Growing up in families at psychosocial risk.

Developmental analysis during childhood and adolescence

DEVELOPMENTAL & EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Doctoral Thesis presented by
Lucía Jiménez
to obtain Ph. Degree - European Mention

Doctoral Thesis Supervisor
PhD María Victoria Hidalgo
Professor at the Developmental & Educational Psychology Department

Seville, 2009 September

Table of contents

Introduction

Today few doubts remain that the family should be recognised as the primordial context for human development, an acknowledgment by both the scientific community as well as social institutions. As the primary institution of our social organisation, the basic economic and consumer building block, the germane system for cultural transmission and the perpetuator of human groupings, the family has been sought out in multiple scientific disciplines as a dynamic worthy of study and comprehension.

In the field of psychology, psychoanalysts and social-learning theorists began to concern themselves with the study of the family, stressing the importance of fathers' and mothers' behaviour[1] in child development (López, 2005). From that point forward, various priorities, models and theories have been proposed to develop this idea and gain a deeper understanding of the processes that said behaviour comprehends.

Developmental and educational psychology is among the highest ranking of our discipline's focal points as interest in family studies has expanded, particularly in recent decades (e.g., Bornstein, 2002; Rodrigo & Palacios, 1998). In this sense, the most recent developmental-educational view presents the **role of the family as a developmental context**. Contextualist, transactional and ecological/system-based assumptions serve as the basic pillars for this reflection since they present this particular interest in family in a coherent and integral manner (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cox & Paley, 1997; Lerner, 1986; Sameroff & Mackenzie, 2003).

[1] Throughout this paper, we occasionally use the masculine gender to refer to both sexes, in accordance with the linguistic law of expressive brevity (Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española y Real Academia Española, 2005). This decision is not intended to be discriminatory in any sense, rather it has been made to avoid repetitions that complicate an understanding of the discourse and, where employed, a term of such nature always makes reference to both sexes explicit.

With respect to the family as the developmental context, the discipline of developmental and educational psychology has been characterised by the special attention it lends to the interindividual variability experienced in children's, adolescents' and, to a lesser extent, adults' development. Bronfenbrenner, in *The Ecology of Human Development*, proffers an excellent definition of the term development, which guides us in our reflections:

> Human development is the process through which the growing person acquires a more extended differentiated, and valid conception of the ecological environment, and becomes motivated and able to engage in activities that reveal the properties of, sustain, or restructure that environment at levels of similar or greater complexity in form and content (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 27).

We consider it pertinent to underscore developmental and educational psychology's notion of human development as well its examination of interindividual variability, given that our approach to the family system follows our professional field's traditional concern with the variability existent in development and the variables inherent in family education contexts. With this as our starting point, we believe that a brief discussion of the concerns that have guided **the path of our research** will be very useful for understanding the objectives of our work.

Researchers are familiar with the interindividual variability that characterises development and of the importance of family education in understanding this variability; as such, our research objectives have lead us to concern ourselves especially with those family contexts in which the family members' development and educational needs, particularly those of the youngest members, have been threatened.

It is not always easy to be a mother or father nowadays, nor is it easy to grow up and develop in current societies (Rodrigo, 2002); and the difficulties experienced in the family setting have captured our attention, as well as that of many researchers, to the extent that such experience may require specific examination through which we might comprehend the development of children and adolescents who grow up in these environments.

As a result of this concern for family contexts that do not adequately satisfy the needs of their members, since 2003, we have been collaborating with the Social Welfare Department of the Seville City Government for the purpose of optimising intervention strategies designed to attend to families at psychosocial risk. Specifically, we have focussed on deepening our study of families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes.

The collaborative route that we have taken in conjunction with the city government and the university has resulted in varied activities concerning development of the psychosocial reality of families who use the social and community services, the programme design for family interventions intended to serve this population, and advising the professionals who work with families who meet this profile.

Considering these actions, it is not difficult to deduce that we are dealing with a process of applied research, enriched by contact with the professionals who design family interventions via social services, as well as with the children, adolescents and adults who are members of these families. Our research process is today, and we believe will continue to be, a process of reflection and deepening with respect to families facing difficulties, with the final objective being to promote, support and improve interventions with families in situations of psychosocial risk from the philosophical point of view of family preservation, especially through support programmes for mothers and fathers.

In our approach and outreach with the families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, we have concerned ourselves particularly with the development of children and adolescents who grow up in these family contexts. Specifically, in earlier research work used by this doctoral candidate to obtain her Diploma of Advanced Studies, we examined in detail psychosocial stress and positive adaptation during adolescence from the perspective of the family at psychosocial risk (Jiménez, 2007).

With respect to the research work conducted earlier, the **focus posited in this study** assumes a deeper examination of families at psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation. On the one hand, this dissertation presents a study of the different developmental facets of preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents who grow up in these families, with the objective of drawing a comprehensive map throughout the course of development. Moreover, we call special attention to adolescent adjustment given the peculiarities that make this developmental stage a sensitive period in terms of confronting certain difficulties (Steinberg & Silk, 2002), examining from a school perspective the protective role that successful educational experiences may play for adolescents in difficult situations (e.g., Eccles & Roeser, 1999).

On the other hand, we will delve deeper into the important role that families at risk for family preservation purposes play in their sons' and daughters' development. In this respect, this dissertation, in addition to presenting new content, seeks a more mature approach to the reality in which these families live, the result of a more complex understanding of how they function from a strengthening point of view (Rodrigo, Máiquez, Martín, & Byrne, 2008). For this reason, although this dissertation provides descriptive information regarding the families, effort has been made to understand some of the family processes that guarantee the development of the children and adolescents facing difficulties and, specifically, positive adaptation in confronting relevant developmental tasks at each developmental stage (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Specifically, the **objective** of this dissertation is to analyse different developmental facets of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, examining the role of these families as positive developmental contexts for their sons and daughters as they grow.

In order to meet this objective, the **complete doctoral dissertation (Spanish version)** has been divided into four sections. The first section provides a review of the literature concerning those questions related directly to the objective of this study. Thus, we examine the theoretical assumptions necessary to study families at psychosocial risk; approach to and outreach with these families is based on the philosophy of family preservation; and different adjustment indicators are described for children and adolescents who grow up in at-risk families, with special attention given to self-perception of the parental role and family functioning as key tools to understanding such. This chapter ends with the presentation of the research objectives of the doctoral dissertation and of the primary expectations of the results with respect to said objectives.

The second section describes the method of the study and the course of analysis. First, we describe the study sample in detail. Second, we introduce the procedure used to collect the information and evaluation measures used. Third, we describe the course of analysis designed to conduct the statistical analyses that will be presented in the chapter containing the results.

The third section presents the empirical results of the doctoral thesis. Specifically, we first describe the psychosocial profile of the sample of families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, as well as the development of the preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents who grow up in these families. Second, we present various analyses based on the available information, including: comparative analyses between different developmental-educational stages, predictive analyses of measurements of the family environment with respect to the children's and adolescents' development at different ages, and comparative analyses of the results obtained from the subjects with respect to their peers. Third, we offer a detailed examination of adolescent adjustment in the family context from a school perspective. Specifically, we explore the variability of different adjustment indicators, the importance of school participation, and the relevance of positive adaptation to school, always noting the role of the family in understanding these aspects.

The fourth section discusses the findings of this doctoral dissertation with respect to the initial literature review, drawing some final conclusions and offering some last reflections on the limitations of our work and the roads that research can take in this field of study.

Finally, we include a references list, which documents the bibliography we have used in this dissertation, and various appendixes, which contain both the evaluation tools used as well as some material related to the chapter containing the results.

The following pages serve as an **English summary of the doctoral dissertation**, where the discussion of the results and the main conclusions are highlighted. The first section of this summary includes the research objectives of the doctoral dissertation and the primary expectations of the results with respect to said objectives.

The second section describes the method of the study. First, we describe the study sample in detail. Second, we introduce the procedure used to collect the information and the evaluation measures used.

The third section presents a summary of the empirical results of the doctoral thesis. Specifically, we first describe the psychosocial profile of the sample of families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, as well as the development of the preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents who grow up in these families. Second, we summarize various analyses based on the available information, including: comparative analyses between different developmental-educational stages, predictive analyses of measurements of the family environment with respect to the children's and adolescents' development at different ages, and comparative analyses of the results obtained from the subjects with respect to their peers. Third, we offer the main results of a detailed examination of adolescent adjustment in the family context from a school perspective. Specifically, we explore the variability of different adjustment indicators, the importance of school participation, and the relevance of positive adaptation to school, always noting the role of the family in understanding these aspects.

The fourth section discusses the findings of this doctoral dissertation with respect to the initial literature review, drawing some final conclusions and offering some last reflections on the limitations of our work and the roads that research can take in this field of study. Finally, we include a references list, which documents the bibliography we have used in this English summary of the doctoral dissertation.

