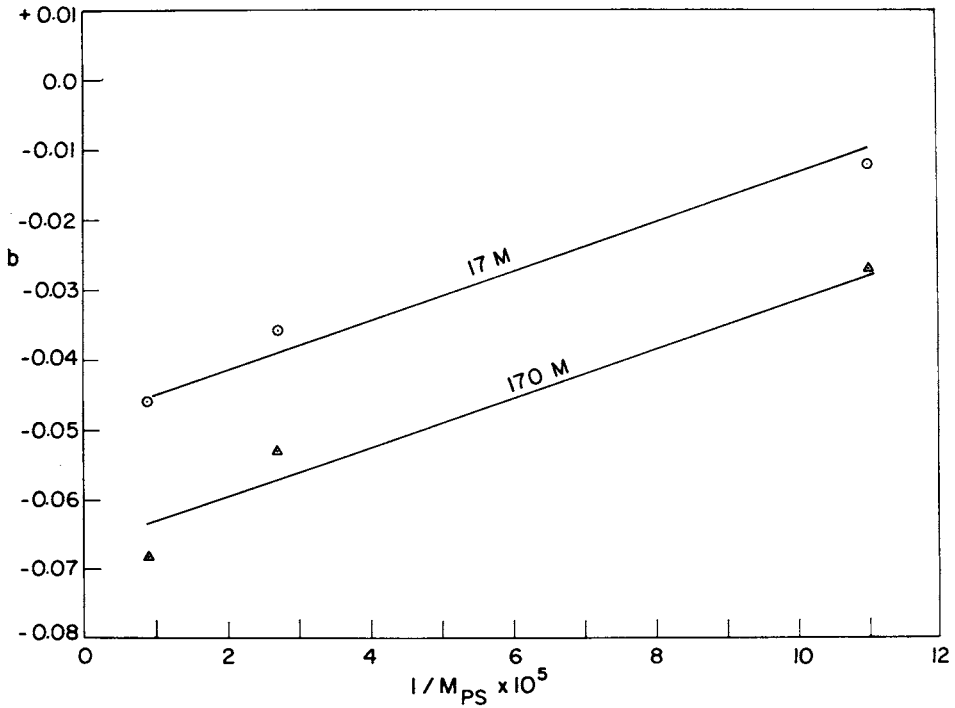


Fig. 3. The intercept  $b$  as a function of the reciprocal of the molecular weight of PS.

molecular weight of PBD, were obtained. Fletcher's algorithm<sup>30</sup> was applied to the data, and the common slope was found to be 351.70, indicating that the  $\chi_{23}$  is decreasing with increasing molecular weight of the PS in the system. The standard deviations of the slopes  $\pm\sigma_{m_i}$  were, respectively, 52.10 and 82.87. The intercepts  $k_1$  and  $k_2$  were, respectively,  $-0.049 \pm 0.0034$  and  $-0.067 \pm 0.0054$ .

Similarly these two intercepts may be plotted against the reciprocal of the molecular weight of PBD and a slope of 342.46 can be obtained, indicating that  $\chi_{23}$  is also decreasing with increasing molecular weight of the PBD in the system.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on Scott's equations for ternary systems of two polymers and a mutual solvent, a method was developed for calculating values of the polymer-polymer interaction parameter ( $\chi_{23}$ ) for systems for which we do not have *a priori* knowledge of the two polymer-solvent interaction parameters,  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$ . Ternary systems of PS-PBD and THF or toluene were studied. The  $\chi_{23}$  values obtained by this new technique, in which the composition of conjugate solutions are used two at a time, were compared with  $\chi_{23}$  values determined earlier using standard equations and known  $\chi_{12}$  values from the literature. There is a very good agreement between the  $\chi_{23}$  values calculated by the two different methods. In general, the  $\chi_{23}$  calculated by this two-tie line method is slightly higher. The  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$  values, however, are greater than 0.5 and cannot be accepted. Hence this two-tie line method can be used to determine a very good approximate value for  $\chi_{23}$  alone. The advantage of this technique is that no prior knowledge of  $\chi_{12}$  and  $\chi_{13}$  is required.

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