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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between psychological separation and college adjustment in a Chicano/Latino sample, a group which has traditionally not valued psychological separation (N=137). Ethnic identity as a moderator variable was also explored. The Psychological Separation Inventory, Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire, and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure were used as indicators of psychological separation, college adjustment, and ethnic identity, respectively. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses supported two separation variables, freedom from negative emotions with father and involvement of father in everyday practical and personal affairs, as significant predictors of the relationship. Ethnic identity was established as a significant moderator of the psychological separation/college adjustment relationship. Multiple analysis of variance revealed that more paternal than maternal separation was evident and that males were more separated than females in this Chicano/Latino sample. Discussion is focused on within-group issues, including shifting gender roles and cultural norms. (Contains 3 figures, 10 tables, and 25 references.) (Author)

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Psychological Separation, Ethnic Identity  
and Adjustment in Chicano/Latinos

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## ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between psychological separation and college adjustment in a Chicano/Latino sample, a group which has traditionally not valued psychological separation (N=137). Ethnic identity as a moderator variable was also explored. The Psychological Separation Inventory, Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire, and Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure were used as indicators of psychological separation, college adjustment, and ethnic identity, respectively.

Hierarchical multiple regression analyses supported two separation variables, freedom from negative emotions with father and involvement of father in everyday practical and personal affairs, as significant predictors of the relationship. Ethnic identity was established as a significant moderator of the psychological separation/college adjustment relationship. Multiple analysis of variance revealed that more paternal than maternal separation was evident and that males were more separated than females in this Chicano/Latino sample. Discussion is focused on within-group issues including shifting gender roles and cultural norms.

Psychological Separation, Ethnic Identity  
and Adjustment in Chicano/Latinos

The relationship between psychological separation and college adjustment has been firmly established in the literature for Anglo/European American samples (Fleming & Anderson, 1986; Hoffman, 1984; Lopez et al., 1986; Rice et al., 1990; Teyber, 1983a). Since separation issues have been implicated as instrumental in the successful transition to college (Moore, 1987; Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990; Sullivan & Sullivan, 1980), in presenting concerns for which college students seek counseling (Bloom, 1980; Cockrell & Erickson, 1992; Elson, 1964; Fulmer, Medalie, & Lord), and in disturbances such as suicidal behavior, chronically depressed mood, poor impulse control, and character pathology (Cristenson & Wilson, 1985; Cockrell & Erickson, 1992; Horner, 1984; Masterson, 1988) separation issues continue to be of concern to clinicians as well as researchers and university officials.

Although the literature reflects interest in the psychological separation/college adjustment issue, differences for ethnic minority groups have not been addressed, nor have studies focused on how this relationship might look for ethnic groups that do not value separation.

Chicano/Latino students. This study explored psychological separation/college adjustment by introducing three important aspects. First, the study sought to clarify how the psychological separation/college adjustment relationship might differ for Chicano/Latino students. Second, the concept of ethnic identity as a developmental and inherently broader concept than acculturation, was utilized to give more specificity to the sample, and to explore its role as a moderating influence. Third, since a differential gender effect has been implicated in prior psychological separation research (Hoffman, 1984; Lopez, et al., 1986), gender was controlled in this study by

entering it as a covariate in the analyses. Three hypotheses were generated: (1) that a relationship different from that observed in the dominant culture with Anglo/European American students would be evidenced between psychological separation and college adjustment in a Chicano/Latino sample of students; (2) that greater paternal than maternal separation would be observed in Chicano/Latino students; and (3) that ethnic identity would moderate the relationship between psychological separation and college adjustment, so that higher levels of ethnic identity would be associated with higher levels of college adjustment.

#### Procedure

Subjects. The final 137 subjects (56% return rate) included in this study were recruited from three universities across the United States and met the inclusion criteria of: being of Chicano/Latino descent, freshman or sophomore standing, and under the age of 22. Table 1 lists the demographic means and standard deviations for the total sample and by university.

Participants were solicited from courses deemed to have a high concentration of Chicano/Latino students and from Chicano/Latino student organizations. After a brief verbal description of the study, packets containing a cover letter further explaining the study and instruments were distributed. Return of the packet was deemed as consent to participate in the study. All instruments were coded to assure anonymity.

