

Consistency/Inconsistency in Paternal and Maternal Parenting Styles and Daily Stress in Adolescence

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the different combinations of maternal and paternal parenting styles, whether consistent or inconsistent, and their relationship with daily stress reported by their adolescent children in the main life contexts of this age group. The participants were 840 Secondary School students, aged 12 to 16. A cluster analysis was performed in order to obtain the parenting styles of both mothers and fathers. Results showed that children reported the lowest levels of stress when they attributed a authoritative style to both parents. Consistency in the style of both parents reduces stress as compared to inconsistency situations. The presence of a single authoritative parent in the family was associated with lower perceived stress. However, the fact that one parent develops a authoritative style was not enough: the child's reported stress also depended on the style developed by the other parent.

Keywords: Parenting styles, consistency, inconsistency, daily stress, adolescent.

Resumen

Este estudio analiza las diversas situaciones de consistencia y de inconsistencia en los estilos educativos de ambos progenitores y su relación con el estrés cotidiano que informan sus hijos e hijas adolescentes en los contextos más significativos de su vida. Los participantes fueron 840 estudiantes de E.S.O. con edades entre los 12 y 16 años. Para la obtención de los estilos educativos parentales se utilizó el análisis de clúster. Los resultados muestran que, cuando se atribuye un estilo democrático a ambos padres, los hijos informan los menores niveles de estrés cotidiano. Las situaciones de consistencia en los estilos de ambos padres reducen el estrés frente a las situaciones de inconsistencia. La presencia de un solo progenitor democrático en la familia se asocia con menor estrés. Sin embargo no basta que uno de los padres ejerza un estilo democrático sino que depende además del estilo desarrollado por el otro miembro de la pareja.

Palabras clave: Estilos educativos paternos, consistencia, inconsistencia, estrés diario, adolescentes.

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Introduction

In recent decades, research has shown the negative impact of stress in adolescence, associating it with the presence of internalized or externalized symptomatology and with lower levels of life satisfaction (Escobar, Trianes, & Fernández-Baena, 2008; Suldo, Shaunessy, Thalji, Michalowski, & Shaffer, 2009). Experiencing stress is especially important in this stage of life, due to the many physiological, cognitive and social changes which adolescents experience.

Although different types of stressful events have been identified, the importance of daily stress has recently come to light (Jose & Ratcliffe, 2004; Seiffge-Krenke, 2000), with evidence showing that daily stress can have a more negative impact on the adolescent's emotional development than stress due to life events or chronic stressful occurrences (Seiffge-Krenke, 2000; Wagner, Compas, & Howell, 1988). Daily stress may be defined as the frustrating demands and setbacks that are part of one's daily interaction with the environment (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981). Such occasions or circumstances have high frequency, low intensity and high predictability. These stressful factors are related to the primary settings where the adolescent functions, in other words, at school, with peers and at home.

One of the factors that affect how adolescents interpret daily

stressful events is their relationship with their parents. As for parental behavior, there has been an important line of research focusing on parenting styles, which are defined by examining their specific child-rearing practices. The relationship between parenting styles and practices and adolescents' overall adjustment has traditionally been considered an important perspective in psychological research (Martínez, García, Musitu, & Yubero, 2012) and continues to draw interest today. As stated by Glasgow, Dornbusch, Troyer, Steinberg and Ritter (1997), parenting styles are understood as a compendium of attitudes, behaviors and non-verbal expression that characterize the nature of relations between parents and children under different scenarios.

A large part of the research that examines the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent behavior is based on the theory proposed by Maccoby and Martin (1983). Taking the work of Baumrind (1971) as a reference, these authors consider that there is a bi-dimensional framework of parental socialization where the dimensions of sensitivity (warmth, acceptance and engagement) and demands (control, supervision and maturity demands) are theoretically orthogonal. The combination of these two dimensions (sensitivity and demands) results in the formation of four parenting styles: authoritative (sensitive and demanding), neglectful (insensitive and undemanding),

permissive (sensitive and indulging) and authoritarian (insensitive and demanding).

