

# **IS ALWAYS AUTHORITATIVE THE OPTIMUM PARENTING STYLE? EVIDENCE FROM SPANISH FAMILIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this paper is to establish which parenting style is associated with optimum youth outcomes among adolescents of Spanish families. A sample of 1,416 teenagers from 12 to 17 years of age, of whom 57.2% were females, reported on their parents' child-rearing practices. The teenagers' parents were classified into one of four groups (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, or neglectful). The adolescents were then contrasted on four different outcomes: (1) self-esteem (academic, social, emotional, family and physical); (2) psychosocial maladjustment (hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional irresponsiveness, emotional instability, and negative worldview); (3) personal competence (social competence, grade point average, and number of failing grades); and (4) problem behaviors (school misconduct, delinquency, and drug use). Results showed that both the indulgent and authoritative parenting styles were associated with better outcomes than authoritarian and neglectful parenting. Overall, our results supported the idea that in Spain the optimum style of parenting is the indulgent one, as adolescents' scores in the four sets of youth outcomes were equal or better than the authoritative style of parenting.

Research conducted mainly in Anglo-Saxon contexts with European-American samples has traditionally identified authoritative parents (i.e., warm and responsive parents that provide at the same time firm control and maturity demands) as the optimal parenting style as it has been consistently associated with optimum outcomes of children and adolescents. However, studies conducted in Anglo-Saxon contexts with ethnic minority groups, as well as research carried out in other cultural contexts, cast doubt on whether the authoritative style of parenting is always associated with optimum adjustment of children and adolescents. The aim of this paper is to establish which parenting style is associated with optimum youth outcomes among adolescents

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of Spanish families. In order to adequately contextualize this study we first examine how parenting styles are theoretically defined. Second, we review research supporting the idea that authoritative parenting is the optimal parenting style as well as research questioning this idea. Third, we explore different theoretical ideas that may account for these inconsistencies. Finally, we draw from this background to propose our hypotheses.

### *A Two-dimension, Four-typology Model of Parenting Styles*

Research examining relationships between parenting styles and children's outcomes largely follow a four-typology model of parental socialization styles. The four-typology or quadripartite model of parental socialization emerged from the theoretical work of Maccoby and Martin (1983), in which they reviewed Baumrind's (1967, 1971) initial tripartite model—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting—proposing a new two-dimensional framework of parental socialization in which the dimensions, responsiveness and demandingness, were theoretically orthogonal (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, pp. 491–492; Smetana, 1995, p. 299; Steinberg, 2005, p. 71). These dimensions mirrored the traditional parenting dimensions of warmth and strictness (Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957; Schaefer, 1959), as “responsiveness was often operationalized using measures of parental warmth and acceptance, while demandingness came to be defined with respect to parental firmness” (Steinberg, 2005, p. 71). The combination of the two dimensions—responsiveness (warmth) and demandingness (strictness)—defined four types of parenting styles: *authoritative* parents—responsive and demanding; *neglectful*—neither responsive nor demanding; *indulgent* parents—responsive but not demanding; and *authoritarian* parents—demanding but not responsive.

This two-dimension four-typology model of parenting was an important advance with respect to Baumrind's initial tripartite model in the sense that it divided the original “permissive” category in two, differentiating theoretically between neglectful and indulgent according to degree of responsiveness (warmth), in the same way as the distinction is drawn between authoritarian and authoritative according to degree of demandingness (strictness). As Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, and Dornbusch (1991) observed “most discussions and empirical tests of Baumrind's model . . . ignore variations in warmth among families characterized by low levels of control, grouping these families together into a single category labeled “permissive” (p. 1050). According to Lamborn et al. (1991), this four-typology or quadripartite model stressed the need to consider the combination of the two parent-

ing dimensions in the analysis of its relationships with youth outcomes. Lamborn et al. (1991) validated the four-typology model with a diverse sample of approximately 10,000 high school students in the USA. This model allowed them to examine explicitly whether within the permissive category of the three-typology model the fact that the parents were so cold with their children like the authoritarian (i.e., “neglectful permissiveness”), or on the contrary, were so emotionally involved like the authoritative parents (i.e., “indulgent permissiveness”) implied different outcomes for the children. Their study confirmed distinct relationships between the four (instead of three) parenting styles and several sets of outcomes (Lamborn et al., 1991), and a follow-up study observed that these relationships held after a year (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994).

#### *Parenting Styles and Youth Outcomes: Unclear Evidence*

A global evaluation of Lamborn et al. (1991) and Steinberg et al. (1994) studies reinforced the idea that the authoritative parent was the optimal parental style. Adolescents from authoritative families would perform better in all youth outcomes examined when compared to adolescents from neglectful families. Results from authoritarian and indulgent families were less clear as they showed a mixture of positive and negative outcomes. For example, adolescents from authoritarian parents—strict but not warm—showed a reasonably adequate position of obedience and conformity with norms (they did well in school and were less likely than their peers to be involved in deviant activities); conversely, they also manifested lower self-reliance and self-competence, and higher psychological and somatic distress. And adolescents from indulgent families—warm but not strict—showed high self-reliance and self-competence, but also showed higher levels of substance abuse and school problems. According to Lamborn et al. (1991), adolescents from authoritarian and indulgent families would perform on all outcomes between the maximum adjustment of the authoritative group and the minimum adjustment of the neglectful group.

Studies conducted in the USA using middle-class European American samples fully supported the idea that the authoritative parenting style was always associated with optimum youth outcomes (e.g., Baumrind, 1967, 1971; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Lamborn et al., 1991; Radziszewska, Richardson, Dent, & Flay, 1996; Steinberg et al., 1994). In addition, a number of studies conducted in other countries using different youth outcomes as criteria, also supported the idea that, compared to the authoritative style, a neglectful style of parenting corresponded with childrens’ poorest performance, whereas authoritarian and indul-

gent parenting occupied an intermediate position: school integration, psychological well-being (United Kingdom; Shucksmith, Hendry, & Glendinning, 1995), adaptive achievement strategies, self-enhancing attributions (Finland; Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000), drug use (Iceland; Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001), and accuracy in perceiving parental values (Israel; Knafo & Schwartz, 2003). Altogether, these studies provided evidence that the combination of high levels of parental warmth (responsiveness) and strictness (demandingness) represented the best parenting strategy; the authoritative style of parenting. In fact, these and other studies conducted in countries with a diversity of cultural values led Steinberg (2001) to claim that the benefits of authoritative parenting transcended the boundaries of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and household composition.