Instruments. Three instruments were used in this study. The Psychological Separation Inventory (Hoffman, 1984) was used to measure psychological separation. This scale consists of 138, 5-point (0 to 4); Likert-type items, with higher scores indicating greater psychological separation. The scale generates paternal and maternal subscales. Functional separation (PAFUN and MAFUN) refers to Conflictual separation (PACON and MACON) measures . . . Emotional

separation (PAEMOT and MAEMOT) measures . . . Attitudinal separation (PAATT and MAATT) . . . Adequate reliability and validity have been reported for this instrument (Cockrell & Erickson, 1992; Hoffman, 1984; Rice, et al., 1990).

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1984) is a 67 Likert-type item, 9-point scale which addresses four aspects of college adjustment: academic (ACASAC), emotional (EMOSAC), social (SOCSAC), and institutional (ATTSAC). An overall adjustment score (COLLADJ) is also generated. Adequate reliability (Cronbach = .92 to .95 for overall scale and .77 to .91 for subscales) has been established for this instrument (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Many validation studies have been conducted as well and are summarized in the instruments manual (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

The Multigroup Ethnic Measure (Phinney, 1992) was used to measure ethnic identity (ETHID). This scale consists of 20 self-descriptive statements rated on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, plus one open-ended item and three nonrated items. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scale range from .81 to .90 (Phinney, 1992) and two separate principle axis factor analyses offer ractorial validation of the measure (Phinney, 1992).

A Demographic Data Sheet was included to collect information regarding parents education level, socioeconomic level, parent's marital status, participant's generation, and participant's living arrangements. The Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale was also included as part of the packet to provide a validity check for the ethnic identity measure.

### Results and Conclusions

A number of significant findings emerged. Hierarchical multiple regression established a relationship between psychological separation and overall college adjustment [ $F(9,127)=3.95$ ,  $p=.001$ ] which accounted for 22% of the variance (Table 2). The primary predictors were PACON (paternal conflictual independence) and PAFUN (paternal functional independence) with betas of .28 and -.44, respectively. The more freedom participants experienced from conflicts (resentment, anger, guilt, or anxiety) with their father, the higher was their college adjustment. In contrast, the less independence participants experienced from their fathers with regard to managing their own practical and personal affairs, the higher was their college adjustment.

Similar relationships with paternal conflictual separation (PACON) and paternal functional separation (PAFUN) were established for academic adjustment [ $F(9,124)=4.38$ ,  $p<.001$ ] (Table 3) and personal-emotional adjustment [ $F(9,124)=3.94$ ,  $p<.001$ ] (Table 4). Paternal conflictual separation and maternal emotional separation were significant predictors of institutional adjustment [ $F(1,124)=3.00$ ,  $p<.01$ ] (Table 5). None of the psychological separation variables alone were significant contributors to social adjustment. Gender was only significant with academic adjustment.

It makes intuitive sense that the less conflict a student experiences with his/her father, the higher college adjustment will be achieved. However, it is more difficult to explain the strong relationship between functional dependence on one's father and higher college adjustment, especially given the importance of mothers in higher educational achievement/persistence in the Chicano/Latino culture (Gandara, 1982; 1986) and the roles of women as transmitters of culture and men as managers of the world outside of the cultural group (Falicov, 1982; Gonzales, 1983)

Going to college is an external affair involving environmental considerations (setting up a checkbook, where to live, etc.), perhaps, functional dependence on father is a manifestation of this phenomenon, that of identification with father in response to the outside world (the college experience). Functional separation may also be confounded with family support for this age group. In addition this study may have tapped into an unexamined area of a minority subgroup within the Chicano/Latino population--that of the college student's separation issues with father.

Multiple analyses of variance indicated significant gender [ $F(4,132)=3.58, p<.01$ ] and maternal versus paternal psychological separation subscale differences [ $F(4,132)=9.79, p<.001$ ], but no interaction effect [ $F(4,132), p=.053$ ]. These results are summarized in Tables 6 and 7. As was hypothesized, both males and females demonstrated greater paternal than maternal separation, and the males were significantly more separated. Given the closer ties between offspring and mothers, the finding that there was greater paternal than maternal separation is consistent with traditional Hispanic norms (Moore & Pachon, 1985) and the tendency toward mother centeredness. Gender differences are also indicative of the traditional culture where women tend to maintain stronger ties to their parents.