Many authors have defended the usefulness of a typological approach to studying complex behaviors, arguing that this multi-dimensional approach can offer a better understanding of how parent characteristics influence their children's development, than the analysis of parenting practices as risk factors (Bergman & Magnusson, 1997; Henry, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 2005; Mandara, 2003).

There is clear agreement as to the importance of warmth on the adolescent's development, but the role of control has been more controversial, probably due to the greater complexity of this concept. Different aspects are included under the label of control, for example, setting limits and applying sanctions for noncompliance, direct supervision or watchfulness over the child's behavior, and parents' knowledge of different aspects pertaining to their children (Oliva & Parra, 2004).

One important aspect of parental control that has received less research attention is the type of discipline used by the parents. Discipline includes the parents' behaviors that are directed toward preventing or correcting inappropriate behavior on the part of the minor child, and toward attaining their compliance and obedience (Fauchier & Straus, 2007). Parental discipline, along with warmth, has been considered

one of the basic dimensions of parental socialization patterns (Baumrind, 1971).

In this study, instead of using the two classical dimensions of warmth and control to establish different parenting styles, we use four dimensions: one that evaluates the warmth shown by parents and three dimensions for the different types of discipline that parents exercise: strict discipline, inductive discipline and indulgent discipline. As Oliva, Parra and Arranz (2008) have understood, the classical strategy of taking score combinations from above or below the mean for each of the variables is no longer practical with four dimensions for defining styles, due to the large number of styles that would result. Instead, we opt for a cluster analysis with the four dimensions of parental behavior and then check to see whether the four styles proposed by the Maccoby and Martin (1983) model are reproduced.

Research has often focused on the effect of the mother's style, or has considered the average score from both parents. In the first case, it is assumed that the father's style is either similar to the mother's, or irrelevant; in the second case, the father's attitudes are diluted into the single score. However, the role played by the father is of particular interest, given that, due to changes in family structure, the relationship between the parenting practices of the two parents has become more complex (Winsler, Madigan, & Aquilino, 2005).

Studies that do consider both parents (Mestre, Samper, & Frías, 2004; McNally, Eisenberg, & Harris, 1991) have shown differences in how the child qualifies his or her relationship with the father and with the mother. In light of these differences, identifying inconsistencies in parenting styles has arisen as a complementary line of research in this area (Dwairy, 2008; Lengua, 2006). As Winsler et al. (2005) indicate, an understanding of the interparental agreement on child-rearing practices is becoming more important in the research on development and families.

Research in this sphere seeks to analyze possible inconsistencies between the parenting styles of mother and father, putting forward a general hypothesis that, regardless of the predominant style, inconsistencies will be harmful (Berkien, Louwarse, Verhulst, & van der Ende, 2012; Lengua & Kovacs, 2005; Tildesley & Andrews, 2008). Thus, consistent parenting is supported, while inconsistency is considered to be a potential target for clinical attention (Chamberlain & Patterson, 1995). Nonetheless, how this consistency or inconsistency in parenting styles influences their children's perceived stress has not been analyzed, even though stress is an aspect that would be especially vulnerable to such an influence.

Elsewhere, research based on the Baumrind (1971) model, and on the later modified model by Mac-

coby and Martin (1983), has confirmed that applying an authoritative parenting style is related to positive results in children (Winsler et al., 2005). As Simons and Conger (2007) indicate, if both parents develop an authoritative style, its beneficial effects are multiplied. By contrast, some authors have investigated whether the presence of only one authoritative parent can have beneficial effects on the children. If this is so, there would be a buffering effect when at least one of the parents shows an authoritative style (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Sellers, 1999; Simons & Conger, 2007). The benefit of at least one parent with an authoritative style is another aspect that converges with and qualifies the analysis of consistency and inconsistency between the two parenting styles.