However, results from studies in the USA with ethnic minority groups such as African Americans (Baumrind, 1972; Deater-Deckard, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1996; Deater-Deckard & Dodge, 1997), Chinese Americans (Chao, 1994; Wang & Phinney, 1998), Hispanic Americans (Torres-Villa, 1995; Zayas & Solari, 1994), or multi-ethnic Americans (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992) questioned the idea that the authoritative style of parenting was always associated with optimum adjustment outcomes among children and adolescents. For example, Steinberg et al. (1992) found that authoritative parenting was strongly linked with adolescents' measures of achievement and engagement in school with two notable exceptions: (1) for African American adolescents, there was no relationship between authoritative parenting and adolescent achievement and engagement; (2) for Hispanic adolescents, authoritarian parenting was highly related to adolescent engagement, whereas the effect was relatively weak for other subgroups. Research with Chinese American samples also showed that children of authoritarian parents obtained better academic results than children of authoritative parents (Chao, 1994, 1996; 2001). Additionally, results from studies with poor families also questioned the idea that the authoritative style of parenting was always associated with optimum outcomes among adolescents (see Hoff, Laursen, & Tardif, 2002). For example, Leung, Lau, and Lam (1998) found differences in the relationship between authoritarian parenting and adolescent academic achievement for parents with little education, but showed no relationship with authoritative parenting. Specifically, for low-educated parents in the United States and Australia, authoritarian parenting was positively related to academic achievement. Some research in Middle East and Asian societies suggested that authoritarian parenting was also an adequate parenting strategy. For example, Quoss and Zhao (1995)

found that authoritarian parenting—but not authoritative—predicted satisfaction with the parent-child relationship in Chinese children, while Dwairy, Achoui, Abouserie, and Farah (2006) found that in Arab societies authoritarian parenting did not harm adolescents' mental health as it did in Western societies.

On the other hand, another set of studies suggested that adolescents who characterize their parents as indulgent obtain equal or higher scores on different outcomes than adolescents who describe their parents as authoritative. For example, in the Philippines, taking the number of completed Bachelor-level courses as a criterion, no significant differences were found between the authoritative and indulgent households, but there were differences in the neglectful households (Hindin, 2005, p. 312). In another study with German adolescents, those who perceived their parents as indulgent-permissive “seemed to show a distinctive better psychosocial adjustment by scoring lowest on depersonalization and anxiety and showing high levels of active coping” (Wolfradt, Hempel, & Miles, 2003, p. 529). Kim and Rhoner (2002) also observed that Korean American adolescents raised by authoritative fathers did not have better academic achievement than youth raised by indulgent fathers. Researchers in South European countries such as Spain (Martinez & García, 2007; Musitu & García, 2001, 2004), Turkey (Turkel & Tezer, 2008), and Italy (Marchetti, 1997), or in South American countries such as Mexico (Villalobos, Cruz, & Sánchez, 2004), and Brazil (Martinez & García, 2008; Martinez, García, & Yubero, 2007; Martinez, Musitu, Garcia, & Camino, 2003), also found that children and adolescents of indulgent parents did perform equally or better in several youth outcomes. For example, Martinez et al. (2007) showed that Brazilian adolescents from indulgent families scored equally or higher on several self-esteem dimensions than adolescents from authoritative families. Spanish children from indulgent families also showed better results on some dimensions of self-esteem than children from authoritative families (Martinez & García, 2007; Musitu & García, 2001, 2004).

### *Explaining the Discrepancies*

Clearly, the question that emerges from the above literature review is why research provides such disparate results regarding the relationship between parenting styles and youth outcomes, depending on the ethnic, socioeconomic or cultural context of the study. Different, although related, lines of argument have been proposed to account for these incongruent results.

From a Person-Environment Fit model, echoing the ideas of the ecology of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), it has been suggested that people adjust better and are more satisfied in environments that match their attitudes, values, and experiences (Swanson & Fouad, 1999). For example, children from authoritative homes may succeed at school better than others because the authoritative climate at home prepares them to function well in authoritative contexts (Pellerin, 2005). The fact that many studies reporting positive (academic) outcomes of the authoritative style of parenting had been conducted in authoritative contexts such as middle-class European-American schools or colleges would illustrate this idea (Hess & Holloway, 1984; Phillips, 1997; Sabø, 1995). In other non-authoritative environments, however, we should not expect that authoritative parenting is always associated with optimum youth outcomes. For example, because poor ethnic minority families are more likely to live in dangerous communities, it has been suggested that authoritarian parenting may not be as harmful and may even carry some protective benefits in hazardous contexts (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder, & Sameroff, 1999). For example, Randolph (1995) noted that authoritarian child-rearing practices in the African American community are associated with caring, love, respect, protection, and the benefit of the child. In an environment where the consequences of disobeying parental rules may be serious and harmful to self and others (Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992), an authoritarian style might be as functional as other styles (Deater-Deckard et al., 1996). Further, Wintre and Ben-Knaz (2000) found a positive association between authoritative parenting and feeling stressed and depressed during military basic training, an authoritarian institutional context.

The concepts of collectivism and individualism (vertical and horizontal) have also been called upon to explain observed differences in the association between parenting styles and youth outcomes (e.g., Rudy & Grusec, 2001, 2006; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis, 1995, 2001). As defined by Singelis et al. (1995) “vertical or horizontal collectivism includes perceiving the self as part of a collective, either accepting inequality or stressing equality, respectively; vertical or horizontal individualism includes the conception of an autonomous individual and acceptance of inequality or emphasis on equality, respectively” (p. 240). In this respect, it has been argued that authoritarian practices have a positive impact on vertical collectivistic Asiatic cultures because in those contexts strict discipline is understood as beneficial for the children (Graf, Mullis, Mullis, 2008; Grusec, Rudy, & Martini, 1997; Shek, 2008), and because both parents

and children see authoritarian practices as an organizational strategy that fosters harmony within the family (Chao 1994; Ho, 1989; Keller, Abels, Borke, Lamm, Lo, Su, et al., 2007). On the other hand, in cultural contexts where a more indulgent style of parenting is culturally promoted, parenting strictness will not have these positive connotations and will be less effective as a parenting practice. Opposite to vertical individualist (e.g., United States) and vertical collectivistic cultures (e.g., some Asiatic countries) which are based on hierarchical relations (Triandis, 1995, 2001), in countries characterized as a horizontal collectivist like some South American countries, such as Mexico and Brazil (Gouveia, Guerra, Martinez, & Paterna, 2004), or South European countries such as Spain or Italy (Gouveia, Albuquerque, Clemente, & Espinosa, 2002; Gouveia, Clemente, & Espinosa, 2003), equalitarian relations are emphasized, and more emphasis is placed on the use of affection, acceptance, and involvement in childrens' socialization (Mayseless, Scharf, & Sholt, 2003; Rudy & Grusec, 2001). As Rudy and Grusec (2001) pointed out, strictness seems to be perceived in a negative way in cultures that are not based on hierarchical relationships. As a result, strictness and firm control in socialization practices, which involve a hierarchical parent-child relationship, seem not to have a positive association with socialization outcomes in these countries, whereas parenting practices like affection, reasoning, acceptance, and involvement would be positively related with youth outcomes (Ciairano, Kliever Bonino, & Bosma, 2008; Marchetti, 1997; Martinez et al., 2003; Martinez et al., 2007; Musitu & García, 2004; Villalobos et al., 2004).