I. Aims and expected results

Before moving on to questions of method and the results obtained, we must be clear about the objectives that have led us to conducting this study and the expected results of the study's empirical data collection.

1. Research objectives

There are still some unanswered questions concerning the development of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes; and in order to answer some of these questions under the theoretical framework explained in the complete version of this doctoral dissertation, it is important to restate the primary objective of this study:

> ***To analyse distinct developmental facets of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, examining the role of these families as positive developmental contexts for their sons and daughters.***

This general objective requires, in the first place, being extremely close to these families and to their reality, describing in detail different aspects of these educational contexts as well as the development of the children who grow up in them. This initial

approximation will give us the tools to respond to two more specific objectives, each of which requires, in turn, further specific research. The following states the specific objectives of this study and the research conducted to meet them:

- In the first place, we seek a comprehensive view of the development of the children of different ages who grow up in families at psychosocial risk. In order to achieve this objective, we must:
    - Describe the *psychosocial profile of the families* participating in the study, noting their socio-demographic characteristics and measuring variables concerning family dynamics as educational contexts.
    - Examine *different adjustment indicators* of the children and adolescents who grow up in these families, analysing these indicators for different developmental periods, and for boys separately from girls.
    - Analyse the role of these *families as positive developmental contexts* for their sons and daughters of different ages.
- In the second place, we seek a thorough examination of adolescent boys and girls who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, paying special attention to their experience at school. In particular, this specific objective translates to the following research:
    - *Explore variability in overall adjustment* of the adolescents who grow up in these families, identifying a typology that accounts for this variability, as well as other socio-demographic and family data related to said typology.
    - *Examine the boys' and girls' adjustment to school*; specifically, analysing their degree of *school participation* and the relationship of said participation to other relevant personal and family data.
    - *Examine the adolescents' adjustment to school*; in this case, considering *situations of positive adaptation to the educational context* and exploring the personal and family characteristics of the boys and girls who demonstrate more positive adaptation.

2. Expected results

As a result of literature's contribution to the topic with respect to the purposes of this study, and based on our experience in applied research, we have made predictions of the empirical results of this work vis-à-vis the objectives proposed. The following lists the most relevant predictions.

In terms of **a comprehensive view of the development of the children of different ages who grow up in families at psychosocial risk**:

- The psychosocial profile of the sample of families participating in the research project will demonstrate specific characteristics that place these families at risk in terms of their functioning as adequate developmental contexts for their sons and daughters. This state of difficulty will be felt more specifically in families with adolescents, a result of the combined effect of the negative situations these families experience and the particular vulnerabilities that normatively occur in adolescence.

- The adjustment indicators of the boys and girls who grow up in these families, at different ages, will bring to light a specific profile, characterized by the presence of some negative indicators that do not agree with normative expectations for their developmental stage. Difficulties will be felt most by adolescents, a result of the combined effect of the negative situations these families experience and the particular vulnerabilities that normally occur in adolescence. Likewise, this profile will demonstrate different characteristics from one child to the next as a result of personal characteristics and different socialisation experiences.

- The role of these families as positive developmental contexts for their sons and daughters of different ages will be very relevant and will contribute to predicting different adjustment indicators. The different variables in the family environment will show a greater predictive capacity during the school-age period. This is due to the fact that, in this developmental stage, boys and girls are less exposed to the influence of their peers and to experiencing other difficulties than are adolescents. The individual characteristics of the parents will fundamentally contribute indirectly to this prediction with repercussions in how the family functions.

With respect to the **thorough examination of adolescent boys and girls who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, paying special attention to their experience at school**:

- In general, these boys and girls will show difficulties in different adjustment indicators, including those related to school participation.

- Nevertheless, there will be a degree of variability in these adolescents' adjustment, and we will be able to identify specific profiles in terms of overall adjustment as well as in terms of experience in the academic environment.

- The adolescents' socio-demographic and family profile will differ in terms of adjustment experienced by the adolescent boys and girls, with more favourable indicators in those groups who are better adjusted and have a more positive school experience.

- The variables regarding the family context, particularly those related to family functioning as a developmental context will contribute to predict these boys' and girls' school adjustment, particularly for those who are more positively adapted in school.

II. Method

The work described in this chapter is part of a research project that, given its magnitude, cannot be dealt with in its entirety in these pages. In 2003, a group of researchers in the Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology at the University of Seville took an interest in studying families at psychosocial risk for family-preservation purposes. This interest has resulted in successive collaboration agreements between the University and the Seville City Government and in a research and development project financed by the Ministry of Science and Innovation. Together, this collaboration process has allowed us to describe the psychosocial reality of families receiving social- and community-services (SS.SS.) intervention for family preservation purposes, to design specific intervention programmes for this population, and to advise professionals working with these families.

This dissertation occupies a part of this broad research framework; specifically, the part concerning the examination of some key aspects of the psychosocial profile of the families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family preservation purposes who were evaluated in the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years, including the evaluation of the development of the preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents in these families as well as through evaluation of the reference group of peers in the school context. In this section we describe in detail the manner in which the study was conducted.

Specifically, in the first place, we describe the sample used in this research work, that is to say, the study participants. In the second place, we detail the measures and the evaluation procedure used.

1. Sample description

As explained above, the results of this research refer to families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes that were evaluated in the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years, including their preschool-aged, school-aged children and adolescents from these families as well as a reference group of peers in the school context.

We describe the participants in this study throughout this section. In order to accomplish this, the entire research sample, which totals 2207 subjects, is first classified into two groups:

- On the one hand, we describe the families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes and their preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents, that is to say 267 parents and 267 children and adolescents (hereinafter, the SS.SS. sample)[2].

- On the other hand, we describe the sample comprised of peers, that is to say 1673 subjects (hereinafter, the reference group).

The following Table 1 lists **the total sample of this study**, classified according to the frequency and percentage of subjects evaluated in each cohort, that is to say the school year (form) in which the children and adolescents participated in the study. Although this study deals with consecutive series pertaining to the same population, we decided to test the sample comparability in the different cohorts included in this study. Thus, for each group and cohort, we compared both the socio-demographic characteristics thereof as well as the average points received for the different measurements and variables included in this study. No statistically significant nor clinically relevant differences were found in any of the aspects compared, which has lead to our assuming the near comparability of the groups evaluated in the different cohorts and, therefore, their similarity (Chacón, Shadish, & Cook, 2008; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002).

[2] For the sake of linguistic brevity, in several parts of the empirical section of this study, abbreviations have been used to refer to *families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes*, using terms such as *families participating in social services*, *families from SS.SS.,* or *SS.SS. sample*.

Table 1. Distribution of the total sample (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the cohort in which the data were collected

Cohort		SS.SS.		Reference group	Total
		Parents	Children & Adolesc.		
2005-2006	*n*	80	80	770	930
	%	29,96%	29,96%	46,03%	42,14%
2006-2007	*n*	80	80	603	763
	%	29,96%	29,96%	36,04%	34,57%
2007-2008	*n*	107	107	300	514
	%	40,07%	40,07%	17,93%	23,29%
Total	***n***	**267**	**267**	**1673**	**2207**
	%	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

In Table 1 we see that the percentage of subjects evaluated in the 2007-2008 cohort included a smaller number of subjects (23,29%)[3] compared to the rest of the series included in this study. These differences were due to the research team's decision to reduce the size of the reference group in this cohort. This decision will be discussed further in the section concerning procedure.

In addition to presenting information regarding the time frame in which the subjects of the investigation participated in the study, the following table contains information regarding their place of residence. In this respect, the sample described in this dissertation pertained entirely to the city of Seville and, therefore, always corresponded to urban habitation. Nevertheless, in this research project, we decided to specify the Social and Community Districts (ZTS) established by local government as indicators of the residential district. Table 2 includes the frequencies and percentages of each ZTS. The distribution of the total sample into five large districts demonstrates, as we see it, reasonable representation of the data used for this research within the city of Seville.

[3] The full version of this doctoral thesis (in Spanish) uses the comma as the decimal separator as this is the generally accepted notation in Spanish. For the purpose of coherence, this summary also employs the comma as the decimal separator throughout this document.

Table 2. Distribution of the total sample (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the residential zone

Residential district		SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Sur	*n*	52	135	187
	%	9,74%	8,07%	8,47%
Este-Torreblanca	*n*	186	548	734
	%	34,83%	32,76%	33,26%
Nervión-San Pablo	*n*	52	167	219
	%	9,74%	9,98%	9,92%
Norte-Macarena	*n*	128	444	572
	%	23,97%	26,54%	25,92%
Casco Antiguo-Triana-Los Remedios	*n*	116	379	495
	%	21,72%	22,65%	22,43%
Total	*n*	534	1673	2207
	%	100%	100%	100%

Having presented the time frame and spatial environment in which the research participants were evaluated, we must point out certain socio-demographic indicators that allow us to describe the sample in greater detail. Specifically, we present some family information that, while not included for analysis in the chapter containing the study results, may prove useful for more detailed family descriptions. Specifically, the following tables/graphs include information concerning the age of the parents participant in the study (primary caregiver), the parent's relation to the child, the family's monthly income and the stability of said income.