In this line, Ryan, Martin and Brooks-Gunn (2006) confirm there is a benefit in the cognitive development of small children when both parents, or at least one of them, presents a support-based style. Oliva et al. (2008) affirm that higher rates of psychosocial adjustment in adolescents are seen when both parents are perceived as authoritative, followed by the group where at least one of the parents presents this style. According to these authors, even though disciplinary inconsistency is considered to be a source of stress for parents, with negative repercussions on the children, the benefits of having at least one authoritative parent seem to exceed

the negative effects that arise from lack of agreement.

In addition to this general confirmation, certain qualifying statements have been made. For example, Hoeve, Dubas, Gerris, Van der Laan and Smeenk (2011) show that the presence of at least one authoritative parent diminishes the frequency of the adolescent child becoming involved in delinquent acts, regardless of the other parent's style; In addition, when one parent exhibits a neglectful style, the child's level of delinquency depends on the style exhibited by the other parent. It seems logical to think that the effect of having one authoritative parent would not be equal in all cases; instead, it would depend on the parenting style of the other parent.

Consequently, it seems clear that the parenting styles of both parents must be investigated (Torrente & Vazsonyi, 2008) in order to understand whether one of the parents can compensate or accentuate the relationship between the other parent's style and their child's development. The present study takes one step further, inquiring not only into the possible buffering effect of having one authoritative parent, but also if there are differences produced as a function of the style exhibited by the non-authoritative parent.

This paper examines children's perception of their parents' behavior, and their self-reported perception of stress. Both subjective

and objective ratings of their parents' behavior provide information about the children's experience in the family, and one is not necessarily superior to the other (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). In fact, recent studies have shown that children's perceptions of their parents' child-rearing practices are related to their behavior problems (Berkien et al., 2012; Framp-ton, Jenkins, & Dunn, 2010).

In summary, this study sets two main objectives:

1. To build a typology of parenting styles based on four dimensions, using cluster analysis to group fathers and mothers as a function of their similarities on these dimensions.
2. To analyze relationships of consistency (parenting styles concur) or inconsistency (parenting styles differ) between the father's and mother's parenting style, and their effects on stress reported by their adolescent children.

With regard to the second objective, the following hypotheses will be tested:

- a) As a whole, situations of consistency in the father's and mother's parenting styles will be associated with lower levels of stress in the adolescent than will situations of inconsistency.
- b) The benefits of having at least one authoritative parent will overrule the negative effects of

a lack of consistency, such that in situations where at least one parent employs a authoritative style, the adolescent's reported stress will be lower than in other situations of inconsistency. Furthermore, one parent's adoption of a authoritative style will reduce the level of the adolescent's stress in an uneven manner, depending on the style adopted by the other parent.

Method

Participants

The sample was composed of 840 students in the first ($n = 448$, 53.3%) and second year ($n = 392$, 46.7%) of compulsory secondary education, from 12 to 16 years of age ($M = 13.07$, $SD = .96$), and drawn from seven different schools (five public and two subsidized) in two cities of Andalusia. Distribution by gender was 422 boys (50.2%) and 418 girls (49.8%). This sample was incidental in that both the schools and the classrooms were chosen on the basis of availability. A total of 814 participants had Spanish nationality (96.9%), while 26 had other nationalities (3.1%).

Instruments

In order to establish the different parenting styles that the adolescents attribute to their parents, the

child version of two instruments of measure were used: the *Escala de afecto* (EA) [Scale of Warmth], and the *Escala de normas & exigencias* (ENE) [Rules and Demands Scale], developed by Fuentes, Motrico and Bersabé (1999) and Bersabé, Fuentes and Motrico (2001). These instruments were chosen because they solve certain content limitations (they ask about parents' specific actions and not about opinions, the items are written in first person and not in third person in order to decrease social desirability) and meet certain methodological requirements (acceptable psychometric properties, adequate number of items, include a format that gives access to the children's perception of the behaviors and attitudes exhibited by their parents), in comparison to other questionnaires designed to assess parenting styles.