### *The Present Study*

Drawing from the above ideas we would expect that the optimum style of parenting in Spain, where the present study was conducted, should be the indulgent one. This suggests that in Spain (as in other countries) parental warmth, acceptance, and responsiveness are the keys to effective socialization, whereas parental strictness and firm control should not be necessarily associated with well-socialized behavior (see also Lewis, 1981). We should expect therefore that the combination of high levels of parental warmth and low levels of strictness will be associated with optimum youth outcomes. Although some research points in this direction, no conclusive evidence on the relationship between parenting styles and optimum youth outcomes in Spain have been found. For example, research in Spain using Baumrind's tripartite model (1967, 1971), supported the idea that authoritative parenting is the optimal parenting style (e.g., Bersabé, Fuentes, & Motrico,

2001). On the other hand, research using the quadripartite model (Lamborn et al., 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983), provided support for the view that the indulgent style is associated with optimum youth outcomes. However, this relationship was analyzed only with regard to two internal (self-esteem and internalization of social values) youth outcomes (Musitu & García, 2001, 2004). The present study uses the quadripartite model because it aims to analyze simultaneously two dimensions of parental behavior (assessed by combining an index of parental warmth with an index of strictness). This paper aims also to take previous research further by exploring a larger set of outcome variables than any other previous study conducted in our cultural context. Thus, four sets of youth outcomes often examined in socialization literature were measured in this study: (1) self-esteem (Baumrind, 1993, p. 1308; Maccoby & Martin, 1983, pp. 46–47), assessed with five specific components—academic, social, emotional, family, and physical (Byrne & Shavelson, 1996; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976); (2) psychological adjustment (e.g., Shucksmith et al., 1995), assessed with six indicators—hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional irresponsiveness, emotional instability, and negative worldview (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Lila, García, & Gracia, 2007); (3) personal competence (e.g., Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Rollins & Thomas, 1979), assessed with three indicators—grade point average, number of school failure grades, social competence (e.g., Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994); and (4) problem behaviors (e.g., Adalbjarnardottir & Hafsteinsson, 2001), assessed with three indicators—school misconduct, delinquency, and drug use (e.g., Buelga, Ravenna, Musitu, & Lila, 2006; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Specifically, the following hypotheses were tested: (1) we expected that adolescents from indulgent families will score more positively on the four sets of outcomes than adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families (characterized by low levels of parental warmth), and higher or equal to adolescents from authoritative families (because authoritative parenting shares with indulgent families the same level of parental warmth, although with higher levels of strictness); (2) we expected that adolescents from authoritative families will also score more positively than adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families (both characterized by low levels of parental warmth).



## METHOD

### *Participants*

Our sampling frame consisted of 119 high schools from a large metropolitan area in Spain with over one million inhabitants. We applied a simple cluster sampling of all of the education centers. According to Kalton (1983), when clusters (i.e., high schools) are selected randomly, the elements within the clusters (i.e., students) are similar to those selected with a random method. A priori power analysis determined a sample size of 652 observations to detect with a power of .80 ( $\alpha = .050$ ,  $1 - \beta = .80$ ) a small size ( $f = .13$ ; estimated from ANOVAs of Lamborn et al., 1991, pp. 1057–1060) in a univariate  $F$ -test among four parenting style groups (Erdfelder, Faul, & Buchner, 1996). We over-sampled to more than double the sample size ( $N = 1,400$ ) in order to replicate the seminal example of the typology construction system on tertiles proposed by Lamborn et al. (1991, p. 1053).

To obtain the planned sample size of 1,400 students we contacted the heads of nine schools using our list of education centers (only one high school refused to participate). All students who participated in this study (91% response rate): (1) were Spanish, as were their parents and four grandparents, (2) were students from 7th through 12th grades and ranged in age from 12 to 17, (3) had received their parents' approval, and (4) attended the designated classroom where the research was conducted. At the end of the sampling process, there were 1,416 participants (16 more than the sample had planned), 810 girls (57.2%) and 606 boys, ranging in age from 12 to 17 ( $M = 14.9$  years,  $SD = 1.7$  years) from 8 high schools.

### *Measures*

Of interest in the present analyses were several demographic variables, two parenting indexes that were used to construct the family types, and four sets of outcome variables.

*Demographic variables.* A family information sheet was used to collect socio-demographic data (see Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994) of adolescents and their families: child sex, birth date, academic grade, family structure (two natural parents, single-parent, stepfamily, or other), and parental education (coded as a two-level variable: less than college completion or college completion and higher).

*Parenting styles.* Parental warmth was measured using the Warmth/Affection Scale (WAS, Rohner, Saavedra, & Granum, 1978). Adolescents responded to the two versions of the WAS, one assessing perceptions of their fathers (or primary male caregivers), and one assessing

perceptions of their mothers (or primary female caregivers). The WAS has been used in approximately 300 studies within the United States and internationally in the past two decades (see Rohner & Khaleque, 2003), including Spain (e.g., Lila & Gracia, 2005). The WAS scale is a reliable measure of the extent to which adolescents perceive his or her parents as loving, responsive, and involved (sample items: "Tries to help me when I am scared or upset," and "Talks to me about our plans and listens to what I have to say"). Cronbach alpha for this 20-item scale was .91 for the mother version, and .93 for the father version (correlation between both versions,  $r = .76$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Parental strictness was measured using the Parental Control Scale (PCS, Rohner, 1989; Rohner & Khaleque, 2003). Adolescents responded to both the mother and the father versions of the PCS. The PCS scale has been used across five culturally distinct populations (see Rohner & Khaleque, 2003). The PCS scale assesses the extent to which the adolescent perceives strict parental control of his/her behavior (sample items: "Tells me exactly what time to be home when I go out," and "Gives me certain jobs to do and I will not let me do anything else until they are done"). Cronbach alpha for this 13-item scale was .80 for the mother version, and .82 for the father version (correlation between both versions,  $r = .84$ ,  $p < .001$ ). On both scales, adolescents rated all items with the same 4-point scale (1 = *almost never true*, 4 = *almost always true*). Both parenting indexes measured family parenting behavior (see Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994) so that higher scores represent a greater sense of parental warmth and parental strictness (Rohner & Khaleque, 2003).