Figure 1 below shows the distribution of families from SS.SS. and the descriptive statistics in terms of the primary caregiver's age. With respect to this variable, we see that, on average, the age of the parents in families from SS.SS. was approximately 39 years old (M = 38,59). Parents between 23 and 69 years of age participated in this study, while, as can be seen in Figure 1, the majority of the participants fell within the age range of 30 to 45 years old.

Figure 1. Distribution of the families from SS.SS. and descriptive statistics in terms of the primary caregiver's age

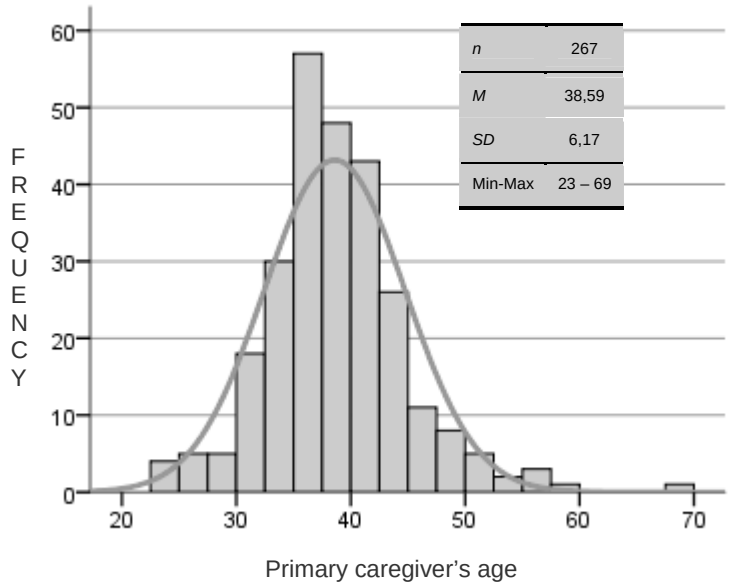


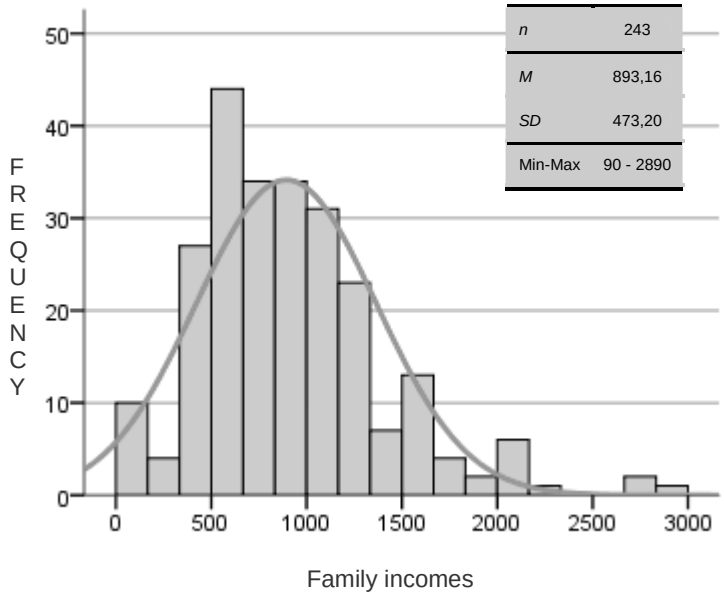
Table 3 below shows the distribution of families from SS.SS. in terms of the relationship of the primary caregiver (study participant) to the child or adolescent evaluated in this study. As can be seen in the table, the majority of the caregivers were the children's and adolescent's biological mothers (94,01%), although some cases reported uncles as the primary caregivers (3,75%), followed by grandparents (1,87%) and, in a single case, the biological father (0,37%). Given the overwhelming presence of mothers as the primary caregivers in the study, this dissertation refers to mothers when referring to the primary parent participating in the study.

Table 3. Distribution of the families from SS.SS. (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the primary caregiver's relationship to the child/adolescent

Primary caregiver's relationship to the child/adolescent	***n***	**%**
Biological mother	251	94,01%
Biological father	1	0,37%
Grandfather or grandmother	5	1,87%
Uncle or aunt	10	3,75%
Total	267	100%

Finally, with respect to the sample of families from SS.SS., we include a graph of the families' economic profile. Specifically, the following graphs the distribution of these families and the primary descriptive statistics in terms of monthly family incomes. It should be noted that this distribution totalled all family incomes resulting from the parents' labours as well as incomes from social aid and from other family members who contributed to the family incomes (such as an elder son's paid work, or financial help from grandparents, etcetera).

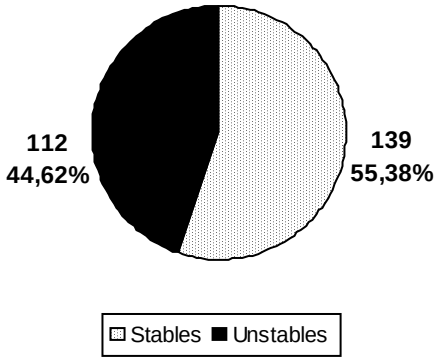
Figure 2. Distribution of the families from SS.SS. and descriptive statistics in terms of monthly family incomes



As can be seen in Figure 2, there was great variation in the monthly income of the families from SS.SS. who participated in the study. On average, these families earned 893,16€ per month, while incomes ranged from 90€ to 2890€. It should also be noted that the majority of families earned moderate incomes between 350€ and 1350€ per month.

In Figure 3 below we see the distribution of participating families from SS.SS. in terms of incomes stability for the economic results reported above. It should be noted that, according to the results graphed in this figure, 42,62% of the families who participated in the study did not enjoy economic stability in terms of their monthly incomes.

Figure 3. Distribution of families from SS.SS. (frequencies and percentages) in terms of stability of monthly family incomes (n = 251)



Having presented the information concerning the family profile of the SS.SS. sample, we now go on to describe the **socio-demographic profile of the children and adolescents who participated in the study**. Thus, we include information concerning both the children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. as well as the group of their school peers (reference group). Specifically, we describe some relevant socio-demographic characteristics (the children's and adolescents' developmental-educational stage, age and gender) as well as information related to the school that the subjects attended and at which the research was conducted (type of school and level of schooling offered at the school, as well as the stage of study and school year (form) in which the boys and girls participating in the study were enrolled).

Table 4 below includes the distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (including frequencies and percentages) in terms of their developmental-educational stage at the time the research was conducted: early childhood, school-age period, and adolescence. It is clear from Table 4 that the majority, 70,82%, of the sample of children and adolescents were in the adolescent stage. This accumulation is in step both with the characteristics of the families from SS.SS. among whom the children and adolescents were chosen as well as with the procedure developed to comprise the reference group in each developmental-educational stage. Both questions will be discussed in more detail in the section concerning procedure.

Table 4. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the developmental-educational stage

Developmental-educational stage		SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Early childhood	*n*	52	184	236
	%	19,48%	11,00%	12,16%
School-age period	*n*	75	255	330
	%	28,09%	15,24%	17,01%
Adolescence	*n*	140	1234	1374
	%	52,43%	73,76%	70,82%
Total	*n*	267	1673	1940
	%	100%	100%	100%

This table clearly shows the differences in the sizes of the groups of children and adolescents who participated in the study in that 267 subjects from families participating in SS.SS. were included while 1673 reference-group subjects from the schools were included. Given the disparity in the size of the groups and given that the chapter reporting the results compared the SS.SS.-receiving group and the reference group, a random selection was taken from the reference group that was equivalent in size to the SS.SS.-receiving group, and classified accordingly per developmental-educational stage. The main inter-group contrasts from the results section were computed on two occasions: once including the total sample of the reference group and once including only the randomly selected group. Given the fact that the results obtained were similar in both cases, we decided to keep the entire reference group, since the larger size offers more variety and better representation of the population to which it refers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Table 5 below presents the distribution of the sample of children and adolescents and the primary descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) in terms of age. As we can see in the table, frequencies associated with each age for each of the developmental-educational levels are reported and, after that, the mean and standard deviation are reported with respect to this measurement in total, that is to say, taking into consideration all of the developmental-educational stages together.