The *scale of warmth* comprises two dimensions: *warmth-communication* (e.g. "Spends time talking to me") and *criticism-rejection* (e.g. "Gets mad at me for anything I do"), each of which contains 10 items. The *rules and demands scale* contains three factors or dimensions: *inductive discipline* (e.g. "Reasons and agrees on rules with me"), *strict discipline* (e.g. "Demands that I follow the rules even if I don't understand why") and *indulgent discipline* (e.g. "Doesn't care whether I obey or disobey"). The first two factors have 10 items, while the third factor has eight. All the dimensions are scored on a five-

point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always). Scores for each factor range from 10 to 50, except for the *indulgent discipline* subscale (8 to 40). A higher score represents a greater degree of the different aspects being assessed.

Convergent validity of this instrument was obtained using correlation analysis of the scores on the discipline dimensions of the *rules and demands scale* and the factors assessed by the *Parental Authority Questionnaire* (Buri, 1991). The values found range from .38 for *indulgent discipline* to .63 for *inductive discipline* (Bersabé et al., 2001).

Items included in the factor *warmth and communication* (EA) and those included in the dimensions *inductive discipline*, *strict discipline* and *indulgent discipline* (ENE) were used in order to establish the parenting style perceived by the adolescents in each of their parents. Reliability indices, assessed through internal consistency according to the Cronbach alpha statistic, were .82 and .87 (mothers and fathers, respectively) for the warmth subscale. Similarly, values found for the reliability indices of the different discipline subscales were .85, .74 and .72 (assessment of the mother) and .86, .74 and .73 (assessment of the father).

These scales have been used in prior studies in order to analyze the relationships between parents' child-rearing practices and adolescents' internalizing and externalizing prob-

lems (García-Linares, Cerezo, de la Torre, Carpio, & Casanova, 2011).

Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ, Byrne, Davenport & Mazanov, 2007). We used a Spanish version developed using the back translation method. This instrument contains 56 items grouped into 10 subscales that are designed to assess the degree of stress generated by a set of situations or events over the past year. Each case is rated on a Likert scale as 1 = not at all stressful, 2 = slightly stressful, 3 = moderately stressful, 4 = quite stressful or 5 = very stressful. A high score on the different dimensions is equivalent to a high degree of discomfort or perceived stress. For the present study, four of the subscales were used, representing the adolescent's main spheres of life: the family context, the peer context and the academic context. The factor *stress in the home* is made up of 12 items referring to a number of conflicts that can occur in the family setting (e.g. "hear arguments between my parents"). The factor *stress for school performance* includes 7 items associated with difficulties experienced from keeping up with the pace of academic demands (e.g. "have difficulty with some subjects"). The factor *stress from peer pressure* is composed of 7 items associated with a set of peer interactions that may cause emotional maladjustment (e.g. "feel pressure to be liked by my classmates"). The factor *stress in interaction with teachers* comprises 7 items that reflect difficulties per-

ceived in interacting with teachers, as well as conflict between freedom and the control that is imposed by the educational environment (e.g. “lack of respect from teachers”). Internal consistency indices, using the Cronbach alpha statistic, ranged from .62 to .92 in the original study (Byrne et al., 2007). Results from the translated version ranged from .76 to .87.

Procedure

To gain access to the sample, a letter was extended to the school administrations and to the students’ parents, explaining briefly the objectives of the study, and requesting their approval and collaboration in order to apply the different tests. A passive consent procedure was used (parents were informed in advance regarding the nature of the study, and were offered the opportunity to sign and return the letter if they did not see fit for their children to participate). The different tests were applied during normal class hours.

Data analysis

Data were obtained using the SPSS statistical package, version 19.0. The tests used were cluster analysis, Chi-square statistic, Pearson correlation analysis, Student’s t test for independent samples, and analysis of variance (ANOVA), according to the different purposes intended.