Following the examples of Lamborn et al. (1991, p. 1053) and Steinberg et al. (1994, p. 758), the four parenting styles—authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian, and neglectful—were defined with a tertile split (33th and 66th percentile) on each family parenting dimension—warmth and strictness—and examined the two variables simultaneously. Mothers' and fathers' scores of warmth and strictness were averaged in two-parent households to obtain each family's parenting dimension (Steinberg, Blatt-Eisengart, & Cauffman, 2006; Stevens, 1992, p. 243). Authoritative families were those who scored above the 66th percentile on both warmth and strictness, whereas neglectful families scores below the 33th percentile on both variables. Authoritarian families were above the 66th percentile on strictness but below the 33th percentile on warmth. Indulgent families were above the 66th percentile on warmth but below the 33th percentile on strictness. Some research indicates that similar results are obtained by dichotomizing the sample using median (50th percentile) split procedures (see Chao,

2001, p. 1836; Kremers, Brug, Vries, & Engels, 2003, p. 46). However, a tertile split procedure, although needing a greater sample size than a median split procedure, maximizes the variance explained (see Kerlinger, 1973) ensuring that the four groups represent distinct categories (Lamborn et al., 1991). Sample-specific split procedures (i.e., median or tertile) are considered appropriate for heuristic (non-diagnostic) purposes of communitarian (non-clinical) studies (e.g., Lamborn et al., 1991), and avoids the problems associated with the use of predetermined cutoffs scores in cross-cultural research when the scales of measures are not clearly equivalent (see Bingenheimer, Raudenbush, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005). Sample split procedure only implicates sample-specific ordinal claims (see Frick, 1996) relating to the order of categories among dimensions; for example, families in the “indulgent” category are indeed relatively more indulgent (i.e., more warmth and less strict) than the other families in the sample (Lamborn et al., 1991; p. 1053). In addition, following Musitu and García (2001), we split the sample by sex and age groups because, generally, the scales of these measures are not clearly equivalent for these socio-demographic groups (Musitu & García, 2001).

*Outcome variables.* Four sets of outcome variables were examined: self-esteem, psychosocial maladjustment, personal competence, and problem behaviors. *Self-esteem* was measured with the five subscales of the AF5 (*AF5 Multidimensional Self-Esteem Scale*; García & Musitu, 1999): Academic (e.g., “I do my homework well”;  $\alpha = .89$ ); Social (e.g., “I make friends easily”;  $\alpha = .71$ ), Emotional (e.g., reverse scored, “I am afraid of some things”;  $\alpha = .70$ ), Family (e.g., “I am happy at home”;  $\alpha = .85$ ), and Physical (e.g., “I take good care of my physical health”;  $\alpha = .74$ ). Each of these areas is measured with six items on a scale of 1 to 99, where 1 corresponds to *complete disagreement* and 99 to *complete agreement*. In the AF5 scale, self-esteem is understood as multidimensional and hierarchically ordered, based on the Shavelson and colleague’s theoretical model (Byrne & Shavelson, 1996; Shavelson et al., 1976). The AF5 was originally normed and validated in Spain (García & Musitu, 1999) with a sample of 6,483 participants of both sexes and among ages ranging from 10 to 62 (3,481 of which ages ranged from 12 to 17) and is more comprehensive than the tools used by the majority of studies. For example, the shorter Rosenberg’s scale contains only 10 to 15 items. Its one-dimensional (Wylie, 1979), method appears to be associated with negatively worded items (Tomás & Oliver, 1999), and has not been normed for adolescents in Spain (Martin-Albo, Núñez, Navarro, & Grijalvo, 2007).

The five-factorial structure of AF5 was confirmed with both exploratory (García & Musitu, 1999; Martínez, 2005) and confirmatory (García, Musitu, & Veiga, 2006; Tomás & Oliver, 2004) factor analyses, and no method effect appears to be associated with negatively worded items (Tomás & Oliver, 2004). In addition, AF5 has been extensively applied as an outcome measure in numerous Spanish studies (e.g., Gual, Pérez-Gaspar, Martínez-González, Lahortiga, de Irala-Estévez, & Cervera-Enguix, 2002; Martínez-González, Gual, Lahortiga, Alonso, de Irala-Estévez, & Cervera, 2003), and it has been used to validate other instruments (e.g., Garaigordobil & Pérez, 2007; Martin-Albo et al., 2007). The AF5 scales are keyed so that a higher score represents a greater sense of self-esteem.

Personal adjustment was measured with six subscales of the Child PAQ (*Personality Assessment Questionnaire*; Rohner, 1990) which assesses the way in which youngsters perceive their own personality with respect to six indices of behavioral dispositions: (a) Hostility/aggression (sample item: "I think about fighting or being mean"; alpha = .60), (b) Negative self-esteem (sample reverse item: "I like myself"; alpha = .73), (c) Negative self-adequacy (sample reverse item: "I can compete successfully for the things I want"; alpha = .61), (d) Emotional irresponsiveness (sample item: "It is easy for me to show my friends that I really like them"; alpha = .64), (e) Emotional instability (sample item: "I get upset when things go wrong"; alpha = .63), and (f) Negative worldviews (sample reverse item: "I think the world is a good, happy place"; alpha = .74). These reliabilities were within the range of variation commonly observed for these scales in other studies (Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). Each of these indicators is measured with six items on a 4-point scale (1 = *almost never true*, 4 = *almost always true*). These six PAQ measures are contrasted indices of psychological maladjustment among children and adults regardless of differences in gender, race, geography, language, or culture (see Khalaque & Rohner, 2002). The PAQ scales are keyed so that higher scores represent a greater sense of psychological maladjustment.

Adolescent personal competence was measured with three indices (overall grade point average, number of failing academic grades, and social competence). Respondents provided information on their current high school grades on a scale of 0 to 10 (the standard in Spanish schools). Self-reported grades are highly correlated with actual grades taken from official school records (Donovan & Jessor, 1985; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987). The number of failing academic grades was calculated from participant's birth date, test date, and adolescent grade. The measure of social competence was an adap-

tation from the social competence subscale of the Adolescent Self-Perception Profile (Harter, 1982). The social competence measure ( $\alpha = .65$ ) includes seven items that ask students whether they perceive themselves as popular, as having many friends, and as making friends easily. The participants are asked to read two alternatives (e.g., "Some teenagers feel that they are socially accepted, but other teenagers wish that more people their age would accept them") and choose the one that is more like themselves. Two youth personal competence indices (grade point average and social competence) were keyed so that higher scores represent a greater sense of personal competence. Number of failing academic grades was keyed so that higher scores represent a lower sense of personal competence.

Problem behaviors were measured with three indices: drug and alcohol use, school misconduct, and delinquency (Lambort et al., 1991). The measure of school misconduct assesses the frequency of such behaviors as cheating, copying homework, and tardiness ( $\alpha = .62$ ) (Ruggiero, 1984). The measure of delinquency assesses the frequency of such behaviors as carrying a weapon, theft, and getting into trouble with the police ( $\alpha = .77$ ) (Gold, 1970). The measure of drug and alcohol use taps the frequency of involvement with cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs ( $\alpha = .73$ ) (Greenberger, Steinberg, & Vaux, 1981). Although self-reports of deviant behavior are subject to both under and over reporting (see McGord, 1990), most researchers agree that these provide a closer approximation of youngsters' true involvement in deviant activity than do "official" reports (e.g., police records), and the practice of using self-report data in the study of adolescent deviance is widely established (see Gold, 1970; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; McGord, 1990). The three problem behavior indices were keyed so that higher scores represent a greater sense of problem behaviors.