Table 5. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents and descriptive statistics in terms of age

Developmental-educational stage	Age	SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Early childhood	1	0	2	2
	2	8	26	34
	3	10	37	47
	4	17	55	72
	5	13	53	66
	6	4	11	15
	Subtotal	52	184	236
	M (*SD*)	3,90 (1,18)	3,89 (1,18)	3,89 (1,18)
School-age period	6	5	18	23
	7	16	61	77
	8	18	58	76
	9	17	58	75
	10	19	60	79
	Subtotal	75	255	330
	M (D*D*)	8,39 (1,26)	8,32 (1,26)	8,33 (1,26)
Adolescence	11	25	218	243
	12	22	322	344
	13	29	333	362
	14	18	200	218
	15	18	78	96
	16	16	52	68
	17	8	31	39
	18	3	0	3
	19	1	0	1
	Subtotal	140	1233	1373
	M (*SD*)	13,59 (1,98)	12,90 (1,47)	12,97 (1,54)
Total	*n*	267	1673	1940
	M (*SD*)	10,24 (4,18)	11,21 (3,36)	11,08 (3,50)

We see in Table 5 that the early-childhood developmental-educational stage included boys and girls from one to six years of age, with an average age of 3,89 years old (*SD* = 1,18). During the school-age period, children aged six through 10, with the average age being 8,33 years old (*SD* = 1,26). During the adolescent stage, subjects from

11 to 19 years old were evaluated, with the average age being 12,97 years old (*SD* = 1,54).

We also see in Table 5 that late adolescence included a small part of the sample (43 subjects between the ages of 17 and 19), while the majority of the adolescent boys and girls were in early adolescence (949 subjects between the ages of 11 and 13 years old). This distribution of subjects during adolescence should be taken into account when interpreting the results and drawing conclusions. In overall terms, the average age of the sample was 11,08 years old, with a standard deviation of 3,50. The existence of possible differences between both subjects groups (SS.SS. and reference group) were explored with respect to age in each of the developmental-educational stages studied. Given the lack of homogeneity of variance and the size of the groups, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used. The results corroborated the significant differences during adolescence (U = 70162,50, p = 0,000), such that the age of boys and girls receiving SS.SS. was, on average, significantly older than their peers (M = 13,59 versus M = 12,90), an aspect that should be taken into consideration upon interpreting the results reported in the following chapter.

Table 6, below, shows the distribution of the sample of children and adolescents in terms of gender. Once again we included the frequencies and percentages associated with this measurement for each developmental-educational stage and, after that, the information is reported in total. As seen in Table 6, in general, the sample of children and adolescents who participated in the study was equally distributed in terms of gender, both in the SS.SS. group (43,45% girls and 56,55% boys) and in the reference group (48,38% girls and 51,62% boys). For each of the developmental-educational stages studied, we tested for the existence of possible significant differences in the percentage of boys and girls present in each group (SS.SS. and reference group) by applying the Chi-square test to one sample. The results demonstrated the existence of equitable distribution in all cases, although the preschool-aged children from families participating in SS.SS. showed a marginally significant difference of more boys than girls (63,46% versus 36,54%), which should be taken into account when interpreting the results contained in the following section of this dissertation.

Table 6. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (frequencies and percentages) in terms of gender

Developmental-educational stage	Group		Gender		Total
			Girls	Boys	
Early childhood	SS.SS.	*n*	19	33	52
		%	36,54%	63,46%	100%
	Reference group	*n*	69	85	154
		%	44,81%	55,19%	100%
	Subtotal	*n*	88	118	206
		%	42,72%	57,28%	100%
School-age period	SS.SS.	*n*	32	43	75
		%	42,67%	57,33%	100%
	Reference group	*n*	124	109	233
		%	53,22%	46,78%	100%
	Subtotal	*n*	156	152	308
		%	50,65%	49,35%	100%
Adolescence	SS.SS.	*n*	65	75	140
		%	46,43%	53,57%	100%
	Reference group	*n*	584	635	1219
		%	47,91%	52,09%	100%
	Subtotal	*n*	649	710	1359
		%	47,76%	52,24%	100%
Total	SS.SS.	*n*	116	151	267
		%	43,45%	56,55%	100%
	Reference group	*n*	777	829	1606
		%	48,38%	51,62%	100%
	Total	*n*	893	980	1873
		%	47,68%	52,32%	100%

Having presented the main descriptive information related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the children and adolescents (developmental-educational stage, age and gender), we present some descriptive measurements concerning the school where the subjects included in the study were enrolled. At the time the research was conducted, the children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. were enrolled in 104 different schools. As we will describe in the section detailing the procedure, the reference group was selected taking into consideration the context of the nearest group of SS.SS. receivers; therefore, this group was comprised of said children's and adolescents' peers.

The following reports information concerning the characteristics of the schools attended by the children and adolescents participating in the study. Specifically, Table 7

includes the distribution of the sample of children and adolescents in terms of the type of school in which the children and adolescents were enrolled.

Table 7. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the type of school

Type of school		SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Private school (i.e. funded by the government)	*n*	202	1261	1463
	%	78,91%	75,37%	75,84%
State-subsidised public school (i.e. funded by the government and managed by private citizens)	*n*	47	393	440
	%	18,36%	23,49%	22,81%
Public school (i.e. funded and managed by private citizens)	*n*	7	19	26
	%	2,73%	1,14%	1,35%
Total	*n*	256	1673	1929
	%	100%	100%	100%

We can observe in Table 7 that the majority of the children and adolescents participating in the study were enrolled in private schools (75,84%), while a small percentage was schooled in state-subsidised public schools (22,81%) or public schools (1,35%).

In addition to the type of school, we collected information concerning the level of schooling offered at the schools in which the participating children and adolescents were enrolled. In Table 8, we present the distribution of the sample of children and adolescents in terms of this variable as well as the frequencies and percentages associated with each type of school. The table clearly shows that the subjects who participated in the study were distributed among preschools, preschools and elementary schools, elementary schools, elementary and secondary schools, and exclusively secondary schools. The most frequent cases were children enrolled in schools or institutions that offered exclusively secondary education (35,87%), preschools and elementary schools (38,52%), and schools offering elementary and secondary education (21,10%).

Table 8. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the level of schooling offered at the school

Level of schooling offered at the school		SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Preschools	*n*	15	51	66
	%	5,86%	3,05%	3,42%
Preschools and elementary schools	*n*	125	618	743
	%	48,83%	36,94%	38,52%
Elementary schools	*n*	5	16	21
	%	1,95%	0,96%	1,09%
Elementary and secondary schools	*n*	40	367	407
	%	15,62%	21,94%	21,10%
Secondary schools	*n*	71	621	692
	%	27,73%	37,12%	35,87%
Total	*n*	256	1673	1929
	%	100%	100%	100%

Having described the general characteristics of the schools at which the children and adolescents participating in the study were enrolled, we proceed to report the school year (form) of each participant. Specifically, Table 9 presents information concerning the children's and adolescents' stage of study, and Table 10 presents the frequencies and percentages associated with the school year (form). Given that we are dealing with more specific measurements concerning the subjects' schools, both variables have been reported separately in terms of the developmental-educational stage corresponding to the participating children.

Table 9 shows the relationship of the children's and adolescents' stage of study, and we see that, in the early-childhood developmental-educational stage, the boys and girls participating in the study overwhelmingly pertained to the second stage of preschool (84,75%). In the school-age period, the majority of the child or adolescent participants pertained to the first stage (44,24%) and to the second stage (43,33%) of elementary school. Finally, in the adolescent stage, the majority of the boys and girls pertained to the first stage of required secondary school (58,98%) and to the second stage of elementary school (31,15%).

Table 9. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (frequencies and percentages) in terms of the stage of study

Developmental-educational stage	Stage of study		SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Early childhood	1st stage of preschool	*n*	9	27	36
		%	17,31%	14,67%	15,25%
	2nd stage of preschool	*n*	43	157	200
		%	82,69%	85,33%	84,75%
	Total	*n*	52	184	236
		%	100%	100%	100%
School-age period	1st stage of elementary school	*n*	31	115	146
		%	41,33%	45,10%	44,24%
	2nd stage of elementary school	*n*	32	111	143
		%	42,67%	43,53%	43,33%
	3rd stage of elementary school	*n*	12	29	41
		%	16,00%	11,37%	12,42%
	Total	*n*	75	255	330
		%	100%	100%	100%
Adolescence	2nd stage of elementary school	*n*	1	2	3
		%	0,80%	0,16%	0,22%
	3rd stage of elementary school	*n*	41	382	423
		%	32,80%	30,98%	31,15%
	1st stage of required secondary school	*n*	62	739	801
		%	49,60%	59,94%	58,98%
	2nd stage of req. secondary school	*n*	15	73	88
		%	12,00%	5,92%	6,48%
	Baccalaureate	*n*	6	37	43
		%	4,80%	3,00%	3,17%
	Total	*n*	125	1233	1358
		%	100%	100%	100%

Table 10 includes more specific information regarding the schooling of the children and adolescents participating in the research project. Thus, with respect to the school year (form), it should be noted that, during the early-childhood developmental-educational stage, the majority of the boys and girls in the study were enrolled in one of the school years (forms) from the second stage of preschool (preschool: 3, 4 or 5 years old) and, less frequently, in the first stage of primary school (15,58%). In the school-age period, the majority of the boys and girls were enrolled in some school year (form) between year one and year five, with a tiny percentage of children enrolled in year six of primary school (0,62%). Finally, the majority of the boys and girls in the adolescent stage were enrolled in year six of primary school (24,72%), in year one of required secondary school (40,69%) and year two of required secondary school (18,32%).