Results

In order to identify the existence of different parenting styles, two cluster analyses were performed separately (scores assigned to mothers and fathers, respectively), using the K-Means procedure. Cluster analysis is a multi-variate approach that allows a greater number of variables to be included than the traditional two dimensions (warmth and control) in order to explore the different styles of parental socialization. This manner of proceeding has been used in prior studies (Hoeve et al., 2011; Oliva et al., 2008). The selection of four dimensions for carrying out this analysis (warmth, inductive discipline, strict discipline and indulgent discipline) is based on the realization of prior factor analyses (mothers and fathers separately) in which the items are grouped in the expected dimensions with factor loadings greater than .36.

A four-cluster solution was selected, with two reasons to justify this choice. The first was our intention to obtain profiles that might be interpreted similarly to the classical four style typology defended by Maccoby and Martín (1983). The second reason was that the four-group solution showed very similar profiles for the sets of mothers and fathers, a necessary condition for later classification of consistent and inconsistent styles.

Following the variables indicated earlier, the four maternal styles were labeled as follows: au-

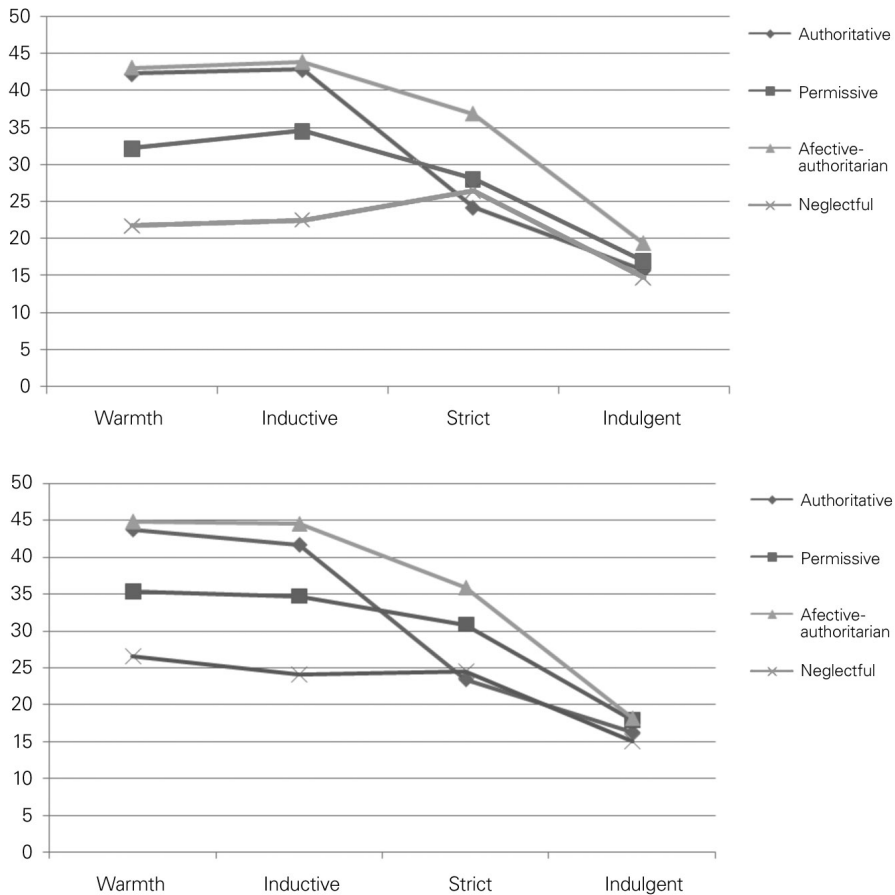


Figure 1. Average values for the different dimensions that were taken into account to establish parenting styles (mother and father).

thoritative ($n = 290$), permissive ($n = 199$), affective-authoritarian ($n = 244$) and neglectful ($n = 107$). The authoritative mothers obtained high scores in warmth and inductive discipline, the lowest levels in strict discipline and low levels in indulgent discipline. Permissive mothers

showed moderate levels of warmth, inductive discipline, strict discipline and indulgent discipline with respect to the remaining groups, while the affective-authoritarian mothers were characterized by showing the highest levels in the dimensions of warmth, inductive discipline and

strict discipline. Finally, the neglectful mothers showed the lowest scores in practically all the dimensions.