With the exception of grade point average and number of failing academic grades, all outcome variables have been scaled on a common four-point Likert-scale, with 1 as *low* (e.g., *never, strongly disagree, not like me*) and 4 as *high* (e.g., *frequently, strongly agree, very much like me*). In the case of grade point average, scores were converted from the numerical standard (0-10) in Spain to the grade standard in USA, ranging from 0 (all *F*s) to 4 (all *A*'s) (see Lambort et al., 1991).

### *Plan of Analysis*

A factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was applied for each of the four sets of outcome variables (self-esteem, psychosocial maladjustment, personal competence, and problem behaviors), with a 4 (parenting style: authoritative, indulgent, authoritarian, and ne-

glectful) by 2 (sex: girls vs. boys) by 2 (parental education: < college vs. college) factorial design with interactions. Our expectation was that the results would vary as a function of parenting style and of adolescent gender, and parental education (see Gracia & Herrero, 2008; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994); but no interactions were expected of parenting style with each of these variables for each set of outcomes (e.g., Amato & Fowler, 2002; Aunola et al., 2000; Lamborn et al., 1991; Martínez et al., 2007; Musitu & García, 2001; Steinberg et al., 1994). Preliminary analyses showed no interactions of parenting styles with family structure (Lamborn et al., 1991), and of parenting styles with adolescents' age (Martínez & García, 2008) for each of four sets of outcomes. Univariate follow-up  $F$  tests were conducted within the four sets of outcomes that had multivariate significant overall differences, and significant results on the univariate tests were followed up using Bonferroni's comparisons between all pairs of means. Given our primary interest in parenting styles, we did not focus on the effects of gender or parental education. However, when such effects were statistically significant, we noted them.

## RESULTS

*Parenting style groups.* To define parenting style groups we followed tertile split procedures, controlling for sex and age (Table 1). Nearly 45% of the families ( $n = 612$ ) fell into one of these four groups. Applying the post hoc power analysis ( $\alpha = .05$ ,  $f = .13$ ,  $n = 612$ ) a power of .77 was obtained (Erdfelder et al., 1996), close to the conventional value of .80 (Cohen, 1965; Garcia, Pascual, Frias, Van Kunckelsven, & Murgui, 2008). Table 1 provides information on the sizes of each of the four parenting groups as well as each group's mean and standard deviation on parental dimensions' measures: warmth and strictness. Additional analyses showed that these two measures of parental dimensions were modestly intercorrelated,  $r = -.06$ ,  $R^2 = .004$ ,  $p < .05$ , and that the distribution of families by parenting style groups were only modestly different,  $\chi^2(3) = 11.23$ ,  $p < .05$ . No interactions were found when crossing sex by parenting style,  $\chi^2(3) = .70$ ,  $p > .05$ ; and adolescents' school grade by parenting style,  $\chi^2(15) = 16.41$ ,  $p > .05$ . Table 2 indicates that families scoring in the upper or lower tertiles on the parenting dimensions are demographically comparable to the overall project sample. Table 3 presents means and standard deviations on the outcome variables for the complete sample of the study.

Table 1

Numbers of Cases in Parenting Style Groups, and Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on Measures of Parental Dimensions ( $n = 612$ )

|             | Total | Indulgent | Authoritative | Authoritarian | Neglectful  |
|-------------|-------|-----------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Frequency   | 612   | 161       | 138           | 183           | 130         |
| Percent     | 100   | 26.3      | 22.5          | <b>29.9</b>   | <b>21.2</b> |
| Warmth:     |       |           |               |               |             |
| Mean        | .724  | .915      | .904          | <b>.546</b>   | <b>.549</b> |
| SD          | .211  | .046      | .042          | <b>.143</b>   | <b>.149</b> |
| Strictness: |       |           |               |               |             |
| Mean        | .560  | .376      | .711          | <b>.753</b>   | <b>.356</b> |
| SD          | .212  | .097      | .086          | .107          | .128        |

*Note.* Family scores on the warmth and strictness could range from 0 to 1.

Table 2

Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Total Sample ( $N = 1,416$ ) Versus Four Parenting Groups ( $n = 612$ ): Percent

|                     | Total Sample | Parenting Groups |
|---------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Sex:                |              |                  |
| Male                | 42.8         | 40.2             |
| Female              | 57.2         | 59.8             |
| Parental education: |              |                  |
| < College           | 34.7         | 34.5             |
| College graduate    | 65.3         | 65.5             |
| School grade:       |              |                  |
| 7 <sup>o</sup>      | 15.1         | 14.9             |
| 8 <sup>o</sup>      | 16.6         | 15.2             |
| 9 <sup>o</sup>      | 12.9         | 13.9             |
| 10 <sup>o</sup>     | 17.9         | 18.8             |
| 11 <sup>o</sup>     | 19.8         | 19.9             |
| 12 <sup>o</sup>     | 17.8         | 17.3             |
| Family structure:   |              |                  |
| Intact              | 84.2         | 81.8             |
| Nonintact           | 15.8         | 18.2             |

Table 3

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Outcome Variables of Total Sample ( $N = 1,416$ )

| Variable                     | Mean | SD   | Range |
|------------------------------|------|------|-------|
| Self-esteem:                 |      |      |       |
| Academic                     | 2.96 | .61  | 1-4   |
| Social                       | 3.18 | .46  | 1-4   |
| Emotional                    | 2.68 | .56  | 1-4   |
| Family                       | 3.44 | .56  | 1-4   |
| Physical                     | 2.77 | .59  | 1-4   |
| Psychological maladjustment: |      |      |       |
| Hostility/aggression         | 1.86 | .48  | 1-4   |
| Negative self-esteem         | 1.80 | .53  | 1-4   |
| Negative self-adequacy       | 1.89 | .48  | 1-4   |
| Emotional irresponsiveness   | 2.12 | .56  | 1-4   |
| Emotional instability        | 2.60 | .53  | 1-4   |
| Negative worldview           | 1.97 | .56  | 1-4   |
| Personal competence:         |      |      |       |
| Social competence            | 2.94 | .45  | 1-4   |
| Grade point average          | 2.23 | 1.17 | 0-4   |
| Number of failure grades     | .35  | .72  | 0-4   |
| Problem behaviors:           |      |      |       |
| School misconduct            | 1.51 | .58  | 1-4   |
| Delinquency                  | 1.45 | .53  | 1-4   |
| Drug use                     | 1.36 | .51  | 1-4   |

*Note.* With the exception of grade point average and number of failure grades, all outcome variables have been scaled on four-point Likert scales, with 1 as low (e.g., never, strongly disagree, not like me) and 4 as high (e.g., frequently, strongly agree, very much like me). In the case of grade point average, scores were converted to the standard 4.0 metric and could range from 0 (all *F*'s) to 4.0 (all *A*'s).