Table 10. Distribution of the sample of children and adolescents (frequencies and percentages) in terms of school year (form)

Developmental-educational stage	School Year (Form)		SS.SS.	Reference group	Total
Early childhood	Preschool: toddler	*n*	9	27	36
		%	17,65%	15,00%	15,58%
	Preschool: 3 y.o.	*n*	13	47	60
		%	25,49%	26,11%	25,97%
	Preschool: 4 y.o.	*n*	15	52	67
		%	29,41%	28,89%	29,00%
	Preschool: 5 y.o.	*n*	14	54	68
		%	27,45%	30,00%	29,44%
	Total	*n*	51	180	231
		%	100%	100%	100%
School-age period	Year One	*n*	11	44	55
		%	14,86%	17,53%	16,92%
	Year Two	*n*	19	67	86
		%	25,68%	26,69%	26,46%
	Year Three	*n*	14	47	61
		%	18,92%	18,73%	18,77%
	Year Four	*n*	18	64	82
		%	24,32%	25,50%	25,23%
	Year Five	*n*	11	28	39
		%	14,86%	11,16%	12,00%
	Year Six	*n*	1	1	2
		%	1,35%	0,40%	0,62%
	Total	*n*	74	251	325
		%	100%	100%	100%
Adolescence	Year Four	*n*	1	2	3
		%	0,79%	0,16%	0,22%
	Year Five	*n*	11	76	87
		%	8,73%	6,16%	6,40%
	Year Six	*n*	30	306	336
		%	23,81%	24,82%	24,72%
	Year One ESO (Req. Secondary School)	*n*	42	511	553
		%	33,33%	41,44%	40,69%
	Year Two ESO	*n*	21	228	249
		%	16,67%	18,49%	18,32%
	Year Three ESO	*n*	10	39	49
		%	7,94%	3,16%	3,61%
	Year Four ESO	*n*	5	34	39
		%	3,97%	2,76%	2,87%
	Year One Baccalaureate	*n*	5	33	38
		%	3,97%	2,68%	2,80%
	Year Two Baccalaureate	*n*	1	4	5
		%	0,79%	0,32%	0,37%
	Total	*n*	126	1233	1359
		%	100%	100%	100%

2. Procedure and measures

The sample studied was composed of families who received an intervention from social services in the city of Seville and who participated in the Family Education and Support (FAF) Programme in the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years.

We interviewed parents participating in the programme as well as their adolescent sons and daughters at the Social Services Centres. Once we had compiled our sample, we requested permission from the parents to go to the schools where their preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents studied and to collect information pertaining to the children and adolescents in families from SS.SS. and to their classroom peers. Given the variability in the procedure and in the evaluation tests used in the centers where the information for this study was collected, we present the information collected separately. Thus:

- First, we describe the procedure to collect the information used as well as the evaluation tests administered in the Social Services Centres, where we interviewed the parents receiving SS.SS. and their adolescent sons and daughters.

- Second, we present both the procedure as well as the evaluation measures used at schools to assess the preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents of families from SS.SS. and their classroom peers.

2.1. Social Services Centres

In the Andalusian region, social services are provided in different Social and Community Districts (ZTS) (Mondragón & Trigueros, 2004). There is at least one Social Service Unit (UTS) within each ZTS, with each UTS providing social and community services that seek "improved living conditions for the full development of individuals and social groups through integrated and multi-purpose assistance" (Mondragón & Trigueros, 2004, p. 26). When the data for this study were collected, 12 UTS were located in the city of Seville. Eleven of these centres had implemented the Family Education and Support (FAF) Programme. As expressed above, the sample for this study was selected intentionally to include the population that participated in social services in the city of Seville via participation in the FAF Programme in the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years.

The families whose parents participated in the Family Education and Support Programme had been assessed by the SS.SS. psychologists, who had described and chosen said participants in the programme based on the following **criteria**: (1) the primary caregiver had a current file with the SS.SS.; (2) the nuclear family preferably had school-aged children or adolescents; (3) the family showed a need for intervention for family-preservation purposes; and (4) the family's level of psychosocial risk had been evaluated by SS.SS. professionals and was deemed to be average or moderate.

Our research team, with the support of the professionals at the UTS, conducted an extensive evaluation of several individual, interpersonal and family variables prior to the families' participation in the Family Education and Support Programme (Hidalgo, Menéndez, Sánchez, Lorence, & Jiménez, 2009). This initial evaluation allowed us to corroborate the descriptions made by the psychologists regarding the participant families in terms of, for example, family environments at moderate psychosocial risk. This study is concerned with the characteristics of families that threaten adequately meeting the developmental and educational needs of their younger members without a situation so grave as to merit more drastic measures of removing children and adolescents from their caregivers' care.

With respect to the **participants of whom data was collected at the UTS**, the SS.SS. psychologists, the participating parents and their adolescent sons and daughters aided data collection. The following describes the procedure for collecting data at these SS.SS. centres.

Prior to starting the program, the SS.SS. psychologists conducted an individual, semi-structured interview with each of the parents participating in the program. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes and gleaned information concerning various individual and family questions.

Subsequently, at the program's first session, two members of our research team interviewed these parents once again, filling out a battery of questionnaires to assess various individual, interpersonal and family psychosocial variables. Administration of the tests required one hour/one hour and thirty minutes, depending on the parent's level of understanding.

In order to interview the adolescent sons and daughters of the families participating in the FAF Programme, the programme coordinators (psychologists) asked the participants (almost entirely women) to invite their sons and daughters aged 11 years or older to be interviewed at the UTS hosting the programme. Over the programme's first three sessions, various members of the research team organised and collected the data at the UTS.

The context in which these families live, their cultural characteristics, the characteristics of adolescence as developmental stage, and the motivational problems that tend to arise in these boys and girls meant that it was not possible to reach all the adolescent boys and girls whose mothers were participating in the FAF Programme. Nevertheless, boys and girls in all 11 UTS collaborated, which guaranteed a certain degree of representation in collecting the data for the sample of adolescents from families at moderate psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation.

At Social Services Centres the adolescents were interviewed individually by a member of the research team, completing a battery of questionnaires to assess various individual and interpersonal psychosocial variables. Administration of the tests required

approximately one hour and thirty minutes of interviewing. Depending on the adolescent's level of understanding, as well as on each adolescent's style, the interviewer proposed that the adolescent fill out self-administered questionnaires or used the interview format to facilitate the adolescent's understanding and to ensure collaboration.

Among the range of individual, interpersonal and family **variables** evaluated at the UTS as a result of an evaluation with broader objectives than this Doctoral Thesis, this dissertation has selected only some of the most relevant variables. Table 11 below presents the variables taken into consideration for this dissertation from the UTS interviews, making note of both the evaluator as well as the procedures employed to measure such.[4]

Table 11. Variables evaluated at the Social Services Centres

Evaluation focus		Reporting evaluator	Variables	Evaluation measure
Individual	Parent	UTS professional	Educational, employment and financial data	FAF participation form (Hidalgo, Menéndez, López, Sánchez, & Lorence, 2005)
		Parent	Self-perceived sense of parental competence	Parental Sense of Competence, PSOC (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Menéndez, Hidalgo, Sánchez, Lorence, & Jiménez, 2005)
	Adolescent	Adolescent	Personal and school socio-demographic data	Socio-demographic data form for the child or adolescent at the UTS (Lorence, Hidalgo, & Jiménez, 2005)
			Adjustment problems	Youth Self Report, YSR (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001; Lemos, Fidalgo, Calvo, & Menéndez, 1992a)
			Self esteem	AF5 (García & Musitu, 2001)
Family		UTS professional	Family composition Employment and financial data Data concerning SS.SS. intervention	FAF participation form (Hidalgo, Menéndez, López, et al., 2005)
		Parent	Accumulation of stress and risk factors in the family	Overview of Situations of Stress and Risk, ISER (Hidalgo, Menéndez, Sánchez, & López, 2005)
			Family functioning as a unit	FACES III (Olson, Portner, & Lavee, 1985; Vielva, Pantoja, & Abeijón, 2001)

[4] The quantitative scales used in this study have been computed maintaining the original scale, such that the points/grades assigned to each variable have been divided by the number of items in each scale in question.