A similar classification was obtained from the assessment of fathers, such that the same labels were applied: authoritative ($n = 283$), permissive ($n = 250$), affective-authoritarian ($n = 189$) and neglectful ($n = 118$) (see Figure 1).

Given that there was a dependency, $\chi^2(9) = 834.86, p < .000$, or relationship between the assessments attributed to mothers or fathers ($r = .59, p < .001$, warmth, $r = .79, p < .001$, inductive, $r = .81, p < .001$ strict, $r = .79, p < .001$, indulgent), in other words, the mother/father judgments made by adolescents were very similar, it was decided to group the styles that were initially attributed individually to each parent into a single variable, family socialization style. This manner of proceeding made it possible to consider parental consistency/inconsistency as levels of analysis, as well as the number of authoritative parents in the home (two, one, or none), and the different combinations of inconsistent families where at least one of the parents was attributed a authoritative style.

To begin, a t test for independent samples was performed in order to verify whether there were differences as a function of the adolescent's gender. The results did not show statistically significant differences between girls and boys for the dimensions consid-

ered, $t(838) = -.12, p > .05$ for *family stress*; $t(838) = -.20, p > .05$ for *academic performance stress*; $t(838) = -1.53, p > .05$ for *peer pressure stress*; and, $t(838) = 1.48, p > .05$ for *stress experienced in interaction with teachers*. Thus, the follow analyses use family style only as the independent variable.

Hence, the independent variable used in the first analysis was family pattern, with two levels (similar style perceived in both parents vs. parenting styles perceived as different). Student's t test for independent samples revealed the existence of statistically significant differences in all the measurements, $t(838) = -3.42, p < .005$, in the dimension of *stress in family life* ($M = 22.79$ vs $M = 25.17$); $t(838) = -2.60, p < .01$ in the dimension of *stress due to scholastic performance* ($M = 18.57$ vs. $M = 19.98$); $t(838) = -2.51, p < .05$ in the dimension of *stress from peer interactions* ($M = 12.58$ vs $M = 13.62$); and finally, $t(838) = -2.22, p < .05$ in the dimension of *stress caused by interaction with the teacher* ($M = 13.70$ vs. $M = 14.68$). The adolescents who perceived a consistent parenting style between mothers and fathers showed lower levels of stress than the adolescents who attributed different styles to each parent.

Next, we examined whether there were differences in the dimensions of stress according to the number of parents who were attributed an authoritative style. This new independent variable, number of

Table 1

Average Values and Standard Deviations in the Dimensions of Stress as a Function of the Number of Authoritative Parents

	Perceived parenting style			
	Two authoritative parents (n = 215)	One authoritative parent (n = 142)	Consistent, non-authoritative (n = 359)	Inconsistent, non-authoritative (n = 124)
Home Stress	19.56 ^a (6.54)	23.66 ^b (9.68)	24.72 ^c (8.89)	26.89 ^c (9.66)
Performance Stress	16.64 ^a (7.11)	19.60 ^b (7.19)	19.73 ^b (7.36)	20.42 ^b (6.79)
Peer Stress	11.26 ^a (4.56)	12.51 ^{a,b} (5.08)	13.37 ^{b,c} (5.89)	14.90 ^c (6.28)
Teacher Stress	12.41 ^a (5.44)	13.89 ^{a,b} (5.96)	14.47 ^b (6.17)	15.57 ^b (5.68)

Note. Differences are statistically significant when the superscripts differ from each other.

authoritative parents in the home, produced four values (both parents with an authoritative style; inconsistent styles with one authoritative parent; consistent, non-authoritative styles; and inconsistent styles with no authoritative parent). The different univariate analyses showed statistically significant differences in every dimension of stress as a function of the number of authoritative parents, $F(3,836) = 8.93, p < .000, \eta^2 = .03$, for the dimension with the least value, corresponding to *stress generated by interaction with teachers*. Table 1 shows the average values and standard deviations obtained.