*Factorial multivariate analysis.* Neither interaction of the four three-way MANOVA was significant (Table 4); hence only significant main multivariate *F*'s were followed up with univariate *F* tests (Table 5). All MANOVAs, as well as the univariate tests associated with each set of outcome variables (see Tables 4 and 5), indicated a significant effect for parenting styles. Sample effect sizes were systematically higher for



Table 4

Three-way MANOVAs for Each Set of Outcomes Measures: Self-Esteem, Psychological Maladjustment, Personal Competence, and Problem Behaviors

| Source of variation    | Self-Esteem |                                | Psychological Maladjustment |                               | Personal Competence |                              | Problem Behaviors |                              |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
|                        | $\Lambda$   | $F$                            | $\Lambda$                   | $F$                           | $\Lambda$           | $F$                          | $\Lambda$         | $F$                          |
| (A) Parenting style    | .625        | $F(15, 1607.05) = 19.92^{***}$ | .753                        | $F(18, 1646.63) = 9.67^{***}$ | .890                | $F(9, 1365.48) = 7.44^{***}$ | .929              | $F(9, 1406.85) = 4.81^{***}$ |
| (B) Sex                | .901        | $F(5, 582.00) = 12.85^{***}$   | .952                        | $F(6, 582.00) = 4.89^{***}$   | .990                | $F(3, 561.00) = 1.85$        | .918              | $F(3, 578.00) = 17.15^{***}$ |
| (C) Parental education | .971        | $F(5, 582.00) = 3.53^{**}$     | .983                        | $F(6, 582.00) = 1.65$         | .945                | $F(3, 561.00) = 10.86^{***}$ | .976              | $F(3, 578.00) = 4.83^{***}$  |
| A × B                  | .982        | $F(15, 1607.05) = .69$         | .963                        | $F(18, 1646.63) = 1.21$       | .988                | $F(9, 1365.48) = .74$        | .990              | $F(9, 1406.85) = .63$        |
| A × C                  | .965        | $F(15, 1607.05) = 1.39$        | .977                        | $F(18, 1646.63) = .75$        | .971                | $F(9, 1365.48) = 1.85$       | .987              | $F(9, 1406.85) = .85$        |
| B × C                  | .982        | $F(5, 582.00) = 2.08$          | .985                        | $F(6, 582.00) = 1.45$         | .998                | $F(3, 561.00) = .35$         | .996              | $F(3, 578.00) = .77$         |
| A × B × C              | .972        | $F(15, 1607.05) = 1.11$        | .971                        | $F(18, 1646.63) = .95$        | .977                | $F(9, 1365.48) = 1.47$       | .988              | $F(9, 1406.85) = .76$        |

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5

Sex, Parenting Style and Four Typologies Means and (*Standard Deviations*), Main Univariate *F* Values and [*Signif Values*], Probabilities of a Type I Error, and *Bonferroni* Test <sup>d</sup> for Outcomes Measures of Self-Esteem, Psychological Maladjustment, Personal Competence, and Problem Behaviors

|                                     | Parenting style            |                            |                            | Sex                   |               |               | Par. education        |               |               |                       |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|                                     | Indulgent                  | Authoritative              | Author-Neglectful          | <i>F</i> [ <i>f</i> ] | Female        | Male          | <i>F</i> [ <i>f</i> ] | <Co-Illege    | Co-Illege     | <i>F</i> [ <i>f</i> ] |
| <b>Self-esteem:</b>                 |                            |                            |                            | <i>F</i> (3, 586)     |               |               | <i>F</i> (1, 586)     |               |               | <i>F</i> (1, 586)     |
| Academic                            | 3.13 <sup>1</sup><br>(.65) | 3.12 <sup>1</sup><br>(.68) | 2.72 <sup>2</sup><br>(.66) | 25.62***<br>[.36]     | 2.99<br>(.65) | 2.80<br>(.63) | 12.93***<br>[.15]     | 2.86<br>(.62) | 2.93<br>(.62) | 1.81<br>[.06]         |
| Social                              | 3.28 <sup>1</sup>          | 3.24 <sup>1</sup>          | 3.00 <sup>2</sup>          | 11.61***              | 3.13          | 3.16          | .77                   | 3.11          | 3.19          | 3.87                  |
| Emotional                           | (.51)                      | (.54)                      | (.48)                      | [.24]                 | (.51)         | (.50)         | [.04]                 | (.49)         | (.49)         | [.08]                 |
|                                     | 2.83 <sup>1</sup>          | 2.56 <sup>2b</sup>         | 2.59 <sup>2</sup>          | 7.02***               | 2.55          | 2.81          | 26.39***              | 2.60          | 2.77          | 12.11**               |
|                                     | (.61)                      | (.64)                      | (.62)                      | [.19]                 | (.61)         | (.60)         | [.21]                 | (.58)         | (.59)         | [.14]                 |
| Family                              | 3.76 <sup>1</sup>          | 3.69 <sup>1</sup>          | 2.88 <sup>3</sup>          | 92.95***              | 3.38          | 3.32          | 1.94                  | 3.34          | 3.36          | .08                   |
|                                     | (.57)                      | (.60)                      | (.58)                      | [.69]                 | (.57)         | (.56)         | [.06]                 | (.54)         | (.55)         | [.01]                 |
| Physical                            | 2.84 <sup>1</sup>          | 2.91 <sup>1</sup>          | 2.55 <sup>2</sup>          | 10.20***              | 2.65          | 2.84          | 12.96***              | 2.73          | 2.76          | .22                   |
|                                     | (.63)                      | (.66)                      | (.64)                      | [.23]                 | (.64)         | (.62)         | [.15]                 | (.60)         | (.61)         | [.02]                 |
| <b>Psychological maladjustment:</b> |                            |                            |                            | <i>F</i> (3, 586)     |               |               | <i>F</i> (1, 586)     |               |               | <i>F</i> (1, 586)     |
| Hostility/aggression                | 1.72 <sup>2</sup><br>(.52) | 1.84 <sup>2</sup><br>(.55) | 2.03 <sup>1</sup><br>(.53) | 12.00***<br>[.25]     | 1.86<br>(.52) | 1.93<br>(.51) | .34<br>[.02]          | 1.93<br>(.50) | 1.86<br>(.50) | —                     |
| Negative self-esteem                | 1.54 <sup>3</sup><br>(.56) | 1.69 <sup>3</sup><br>(.59) | 2.09 <sup>1</sup><br>(.57) | 29.66***<br>[.39]     | 1.85<br>(.56) | 1.75<br>(.55) | 4.53*<br>[.09]        | 1.82<br>(.53) | 1.78<br>(.54) | —                     |
| Negative self-adequacy              | 1.66 <sup>2</sup><br>(.51) | 1.80 <sup>2</sup><br>(.53) | 2.11 <sup>1</sup><br>(.51) | 24.75***<br>[.36]     | 1.95<br>(.51) | 1.84<br>(.49) | 7.18**<br>[.11]       | 1.93<br>(.48) | 1.86<br>(.49) | —                     |