The professionals who implemented the development programme filled out the FAF Participation Form and interviewed the parents to complete the Overview of Situations of Stress and Risk (ISER). The following describes both measures used for evaluation:

- *FAF participation form* (Hidalgo, Menéndez, López, et al., 2005): This test consisted of a semi-structured interview and was completed by the family-intervention professional based on the information provided by the parent. This form included information regarding socio-demographic characteristics of the parent and his or her family as well as information regarding the type of intervention received from the SS.SS. Filling out the form took approximately 40 minutes. For this dissertation, we have included the following indicators from those listed on the form:

    - The parent's individual socio-demographic data: Gender, level of education, employment and skill level of the employment.

    - Family socio-demographic data: Family composition (primary caregiver's relationship to the child or adolescent, family structure, number of persons in the home, number of children in the nuclear family), family's monthly incomes and stability of family's monthly incomes.

    - Intervention received from SS.SS.: degree of SS.SS. intervention at the time of the interview. This indicator refers to the specialisation of the family intervention as evaluated by the social workers pursuant to a scale with four categories (in numerical order corresponding to the degree of intervention specialisation). All parents interviewed in this study participated in the FAF Programme; therefore, all families benefitted from the first level of intervention proposed. Nevertheless, we also noted when the parents received further, more specialised intervention from among categories established by the Social Services of the Seville City Government (Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, n.d.). Specifically, we used the following classification categories:

        - Group psycho-educational intervention (FAF): Intended for those families from SS.SS. whereby the only family intervention in terms of said services consisted of the family's participation in the Family Education and Support Programme.

        - Group psycho-educational intervention plus intervention via information, guidance and social assessment (FAF+SIOV): Intended for those families that participated in the Family Education and Support Programme and that, moreover, were in need of social resources.

  - Group psycho-educational intervention plus intervention via family coexistence and reintegration (FAF+CORE): Intended for those families that participated in the Family Education and Support Programme and that, moreover, faced social difficulties that required specific intervention to aid coexistence, participation and integration in social life.

  - Group psycho-educational intervention plus intervention via family treatment teams (FAF+ETF): Intended for those families that participated in the Family Education and Support Programme and in which one of the children was at severe social risk that required specialised action so as to avoid family separation and to normalise the family situation.

- *Overview of Situations of Stress and Risk* (ISER) (Hidalgo, Menéndez, Sánchez, et al., 2005): This test contained a list of 46 items referring to distinct stress and risk factors that the nuclear family had experienced in the past year and/or that were weighing on the family at the time of the interview, leading to quantitative grading whereby the highest points corresponded to the most negative results. Some stress and risk factors included in this test were: *"Being the victim of abuse"* and *"Conflictive relationship with children"*. The primary caregiver provided this information to the professional, who served as a reference for the family, in an interview that lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Of the different variables evaluated by our research team through the individual interview with the parents who participated in the development programme, this dissertation has utilised the Parental Sense of Competence (PSOC) questionnaire and the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale (FACES III) questionnaire, which are detailed below:

- *Parental Sense of Competence* (PSOC) (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Menéndez et al., 2005): This test provided information regarding the adult's sense of her role as a mother via two indicators: self-perceived competence as parent and satisfaction with this role. The test used a likert scale composed of 16 items with six response choices (from 1=*no, total disagreement* to 6=*yes, total agreement*), whereby the greater the points awarded, the greater the self-sense of competency and more positive satisfaction as a parent. This questionnaire required some 10 minutes to complete and could be self-administered, although the complexity of some of the statements can require an interview when administered to a population with little formal education. For this questionnaire, we used the translation into Spanish by Menéndez et al. (2005) from the original (Johnston & Mash, 1989). A confidence analysis of the questionnaire based on the sample of parents participating in this study resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,69. The PSOC allowed us to understand the parent's perception of his or her role through two variables:

- Parental satisfaction: This scale contained 9 items that assessed the parent's degree of satisfaction with her role as mother or his role as father through questions like *"I enjoy other things more and am better at other things than mothering/fathering"* and *"Being a mother/father makes me nervous and anxious"*.

- Parental competence: This scale contained 7 items that assessed to what extent the parent felt competent as mother or father via statements like *"I already know how to influence my children despite how difficult that is"* and *"I am as good a mother as I had hoped to be"*.

- *Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale* (FACES III) (Olson et al., 1985; Vielva et al., 2001): This test evaluated two of the three variables of family functioning described in the circumplex model: cohesion and adaptability. For this dissertation, we used the FACES III version (Olson et al., 1985) and, specifically, the translation and adaptation into Spanish by Vielva et al. (2001). The test used a likert scale composed of 20 items with five response choices (from 1=*never or almost never* to 5=*almost always*) in a linear structure, whereby higher points on the scale are indicative of more balanced families. This questionnaire required some 10 minutes to complete and could be self-administered. A confidence analysis of the questionnaire based on the sample of parents participating in this study resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,76. The FACES III allowed us to understand family functioning as a unit through two variables:

  - Family adaptability: This scale contained 10 items that assessed the family's ability to change its power structure, rules and/or roles in response to situational and persistent tensions it confronted, with questions like *"Rules and standards change in our family"* and *"When our family has to resolve problems, we tend to take the children's opinions into consideration"*.

  - Family cohesion: This scale contained 10 items that assessed the emotional bond among the family members via statements like *"The members of our family feel very united"* and *"We family members ask each other for help"*.

In terms of the questionnaires completed at the UTS for adolescent boys and girls, this dissertation has utilised only the adolescent's socio-demographic data form, the Youth Self Report (YSR) and the Adolescent Self-Esteem Evaluation Questionnaire (AF5), which are described below:

- *The UTS adolescent's socio-demographic data form* (Lorence et al., 2005): This form included socio-demographic data related to gender, age, degree of access to school (absenteeism, reasons for not attending school) and the school year (form) of the adolescent in question.

- *Youth Self Report* (YSR) (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001; Lemos et al., 1992a): This report was part of a multiaxial evaluation system to measure the

psychopathology of adolescent boys and girls. This study used the translation and adaptation to Spanish by Lemos et al. (1992a) and, specifically, the broadband syndromes scale for assessment: internalising and externalising problems. This scale, according to the correction proposed by Lemos et al. (1992a), was composed of 103 three-level likert items (0=*not true*, 1=*somewhat true,* and 2=*very true*), whereby a greater accumulation of points indicated a greater degree of problems. This test could be self-administered and took between 15 and 20 minutes to complete. The following lists the YSR variables utilised in this dissertation:

- Internalising problems: This scale contained 22 items that assessed adjustment problems that implied a change in feeling or mood and included emotional components like anxiety, depression, physical complaints and problems relating to others (isolation). Some of the statements included in this scale were *"I do not think anyone likes me"* and *"I like to be alone"*. The Cronbach's alpha from the sample was α = ,81.

- Externalising problems: This scale contained 17 items that assessed adjustment problems that implied a change in behaviour and included components like criminal behaviour, verbal aggression and attention seeking. These problems were measured through statements such as *"I try to call a lot of attention to myself"* and *"I destroy things that belong to others"*. The Cronbach's alpha in this sample was α = ,83.

- *Adolescent Self-Esteem Evaluation Questionnaire* (AF5) (García & Musitu, 2001): This questionnaire evaluated adolescent self-esteem (family, social, physical, academic and emotional esteem) via 30 likert items that could be self-administered in five to 10 minutes. This dissertation utilised three of the five variables measured in this scale (excluding physical and academic self-esteem) and adapted the number of response choices proposed by the questionnaire authors, employing a five-choice likert scale (from 1=*never* to 5=*always*) instead of the 99 listed in the original questionnaire. The following lists the AF5 variables evaluated in this dissertation:

  - Emotional self-esteem: A scale of 6 items that evaluated how the adolescent perceived his or her emotional state through questions like *"I am a happy boy/girl"* and *"I feel nervous"*. A confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,73.

  - Social self-esteem: A scale of 6 items that measured how the adolescent perceived his/her performance in terms of social relationships through questions like *"I am a friendly person"* and *"It is difficult for me to make friends"*. A confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,72.

- Family self-esteem: A scale of 6 items that evaluated how the adolescent perceived his or her involvement, participation and integration with the family through questions like *"I feel loved by my parents"* and *"My family would help me out with any type of problem"*. A confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,84.

2.2. SCHOOLS

At the end of the interviews with the parents at the Social Services Centres, we requested **authorisation** for the research team to go to the schools where their sons and daughters were enrolled in order to measure the adjustment of the children and adolescents with respect to their peers in their schools. Therefore, an intentional sampling was taken to evaluate the preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents at the schools.