Ethnic identity alone was not significantly related to college adjustment. However, hierarchical multiple regression analyses revealed that ethnic identity served as a positive moderator of maternal attitudinal separation with social adjustment [ $F(18,114)=2.47, p<.01$ ] (refer to Table 8) and institutional adjustment [ $F(18,113)=2.87, p<.001$ ] (refer to Table 9), as well as, paternal attitudinal separation with personal emotional adjustment [ $F(18,113)=2.37, p<.01$ ] (refer to Table 10). These relationships, depicted in Figures 1-3 demonstrate that ethnic identity changed two negative relationships into positive, and one slightly positive into highly

positive relationships. Highly ethnically identified students evidenced a stronger positive relationship between separation and adjustment, while less ethnically identified students did not.

In light of the results indicating the strong relationship between paternal conflictual and especially paternal functional independence with college adjustment of Chicano/Latino students, the role of fathers' contribution to their offsprings' academic adjustment needs to be reconsidered. It is time to reexamine old assumptions. With the rapid growth of the Chicano/Latino population in the United States and shifting gender roles in the dominant and Chicano/Latino cultures (Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Vasquez-Nuttall, Romero-Garcia & DeLeon, 1987), it is not surprising that Chicano/Latino fathers may be contributing in new and different ways to their offsprings' adjustment to college. It is imperative that between- and within-group differences in ethnic minority cultures be explored to facilitate the provision of ethnically sensitive services. It has become an ethical imperative to be culturally competent and remain aware of shifting norms in culturally specific knowledge.

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Table 1

Demographic Means and Standard Deviations

Variable	Total (n=137)	University		
		1 (n=72)	2 (n=27)	3 (n=38)
Age (years)	18.96	18.89	18.93	19.16
sd	1.0	1.09	0.78	1.28
Mother's Education***	10.84	11.18	7.70	12.42
sd	4.29	3.86	4.28	4.01
Father's Education***	11.35	12.19	8.19	12.00
sd	4.57	4.41	4.76	3.81
Self-Identified SES	1.78	1.86	1.54	1.81
sd	.64	.54	.65	.78
Language Spoken at Home**	1.50	1.40	1.78	1.47
sd	.50	.49	.42	.51
Generation***	2.43	2.93	1.78	2.03
sd	1.22	1.32	.70	.94
Parents' Divorce*	.20	.16	.07	.34
sd	.40	.37	.27	.48
Living Arrangements***	3.22	3.11	3.93	2.87
sd	1.14	1.25	.39	1.14

\*p ≤.05

\*\*p ≤.01

\*\*\*p ≤.001

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression of Psychological Separation (PSEP) Subscales on COLLADI

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	AdjR	R Chg	F Chg/F	$\beta$
1. Gender	.07	.005	-.002	.005	.72/.40	-.07
2. PSEP Subscales	.47	.22	.16	.21	4.33***/3.95***	
MACON						.13
PAATT						-.09
PACON						.28***
MAEMOT						.19
MAATT						-.07
PAFUN						-.44
MAFUN						.09
PAEMOT						.21
Gender						.02

\* $p \leq .05$ \*\* $p \leq .01$ .\*\*\* $p \leq .001$ 

Legend: PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression of PSEP on Academic Adjustment

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
1. Gender	.04	.002	-.006	.002	.25/.25	.04
2. PSEP Variables	.49	.24	.19	.24	4.89***/4.38***	
PAATT						-.22
MACON						.15
PACON						.23**
MAEMOT						.12
MAATT						-.11
PAFUN						-.43*
MAFUN						.28
PAEMOT						.28
Gender						.17*

\* $p \leq .05$ \*\* $p \leq .01$ \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ 

Legend: All=all variables entered as a block, PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression of PSEP on Personal-Emotional Adjustment

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
1. Gender	.21	.04	.04	.04	6.03*/6.03*	-.21*
2. All Variables	.47	.22	.17	.18	3.57**/3.94**	
Gender						
PAATT						-.14
MACON						-.08
PACON						.11
MAEMOT						.29**
MAATT						.03
PAFUN						.05
MAFUN						-.48**
PAEMOT						.01
						.42*

\*p ≤ .05

\*\*p ≤ .01

\*\*\*p ≤ .001

Legend: PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence.