Table 5 (Continued)

|                             | Parenting style             |                             |                             | Sex               |                |                | Par. education    |                |                |                   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
|                             | Indulgent                   | Authoritative               | Authoritarian-Neglective    | F [f]             | Female         | Male           | F [f]             | <Co-Illege     | Co-Illege      | F [f]             |
| Emot. irresponsiveness      | 1.82 <sup>3</sup><br>(.61)  | 2.07 <sup>2</sup><br>(.63)  | 2.40 <sup>1</sup><br>(.61)  | 30.84***<br>[.39] | 2.14<br>(.61)  | 2.17<br>(.59)  | .49<br>[.03]      | 2.19<br>(.58)  | 2.12<br>(.58)  | —                 |
| Emotional instability       | 2.47 <sup>2</sup><br>(.59)  | 2.67<br>(.62)               | 2.76 <sup>1</sup><br>(.60)  | 6.93***<br>[.19]  | 2.70<br>(.59)  | 2.55<br>(.58)  | 9.43**<br>[.13]   | 2.68<br>(.56)  | 2.57<br>(.57)  | —                 |
| Negative worldview          | 1.71 <sup>2</sup><br>(.60)  | 1.99 <sup>1b</sup><br>(.63) | 2.22 <sup>1a</sup><br>(.61) | 22.29***<br>[.34] | 2.02<br>(.60)  | 2.00<br>(.59)  | .12<br>[.01]      | 2.06<br>(.57)  | 1.96<br>(.58)  | —                 |
| <b>Personal competence:</b> |                             |                             |                             | F(3, 563)         |                |                |                   |                |                | F(1, 563)         |
| Social competence           | 3.01 <sup>1</sup><br>(.50)  | 3.06 <sup>1</sup><br>(.51)  | 2.79 <sup>2</sup><br>(.51)  | 8.74***<br>[.22]  | 2.93<br>(.50)  | 2.95<br>(.48)  | —                 | 2.89<br>(.47)  | 3.00<br>(.48)  | 6.37**<br>[.11]   |
| Grade point average         | 2.42 <sup>1</sup><br>(1.25) | 2.36 <sup>1</sup><br>(1.29) | 1.94 <sup>2</sup><br>(1.28) | 9.88***<br>[.23]  | 2.18<br>(1.25) | 2.05<br>(1.22) | —                 | 1.91<br>(1.18) | 2.32<br>(1.20) | 15.93***<br>[.17] |
| N° of failing grades        | .21 <sup>2</sup><br>(.74)   | .53 <sup>1</sup><br>(.77)   | .43 <sup>1</sup><br>(.76)   | 4.58**<br>[.09]   | .33<br>(.75)   | .46<br>(.72)   | —                 | .52<br>(.70)   | .27<br>(.72)   | 15.39***<br>[.16] |
| <b>Problem behaviors:</b>   |                             |                             |                             | F(3, 580)         |                |                |                   |                |                | F(1, 580)         |
| School misconduct           | 1.39 <sup>2</sup><br>(.60)  | 1.47 <sup>2</sup><br>(.63)  | 1.67 <sup>1</sup><br>(.61)  | 9.07***<br>[.22]  | 1.39<br>(.60)  | 1.72<br>(.58)  | 45.61***<br>[.28] | 1.63<br>(.57)  | 1.48<br>(.58)  | 9.60**<br>[.13]   |
| Delinquency                 | 1.40 <sup>2</sup><br>(.54)  | 1.40 <sup>2</sup><br>(.56)  | 1.58 <sup>1</sup><br>(.55)  | 6.80***<br>[.19]  | 1.38<br>(.54)  | 1.62<br>(.52)  | 29.73***<br>[.23] | 1.57<br>(.51)  | 1.42<br>(.52)  | 11.90**<br>[.14]  |
| Drug use                    | 1.33 <sup>2</sup><br>(.56)  | 1.24 <sup>2b</sup><br>(.59) | 1.42 <sup>a</sup><br>(.57)  | 8.53***<br>[.21]  | 1.36<br>(.56)  | 1.42<br>(.55)  | 1.49<br>[.05]     | 1.41<br>(.54)  | 1.37<br>(.54)  | .67<br>[.03]      |

<sup>c</sup> According to Cohen's criteria the *f* effect size conventions are: .10, small; .25, medium; and, .40, large. <sup>d</sup>  $\alpha = .05$ ; 1 > 2 > 3, a > b. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

parenting styles than planned (always higher than .18,  $M = .29$ , medium effect size). This enabled us to carry out pair-wise comparisons in order to contrast the two hypotheses of the study (Table 5).

*Main effects for sex, and parental education.* Although not central to the thrust of this study (sex and parental education did not change the relationships between parenting styles and youth outcomes), several univariate main effects for sex and parental education reached significance (see Table 5). With respect to measures of self-esteem, the analyses indicated that academic self-esteem scores were higher among girls, but emotional and physical self-esteem scores were higher among boys; emotional self-esteem scores were higher for adolescents of parents with higher education. With respect to measures of psychological maladjustment, girls reported more negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, and emotional instability. With respect to measures of personal competence, higher scores were reported by adolescents of parents with higher education. Finally, with respect to problem behaviors, boys reported more school misconduct and delinquency, and adolescents of parents with higher education reported less school misconduct and delinquency.

*Self-esteem and parenting styles.* As first hypothesized (Table 5), adolescents who characterized their parents as indulgent scored higher on all measures of self-esteem than did adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families. Also, as first hypothesized, adolescents from indulgent families scored more positively than those from authoritative parents on one measure of self-esteem (emotional), and equal on the other four areas of self-esteem measured (academic, social, family, and physical). Results partially confirmed the second hypothesis. Adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritative scored more positively than those from authoritarian and neglectful families on all areas of self-esteem measured, except for emotional self-esteem, where adolescents from authoritative families scored lower than those from neglectful parents.

*Psychological maladjustment and parenting styles.* As first hypothesized (Table 5), adolescents who characterized their parents as indulgent scored more positively on all measures of psychological maladjustment than did adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families, except for emotional instability (where adolescents of neglectful parents share the same scores). Also, as first hypothesized, adolescents from indulgent families scored more positively than did adolescents from authoritative parents on two measures of psychological maladjustment (emotional irresponsiveness, and negative worldview), and equal on three measures of psychological maladjust-

ment (hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy). Again, results only partially confirmed the second hypothesis. Adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritative scored more positively than did adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families on four measures of psychological maladjustment (hostility/aggression, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, and emotional irresponsiveness). However, although these adolescents scored more positively on the measure of negative worldview than those from authoritarian parents, their scores equaled those of adolescents from neglectful families. Results for the measure of emotional instability indicated that differences were not statistically significant.