Parents with children in school authorised evaluation of their sons and daughters at their schools in 95,63% of all cases for FAF Programme participants for the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 cohorts. There were two reasons for the remaining percentage's not giving its authorisation. In the first place, 8,93% of the parents participating in the programme did not have children in school at the time authorisation was requested given some of the characteristics of boys and girls who grow up in these families (such as school absenteeism and early drop outs), particularly during late adolescence. In the second place, a small number of parents decided not to sign the authorisation in order to avoid stigmatising their child at school despite it being made clear that neither the subjects nor their class peers would associate the data collection with the social- and community-services family intervention. This situation occasionally resulted in the parents of children in school deciding not to sign the authorisation, though the number was less than 5% (specifically 4,37%). Nevertheless, we decided to verify that there were no differences in the socio-demographic profile of the families who did not grant authorisation vis-à-vis those that did grant authorisation. The results obtained showed no demonstrable differences.

The authorisation granted by 263 parents to evaluate their sons and daughters at school required going to 104 schools, where 234 different classrooms were evaluated. In all cases, we initially contacted the school by sending a letter explaining the intervention-research process. A few days after sending the letter, one of the team's researchers phoned the principal, head of school and/or guidance counsellor and set up a meeting at each of the schools. When requested, a personal interview was held with the school's teachers, principal or counsellors to explain the study's objectives and the nature of the research; in some cases, the questionnaires were sent via fax or e-mail, and the information was subsequently distributed by the school. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases, a small interview was sufficient prior to evaluating the groups. The schools' practically always collaborated with the research team. Two members of the research team attended each class, explaining the process of completing the

questionnaires, answering any questions that arose and checking to see that no questions had been omitted. Nevertheless, despite all our best efforts, we were unable to avoid a small loss of some responses to the socio-demographic variables evaluated.

The teachers of the children whose evaluation had been authorised, the adolescents of the families from SS.SS. and their adolescent classmates participed in the **collecting data at the schools**. Given the impossibility of collecting self-administered data to the youngest boys and girls, the procedures designed for the different educational-developmental groups in this study were as follows:

- In order to evaluate preschool-aged and school-aged children, for all classrooms that had one boy or girl from the sample of families from SS.SS., we requested that the teachers evaluate the youngest "Joe/Joan" in question as well as four classroom peers anonymously and randomly; therefore, the boys and girls were not interviewed directly nor identified within the group. In order to evaluate the group of peers, the teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaires for the boys or girls corresponding to the numbers 1, 5, 9 and 13 on the classroom attendance list. If the number coincided with a boy or girl with severe developmental problems, the number immediately following on the list was chosen. The evaluation conducted by the teachers required approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete.

- In order to evaluate adolescents, once again for all the classrooms with one adolescent from the sample of families from SS.SS., we requested that the teachers evaluate the youngest "Joe/Joan" in question, which required some 20 minutes complete. Therefore, we administered a battery of tests, lasting some 35-45 minutes, to "Joe/Joan" and to all his/her classmates.[5] It should be noted that the data were collected in the classrooms without ever signalling or identifying the boys or girls from families participating in SS.SS., and without said boys or girls ever associating these anonymous group tests with the assistance their families were receiving from the social services.

Of the **variables** assessed in the schools, we have chosen the most relevant to this study. Table 12 below presents the variables from the school context taken into consideration for this dissertation, making note of both the evaluator as well as the procedures employed to measure such at each of the developmental-educational stages.

[5] In the 2007-2008 cohort, the procedure for collecting data during the adolescent developmental-educational stage included a variation for the reference group; on this occasion, teachers evaluated four peers from the class anonymously and randomly, employing the same selection process used in early childhood and the school-age period.

Table 12. Variables evaluated at the schools

Evaluation focus	Developmental-educational stage	Reporting evaluator	Variables	Evaluation measure
Individual	Early childhood and school-age period	Academic teacher	Socio-demographic, personal and school data Adjustment problems Social skills Academic achievement	Social Skills Rating System, SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Hidalgo & Jiménez, 2005)
			Classroom adaptation	Classroom Behaviour Inventory, CBI (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1978; Moreno, n.d.-a)
	Adolescence	Academic teacher	Socio-demographic, personal and school data	Socio-demographic data form for the child or adolescent and his/her family at school (Jiménez & Hidalgo, 2005)
			Adjustment problems Social skills Academic achievement	Social Skills Rating System, SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Moreno, n.d.-b)
		Adolescent	Classroom adaptation	Magallanes Adaptation Scales, EMA (García & Magaz, 1998)
Family	Early childhood, school-age period and adolescence	Academic teacher	Family composition Education and employment data	Socio-demographic data form for the child or adolescent and his/her family at school (Jiménez & Hidalgo, 2005)
			Parental motivation for academic achievement	Social Skills Rating System, SSRS (Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Hidalgo & Jiménez, 2005; Moreno, n.d.-b)

The teachers completed the socio-demographic data form for the child/adolescent and his/her family, the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) questionnaire and the Classroom Behaviour Inventory (CBI). The following describes the information gathered from these tests:

- *Socio-demographic data form for the child or adolescent and his/her family at school* (Jiménez & Hidalgo, 2005): This form included socio-demographic data related to gender, age, school year (form), need for academic support, and

degree of access to school (absenteeism, extent of absenteeism, and reasons for not attending school). It also collected data regarding the family's socio-demographics, such as: family composition (family structure, persons in the home, number of children in the nuclear family), level of education, parents' employment and skill level at employment.

- *Social Skills Rating System* (SSRS) (Gresham & Elliot, 1990, Hidalgo & Jiménez, 2005; Moreno, n.d.-b): This test broadly assessed various social behaviours exhibited by the student in three areas: social skills, behavioural problems and academic achievement. Likewise, it included a question related to the degree of parental motivation for academic achievement. This questionnaire required 20 minutes to complete. For this study, we used the teacher's version for the separate stages of early childhood, school-age period and adolescence. Specifically, we used the translation to Spanish by Hidalgo and Jiménez (2005) for early childhood and the translation by Moreno (n.d.-b) for the school-age and adolescent stages. The SSRS gathered information related to the following variables:

  - Social skills: A likert scale composed of 30 items with three response choices (0=*never*, 1=*sometimes*, and 2=*often*), whereby greater points correspond to more positive social skills, in the following aspects:

    - Self-control: Six items that measured behaviour relative to appropriate responses in conflict and non-conflict situations that require taking turns and making compromises. Self-control was evaluated through questions like *"Responds appropriately to jokes by his/her peers"* and *"Exercises control in conflict situations with adults"*. The confidence analysis of the questionnaire based on the sample of children and adolescents participating in this study resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,92.

    - Assertiveness: Six items that measured behaviours like asking others for information and responding to others' actions, evaluated through statements like *"Expresses feeling adequately when mistreated"* and *"Compliments his/her peers"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,85.

    - Cooperation: Six items that measured behaviours like helping others, lending materials and following rules and directions, evaluated through questions like *"Returns classroom or school materials in their proper place"* and *"Follows instructions"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,94.

  - Adjustment problems: A likert scale composed of 10 items (early childhood), 18 items (school-age stage) or 12 items (adolescence) with three response

choices (0=*never*, 1=*sometimes* and 2=*often*), whereby greater points corresponded to more adjustment problems, in the following areas:

- Internalising problems: Behaviours that indicated anxiety, sadness and loneliness, evaluated through statements like *"Enjoys being alone"* and *"Is bashful"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,73.

- Externalising problems: Inappropriate behaviours that involved verbal or physical aggression against others, being temperamental and being argumentative, evaluated through statements like *"Throws fits"* and *"Fights with others"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,91.

- Hyperactivity: Behaviours that implied excessive movement, nervousness and impulsivity, evaluated through questions like *"Interrupts ongoing activities"* and *"Acts impulsively"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,86. As indicated by the authors, this behaviour was evaluated only at the school-age period.

- Academic competence: A likert scale composed of 9 items with five response choices (from 1=*very low, among the bottom 10% of the class* to 5=*very high, among the top 10% of the class*) that referred to the student's academic achievement with respect to the classroom average, through items such as *"Compared to the other boys and girls in this class, this student's overall academic achievement is"* and *"Compared to the other boys and girls in this class, this student's intellectual activity is"*. Greater points corresponded to higher academic competence. In early childhood, we used an adaptation proposed by Hidalgo and Jiménez (2005), which included five general items, since the original questionnaire did not take measurements for early childhood. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,96.