A posteriori comparisons using Tukey's DHS test revealed the fol-

lowing: in the home stress dimension, children who attributed a consistent authoritative style to their parents had lower scores than the rest of the adolescents raised in any other family type. In addition, children from families where at least one of the parents was authoritative showed lower values on this dimension, at a statistically significant level, than young people from the remaining inconsistent family types. As for the dimension of stress associated with academic performance, children from a consistent, authoritative family obtained statistically significant lower scores than adolescents from all other family types. Analysis of the variable of stress from peer interaction revealed that

Table 2

Average Values and Standard Deviations on the Dimensions of Home Stress in Families with one Authoritative Parent

	Perceived parenting styles			
	Authoritarian-Authoritative (n = 44)	Authoritative-Permissive (n = 51)	Permissive-Authoritative (n = 17)	Authoritative-Neglectful (n = 20)
Home stress	20.48 ^a (7.58)	22.94 ^a (10.04)	26.41 ^{a,b} (9.09)	30.35 ^b (11.35)
Performance stress	18.05 ^a (6.96)	18.49 ^a (6.50)	20.24 ^{a,b} (6.06)	24.80 ^b (7.92)
Peer stress	11.75 (5.92)	12.65 (4.72)	11.71 (3.33)	14.10 (5.62)
Teacher stress	14.09 (6.60)	13.14 (5.84)	13.00 (4.57)	16.95 (5.72)

Note. Differences are statistically significant when the superscripts differ from each other.

children from consistent, authoritative families obtained lower values than children from other consistent family types or from inconsistent families where neither parent showed a authoritative profile. Similarly, adolescents belonging to families where at least one parent was authoritative, or both parents showed a consistent, non-authoritative style, obtained lower scores than youths from the remaining inconsistent families. Finally, on the dimension of stress from interaction with teachers, adolescents raised in consistent, authoritative families scored lower than other adolescents raised in families where neither parent was attributed a authoritative style.

In order to analyze the relationship with stress seen in combina-

tions of inconsistent parenting styles where one of the two parents was attributed a authoritative style, a final analysis was performed in which all combinations that represented more than 15 cases were included. There were four levels of this variable, indicated by the perceived style of the mother followed by perceived style of the father (authoritarian-authoritative, authoritative-permissive, permissive-authoritative and authoritative-neglectful).

Different analyses of variance indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the dimensions of *family stress*, $F(3, 128) = 5.66, p < .005, \eta^2 = .12$; and *academic performance stress*, $F(3, 128) = 5.11, p < .005, \eta^2 = .11$. A posteriori comparisons using the

Tukey DHS test revealed that differences in the two dimensions were statistically significant between adolescents from homes where the mother was authoritative and the father neglectful, as compared to other youths raised in families with an affective-authoritarian mother and a authoritative father, or alternatively, a authoritative mother and a permissive father.

Discussion

Regarding our first proposed objective, we have elaborated a parent typology based on four dimensions related to warmth, and three different forms of discipline that parents may exercise. To a large extent, this typology reproduces the four classical styles proposed in the Maccoby and Martin model (1983). The only discrepancy refers to the group that is traditionally called authoritarian.

Prior studies that have used the cluster analysis technique have obtained similar patterns to those found in the present study. Hoeve et al. (2011) identify four clusters as the optimal solution for both fathers and mothers. They call these groups: authoritative, permissive, neglectful and authoritarian but affective. The latter group show high scores in affectivity but also high demands.