*Personal competence and parenting styles.* As first hypothesized (Table 5), adolescents who characterized their parents as indulgent tend to score more positively on measures of personal competence than do adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families. However, no differences were found with respect to neglectful families on social competence. Also, as first hypothesized, adolescents' scores from indulgent families were equal on two measures of personal competence (social competence and grade point average) to those of adolescents from authoritative families. However, adolescents from indulgent families scored more positively than adolescents from authoritative parents on number of failing grades. Results partially confirmed the second hypothesis. Adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritative scored more positively than did adolescents from authoritarian parents on measures of social competence and grade point average, but the same on number of failing grades. Moreover, adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritative scored more positively than adolescents from neglectful parents on grade point average, but the same on number of failing grades (results for social competence were statistically indistinguishable with respect to adolescents who characterized their parents as neglectful).

*Problem behaviors and parenting styles.* As first hypothesized (Table 5), adolescents who characterized their parents as indulgent scored more positively on all measures of problem behaviors (school misconduct, delinquency, and drug use) than did adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families. Also, as hypothesized, adolescents from indulgent families scored the same on all measures of problem behaviors than did adolescents from authoritative families. Results confirmed the second hypothesis. Adolescents who characterized their parents as authoritative scored more positively than adolescents from authoritarian and neglectful families on measures of problem behaviors.

## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to analyze the relationships between parenting styles and adolescents' youth outcomes using a two-dimensional four-typology model of parenting styles, and four sets of outcome variables with a sample of Spanish adolescents. We expected that high levels of parental warmth combined with low levels of parental strictness (i.e., an indulgent style of parenting) would be associated with optimum youth outcomes. Overall, our results supported the idea that in Spain the optimum style of parenting is the indulgent one, because adolescents' scores on the four sets of youth outcomes were equal to or better than the authoritative style of parenting.

These results confirm previous research in some South European (Marchetti, 1997; Musitu & García, 2001, 2004) and South American countries (Martinez et al., 2003; Martinez et al., 2007; Villalobos et al., 2004), as well as in other cultural contexts (Hindin, 2005; Wolfradt et al., 2003; Kim & Rhoner, 2002), suggesting that adolescents from indulgent families do perform equally or even better than adolescents from authoritative households. Our results also add to a growing body of research questioning the idea that the authoritative parenting style is always associated with optimum youth outcomes across all cultural and ethnic contexts (see Steinberg, 2001). For example, in some ethnic and cultural contexts, authoritarian parenting has successfully competed with authoritative parenting for some optimal outcomes (e.g., Chao, 1994; 2001; Dwairy et al., 2006; Leung, et al., 1998; Quoss & Zhao, 1995; Steinberg et al., 1992). The present study suggests that, at least in some cultural contexts, indulgent parenting can also compete with authoritative parenting for optimal outcomes in adolescence.

Our results confirmed the first hypothesis because adolescents from indulgent families scored more positively on the four sets of outcomes than did those from authoritarian and neglectful families. Adolescents from indulgent families also scored equally or higher than adolescents from authoritative families. In this respect, it is interesting to note that we consistently found that adolescents from authoritative families performed worse than those from indulgent families on several outcomes associated with emotional adjustment and academic achievement. Compared to adolescents from indulgent families, those from authoritative families were more emotionally unresponsive (i.e., more emotionally insulated from others), held a more negative worldview (i.e., an overall evaluation of life as more insecure, threatening, hostile or uncertain), scored lower on emotional self-esteem (i.e., positive feelings and self-appraisal about one's emotional state and control over

stressors), and scored worse on the number of failing grades. In the rest of the outcomes examined, adolescents from authoritative families performed equally with adolescents from indulgent families, but never better. As we also hypothesized, overall, adolescents from authoritative families also performed better than those from authoritarian and neglectful families.

From these results, indulgent parenting (characterized by the combination of high levels of warmth and low levels of strictness) appears to be in the Spanish cultural context the optimum parenting style. Adolescents of authoritative families (where adolescents perform equally and, in some cases, worse than adolescents from indulgent families) would perform between the maximum adjustment of the indulgent group and the minimum overall adjustment of the authoritarian and neglectful parenting. Both the indulgent and authoritative parenting styles (high levels of parental warmth and involvement) are associated with better outcomes than authoritarian and neglectful parenting (both sharing low levels of parental warmth and involvement). However, because adolescents from authoritative families (characterized by high levels of strictness) in some cases perform worse than those from indulgent families (characterized by low levels of strictness), this suggests that the key to effective socialization is parental warmth and involvement (all parenting styles with low levels of parental warmth tend to perform worse). This also suggests that strictness is either unnecessary or of little importance (adolescents from authoritative parents perform in many outcomes equally with those from indulgent parents), or may be associated with negative outcomes (those from authoritative parenting perform worse in some outcomes). Therefore, the combination of high levels of parental warmth and involvement with low levels of strictness appears to be the best parenting strategy in the Spanish context.

Clearly, these results differ from those obtained in other cultural contexts. But they can be explained by drawing from the theoretical ideas outlined earlier. In a cultural context, such as that of Spain, which has been described as horizontal collectivistic (Gouveia et al., 2003; Triandis, 1995, 2001), egalitarian rather than hierarchical relations are emphasized, and strictness in parental practices would not have the positive meaning they would have in other contexts such as the United States—characterized by vertical individualism—or Asian cultures—characterized by vertical collectivism. Whereas in these latter contexts, where hierarchical relations are emphasized more, parental strictness practices would be more effective (Rudy & Grusec, 2001), in horizontal collectivistic countries these practices would be more inef-

fective or unnecessary for effective socialization (Gouveia et al., 2004; Martínez et al., 2007; Martínez & García, 2007). These issues are, however, still open to debate (Keller et al., 2007; Lins-Dyer & Nucci, 2007; Reglin & Adams, 1990; Sorkhabi, 2005). As Sorkhabi (2005) noted, more research is needed before conclusions can be reached about the extent to which culture constructs such as individualism and collectivism explain effects on child development.

Finally, this study has some strengths and limitations. One strength is the use of a wide range of outcomes which allowed us to explore the relevance of the different parenting styles on youth outcomes that posit different socialization challenges (e.g., enhancing self-esteem, reducing problem behaviors, improving school performance); and extending the results of other studies with a more limited number of outcomes and different measures of parenting dimensions (e.g., Musitu & García, 2004; Martínez & García, 2007, 2008). Also the magnitude of effects obtained in this study is even higher than those found in other classical studies examining these issues (e.g., Lamborn et al., 1991). Despite these strengths, two considerations need to be taken into account. First, results may have been influenced by the fact that the adolescents reported on their parents' behavior, although adolescent self-reports contribute meaningfully to our understanding of family process (Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Steinberg et al., 1994), and similar results have been obtained on parenting styles in spite of different methods of data collection (see Baumrind, 1991; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994). Second, the study was cross-sectional and hence did not provide the opportunity to test causal hypotheses which explore issues of directionality (Lila, Van Aken, Musitu, & Buelga, 2006; Maccoby, 2000). Therefore in the absence of longitudinal or experimental data, the findings here must be considered as preliminary.

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