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression of PSEP on Institutional Adjustment

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
1. Gender	.05	.003	-.005	.003	.34/.34	.05
2. All Variables	.42	.18	.12	.18	3.33**/3.00**	
Gender						
PAATT						.06
MACON						.08
PACON						.10
MAEMOT						.25**
MAATT						.32*
PAFUN						-.11
MAFUN						-.21
PAEMOT						-.15
						-.10

\*p&lt;.05

\*\*p&lt;.01

\*\*\*p&lt;.001

Legend: PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for PSEP X Gender

Separation Subscale	Male (n=50)	Female (=87)
PAEMOT		
$\bar{X}$	48.18	41.74
sd	14.53	17.66
MAEMOT		
$\bar{X}$	42.2	32.75
sd	11.13	14.69
PACON		
$\bar{X}$	75.90	75.38
sd	18.73	16.66
MACON		
$\bar{X}$	73.99	73.74
sd	16.25	16.83
PAFUN		
$\bar{X}$	38.32	36.69
sd	10.97	12.63
MAFUN		
$\bar{X}$	35.10	28.45
sd	9.26	11.89
PAATT		
$\bar{X}$	34.90	35.21
sd	12.71	15.55
MAATT		
$\bar{X}$	31.14	27.24
sd	9.76	11.77

Table 7

MANOVA: Maternal/Paternal PSEP by Gender

Source	Pillais	df	F	p
<u>Overall Multivariate</u>				
Gender	.10	4, 132	3.58	.008
Ma/Pa Diff	.23	4, 132	9.79	.000
Gender by Diff	.07	4, 132	2.40	.053
<u>Univariate Analysis</u>				
Emotional Separation (EMOT)				
Gender		1, 135	12.22	.001
Ma/Pa EMOT		1, 135	27.38	.000
Gender by EMOT		1, 135	1.11	.294
Conflictual Separation (CON)				
Gender		1, 135	.02	.881
Ma/Pa CON		1, 135	1.20	.275
Gender by CON		1, 135	.01	.936
Functional Separation (FUN)				
Gender		1, 135	5.36	.022
Ma/Pa FUN		1, 135	32.91	.000
Gender by FUN		1, 135	6.31	.013
Attitudinal Separation (ATT)				
Gender		1, 135	.80	.372
Ma/Pa ATT		1, 135	27.27	.000
Gender by ATT		1, 135	3.51	.063

Table 8

Hierarchical Multiple Regression of ETHID on Relationship between PSEP and Social Adjustment

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
1. Gender	.02	.0003	-.007	.0003	.04/.04	-.02
2. All Variables	.41	.17	.10	.17	2.72**/2.45*	
Gender						-.07
MACON						.06
PAATTC						.15
ETHID						.24**
PACON						.18
MAEMOT						.40*
MAATT						-.03
PAFUN						-.03
MAFUN						-.28
PAEMOT						-.27
3. Interaction	.53	.28	.17	.11	2.24*/2.47**	
Gender						-.08
MACON						.08
PAATT						.15
ETHID						.32**
PACON						.14
MAEMOT						.38*
MAATT						-.07
PAFUN						-.09
MAFUN						-.25
PAEMOT						-.17
PAATTXETHID						.01
MACONXETHID						-.01
MAEMOTXETHID						.13
PAFUNXETHID						.10
PACONXETHID						-.14
MAATTXETHID						-.35**

Table continues

Table 8 (continued)

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
MAFUNXETHID						.20
PAEMOTXETHID						-.30

\* $p \leq .05$ ; \*\* $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

Legend: PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence, ETHID=ethnic identity