In the study by Oliva et al. (2008), a three-group solution is preferred, for both the maternal and paternal case: They include author-

itative and neglectful groups with similar characteristics to those found under the classical labels, plus a group they refer to as *strict*, characterized by high scores in control but higher than average warmth. The authoritarian label is not considered appropriate, since the parents show a slightly higher than average level of warmth, hence the label of strict mothers and fathers. In other words, both studies obtained a group of parents with high scores in control, but unlike the classical authoritarian parent, they also present higher scores in warmth, just as we found in the present study.

The second objective of this study was to analyze whether situations of consistency or inconsistency in perceived parenting styles of mother and father are related to the daily stress manifest by adolescents in the most pertinent settings of their life.

The first hypothesis was entirely fulfilled. Results indicate that adolescents show lower levels of stress when there is a consistent style between the two parents, than in situations of inconsistent styles. This was true for all measures of stress that were taken, that is, in the family context, school context, and in relation to peers.

These results concur with those found in prior studies such as Benson, Buehler and Gerard (2008), Lengua and Kovacs (2005) and Tildesley and Andrews (2008), although these studies analyzed intra-parental inconsistency rather than

the interparental inconsistency that was assessed in this study.

The differences observed between consistency and inconsistency situations, however, are not very substantial. This may be due to the fact that the consistency category includes the combination of two neglectful parents, with rather negative outcomes, while the inconsistency category includes situations where one parent has an authoritative style, a possible buffer to perceived stress in adolescents, as we have verified in this study.

The second hypothesis is partially fulfilled, since we have confirmed that having one authoritative parent presents a buffering effect on stress when compared to other inconsistency situations, but not when compared to consistency situations. However, this buffering effect is manifest in stress measures that refer to relations with parents and peers, but not in the measures that refer to the school context.

The data indicate that having only one parent with an authoritative style is an inconsistency situation that diminishes stress with respect to the other inconsistency situations (namely, authoritarian-permissive, authoritarian-neglectful, permissive-neglectful, authoritarian-permissive, authoritarian-neglectful, permissive-neglectful) but not when compared to consistency situations where neither parent has an authoritative style (namely, authoritarian-authoritarian, permissive-permissive, neglectful-neglectful).

Taken together, these results confirm that consistency still fosters a lower level of stress in children, and that, within the inconsistency situations, it is preferable that at least one parent develops an authoritative style. In particular, it seems that having one authoritative parent may equip the child with skills that favor social interactions with parents and peers, although this buffering effect is not manifest in the school context. This might be due to the teacher's teaching style exercising as much or greater influence in this context than the parents' styles. However, this affirmation must be verified.

Interesting results were also seen in the final analysis, which differentiated between combinations of inconsistency styles where one parent uses an authoritative style, but with the caveat that not all combinations were found with sufficient frequency to be included in the analysis. Combinations in which the father is authoritative and the mother affective-authoritarian, and others in which the mother is authoritative and the father permissive, are associated with lower levels of stress than the combinations where the mother is authoritative and the father neglectful. In other words, when the other parent is associated with an intermediate style (authoritarian or permissive), results are better than when the other parent is associated with the worst style, neglectful.

In summary, the results indicate that consistency in the parenting styles of both parents, considered overall, is found to be more beneficial than inconsistency, in terms of its relationship to stress produced in the adolescents. This study represents a step forward in the analysis of a possible buffering effect of having at least one parent that exercises an authoritative parenting style. The results are congruent with a ben-

efit from consistency in both parents' styles, since they indicate that having one authoritative parent produces advantages over the remaining inconsistency situations, but not over consistency situations where neither parent was authoritative. Furthermore, the data confirm that it is not enough for one of the parents to exercise an authoritative style; in addition, the type of style exercised by the other parent makes a difference.

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