Table 9

Hierarchical Regression of ETHID on PSEP and Institutional Adjustment

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
1. Gender	.05	.003	-.005	.003	.37/.37	.05
2. All Variables	.45	.20	.13	.20	3.32**/3.03**	
Gender						.03
MACON						.10
PAATT						.11
ETHID						.15
PACON						.23*
MAEMOT						.36*
MAATT						-.10
PAFUN						-.22
MAFUN						-.19
PAEMOT						-.13
3. Interaction	.56	.31	.20	.11	2.32*/2.87***	
Gender						.02
MACON						.12
PAATT						.11
ETHID						.23*
PACON						.19*
MAEMOT						.33*
MAATT						-.12
PAFUN						-.29
MAFUN						-.17
PAEMOT						-.02
PAATTXETHID						-.02
MACONXETHID						-.09
PAFUNXETHID						.17
MAEMOTXETHID						-.07
PACONXETHID						-.14
MAATTXETHID						-.26*

Table continues

Table 9 (continued)

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/F	Beta
MAFUNXETHID						.19
PAEMOTXETHID						-.28

\* $p \leq .05$ \*\* $p \leq .01$ \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ 

Legend: PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence, ETHID=ethnic identity

Table 10

Hierarchical Regression of ETHID on Relationship between PSEP and Emotional  
Separation

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	F Chg/E	Beta
1. Gender	.20	.04	.03	.04	5.52*/5.52*	-.20
2. All Variables	.46	.21	.15	.17	2.94*/2.37**	
Gender						-.13
MACON						.09
PAATT						-.07
ETHID						.01
PACON						.30**
MAEMOT						.04
MAATT						.04
PAFUN						-.48**
MAFUN						.01
PAEMOT						.41*
3. Interaction	.52	.27	.16	.06	1.19/2.37**	
Gender						-.11
MACON						.08
PAATT						-.17
ETHID						.004
PACON						.30**
MAEMOT						.06
MAATT						.07
PAFUN						-.51**
MAFUN						.01
PAEMOT						.50**
PAATTXETHID						.32*
MACONXETHID						-.18
PAFUNXETHID						-.13
MAEMOTXETHID						-.08
PACONXETHID						.03
MAATTXEIHD						-.17

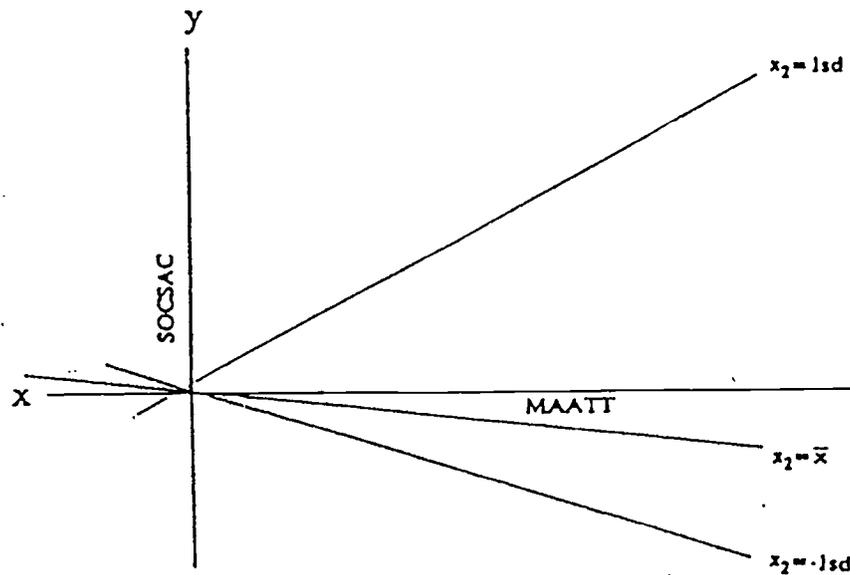
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Table 10 (continued)

Step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R	R Chg	E Chg/E	Beta
MAFUNXETHID						-.02
PAEMOTXETHID						.06

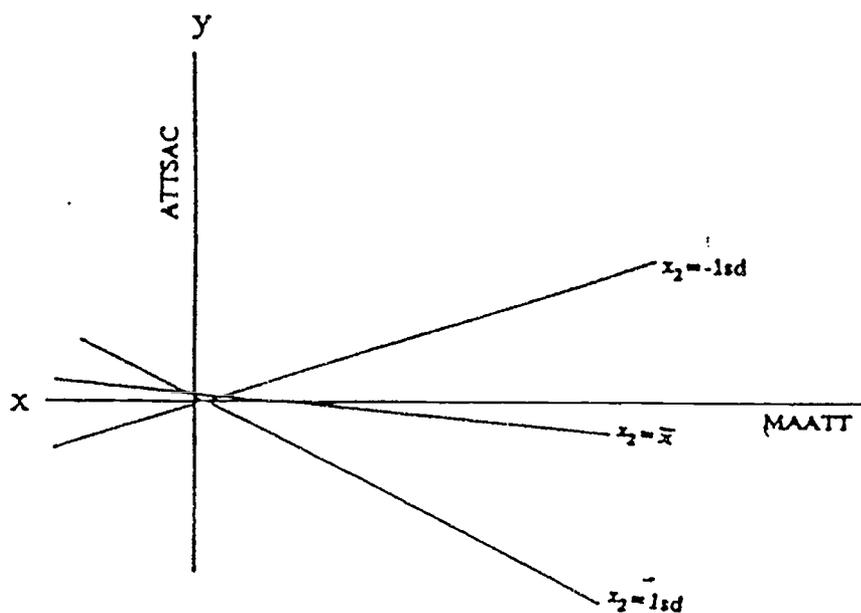
\* $p \leq .05$ \*\* $p \leq .01$ \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ 

Legend: PSEP=psychological separation, MAATT=maternal attitudinal independence, MACON=maternal conflictual independence, MAEMOT=maternal emotional independence, MAFUN=maternal functional independence, PAATT=paternal attitudinal independence, PACON=paternal conflictual independence, PAEMOT=paternal emotional independence, PAFUN=paternal functional independence, ETHID=ethnic identity



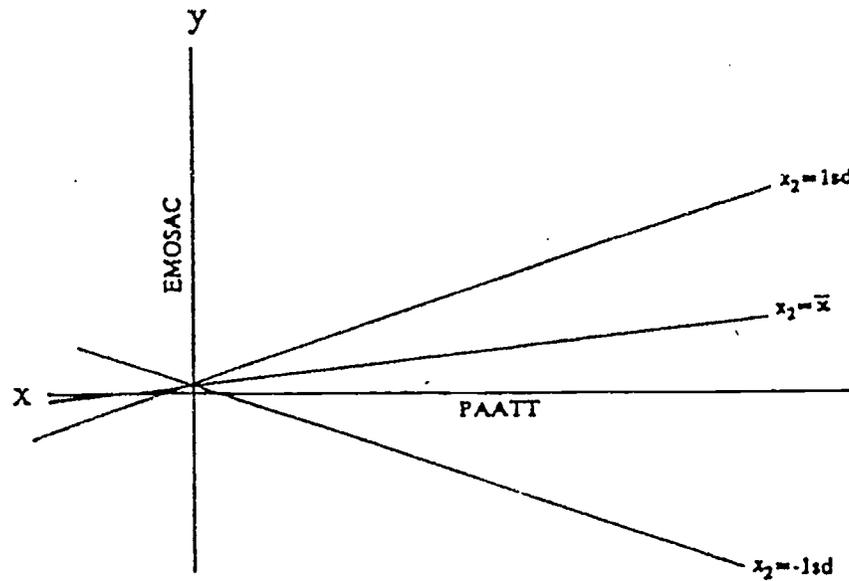
Legend: SOCSAC = Social Adjustment  
MAATT = Maternal Attitudinal Separation  
ETHID = Ethnic Identity ( $x_2$ )

Figure 1. Interaction of ETHID on MAATT with SOCSAC



Legend: ATTSAC = Institutional Adjustment  
MAATT = Maternal Attitudinal Separation  
ETHID = Ethnic Identity ( $x_2$ )

Figure 2. Interaction of ETHID on MAATT with ATTSAC



Legend: EMOSAC = Personal-Emotional Adjustment  
PAATT = Paternal Attitudinal Separation  
ETHID = Ethnic Identity ( $x_2$ )

Figure 3. Interaction of ETHID on PAATT with EMOSAC