- *Classroom Behaviour Inventory* (CBI) (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1978; Moreno n.d.-a): This test evaluates children's and adolescents' adaptation in the school environment. This study used the Spanish version translated by Moreno (n.d.-a). The test uses a likert scale composed of 42 items with five response choices, from 1=*none* to 5=*many,* regarding the different aspects of school adaptation:

  - Intelligent behaviour: This variable includes 10 items that evaluated intelligent behaviour through questions like *"Asks questions that show an interest in the reasons behind things" and "Normally knows how to interpret what s/he is told"*. The confidence analysis based on the sample of children and adolescents participating in this study resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,95.

- Task orientation: This variable included 8 items that evaluated task orientation through questions like *"Completes written work to the end, even if difficult" and "Easily distracted with noise inside or outside the classroom"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,94.

- Independence: This variable included 8 items like *"Works without requesting help"* and *"Tries to resolve things on his/her own before asking questions"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,90.

- Extroversion: This variable included 8 items that evaluated extroversion through statements like *"Does not wait for other children to approach, rather takes initiative" and "Almost always happy and content"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,84.

- Consideration for others: This variable included 8 items that evaluated consideration for others through questions like *"Ridicules and makes fun of others without taking their feelings into consideration" and "Tries to get along with others, even with those s/he has annoyed"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,89.

With respect to adolescent boys and girls, this study has chosen to use only the Magallanes Adaptation Scales (EMA) from the questionnaires administered at the schools, which is described below:

- *Magallanes Adaptation Scales* (EMA) (García & Magaz, 1998): This test evaluated adolescent adjustment in different social contexts in which the adolescent frequently interacted. The school adaptation scale, employed in this study, used a likert scale composed of 31 items with five response choices (from 0=*never* to 6=*always*); it could be completed in approximately 10 minutes. This evaluation provided information regarding adolescents school behaviour within the educational environment through three variables:

  - School adaptation: This variable included 6 items that evaluated learning adaptation through questions like *"I pay attention in class" and "Although I may disagree, I follow the class rules"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,87.

  - Teacher adaptation: This variable included 14 items that measured the adolescent's relationship with the school's teachers through questions like *"I talk with my teachers"* and *"I try to please my teachers"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,92.

  - Classmates adaptation: This variable included 11 items that measured the adolescent's relationship with his/her classroom peers through questions like *"I get along with my classmates" and "My classmates act nicely with me"*. The confidence analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha α = ,91.

III. Results

Throughout this third section, we present a summary of the main results of the empirical research described earlier. In accordance with the objectives proposed and their related research tasks, this section is divided into three chapters:

- A first chapter of results that describes the families participating in SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes, paying particular attention to the adjustment of preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents growing up in these contexts.

- A second chapter of results that examines deeply the development of children and adolescents growing up in these families. Specifically, several adjustment indicators are examined, concerning age and gender of these boys and girls; these results are compared with a reference group; and the predictive power of family variables for child and adolescent adjustment is analysed.

- A third chapter of results in which we thoroughly examine the adolescents in families participating in SS.SS., paying special attention to school aspects. Specifically, we analyse adolescent adjustment and the family environment in which the boys and girls of these families grow up. We achieve this through a triple approach to examine the existing variability during adolescence in these families.

1. Description of families participating in SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes and children and adolescents growing up in these contexts

Throughout this chapter of results, we describe the families participating in SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes, paying particular attention to the development of preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents growing up in these contexts. The psychosocial profile of the sample of families participating in SS.SS for family-preservation purposes is described, noting both socio-demographic characteristics as well as the variables that define such like developmental contexts for children and adolescents. This section includes a description of the adjustment of the children and adolescents that grow up in these families, noting different personal and school adjustment variables during early childhood, school-age period and adolescence.

The **families participating in SS.SS.** with preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents were characterised by low incomes and low education levels in general. Indeed, the majority of the parents in these families had attended only elementary school or were illiterate and, while the majority did hold paying jobs, the skills required for such tended to be minimal or non-existent.

In terms of the family structure in these homes, a high percentage were single-parent homes, particularly those with school-aged children (in which 52,24% of the families were headed by a single mother). An average of four or five family members shared the home, with an average of two or three children per nuclear family. We were dealing with families that, on average, had experienced a high number of events characterised by stress and risk, though there was wide variability in terms of this factor. The majority of these families participated in SS.SS. because of need for family coexistence and family reintegration, although a small percentage of families just participated in family education and support groups, and other families also received intervention via information, guidance and social assessment or received a high specialized family treatment. The families with the highest stress levels and most at risk received the most specialized intervention.

With respect to the variables related to family functioning, for the different developmental-educational stages studied, the primary caregiver's parental satisfaction and perceived competence fell in the central section of the scale. Parents with preschool-aged children and adolescents expressed more satisfaction than competence in their parental role, while mothers of school-aged children expressed the opposite (reported parental competence was slightly higher than parental satisfaction). With respect to family functioning as an unit, generally family adaptability fell in the central section of the scale, while family cohesion was high in all cases.

Parents' encouragement for their children's academic success was the factor that showed the greatest variability in the different developmental-educational stages

studied. Indeed, during early childhood, academic encouragement from the parents participating in *SS.SS.* ranged from low to high. In the school-age period, parental encouragement was overwhelmingly average to high. Nevertheless, in adolescence, greater variability was noted, with a predominance of high values, on the one hand, and very low values, on the other hand.

In terms of the **adjustment of children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS.**, the study explored personal and school variables. For preschool-aged children, adjustment problems were infrequent, particularly in terms of internalising aspects. In the set of interaction skills evaluated, cooperation skills demonstrated by these boys and girls stood out, clearly demonstrating more positive results. In terms of the academic environment, the pre-school children were characterised by a low need for educational support (only 8,51% of the children received some extra-academic support). These boys and girls scored average in the academic variables evaluated, both in terms of academic achievement and in didactic aspects of school adaptation (intelligent behaviour and task orientation). The highest scoring in terms of school adaptation was related to less didactic aspects, such as classroom independence, extroversion and consideration for others.

The school-aged boys and girls from families participating in *SS.SS.* demonstrated more frequent adjustment problems than boys and girls in early childhood. Indeed, problems of hyperactivity constituted the variable in which the worst results were obtained. With respect to social-interaction skills, these boys and girls showed overwhelming homogeneity in the various aspects evaluated, with scores in the central section of the scale in all cases, although the boys were far more assertive than the girls. The school-aged children showed a greater need for school support than in earlier years, since 43,94% received some form of educational support, though only 4,23% of these children had ever repeated a school year (form). Just as in early childhood, the boys and girls from families participating in *SS.SS.* scored average in academic aspects (academic competence, intelligent behaviour and school adaptation) and scored higher in terms of independence, extroversion and consideration for others.

Concerning adolescent boys and girls from families participating in *SS.SS.*, externalising problems predominated over internalising problems. In terms of social-interaction skills, self-control was the variable in which adolescents from families participating in *SS.SS.* scored worse. In terms of school variables, these boys and girls were characterised by a high need for academic support (38,46% receive some measure of educational support). Likewise, these adolescents scored average for academic competence, although 50% had repeated at least one grade. With respect to school adaptation, these boys and girls scored well in terms of adaptation to teachers. This developmental-educational stage showed the greatest differences in terms of gender, although with a low clinical relevance. The girls demonstrated more problems with internalising, higher self-control, adaptation to teachers and adaptation to the school than did the boys. The boys, in turn, notably had more externalising problems.

Finally, it should be noted that, in general terms, none of the developmental-educational stages considered the internalising problems of the children and adolescents to significantly relate to their externalising problems.

2. Analysis of families participating in SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes as developmental contexts for children and adolescents

We have described the psychosocial profile of the sample of families and children that participated in the study. Following this information is deeply analysed, concerning next questions:

- The first section contained a comparative analysis among the different developmental-educational stages, taking into consideration both the characteristics of SS.SS. families as well as the personal, academic and overall adjustment of the children and adolescents who grow up in these contexts.

- The second section examined the predictive capacity of the family-environment variables with respect to the adjustment of the children and adolescents of different ages in families participating in SS.SS.

- The third section described the results obtained regarding the children and adolescents who grow up in families from SS.SS. compared to their peers in terms of family environment and with respect to their personal, academic and overall adjustment; this section differentiates development in early childhood, school-age period and adolescence.

- The fourth section examined which developmental-educational stage demonstrates where the differences found between children and adolescents who grow up in families from SS.SS. compared to their peers are most pronounced in terms of family context and personal, academic and overall adjustment.

2.1. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN SS.SS. DURING EARLY CHILDHOOD, SCHOOL-AGE PERIOD AND ADOLESCENCE

This section analysed the family context as well as the personal, school and overall adjustment of the children and adolescents who grow up in families who participate in SS.SS., as a set, comparing the results obtained in the different developmental-educational stages. The following is a summary of these results.

In general, it should be noted that all multivariate analyses conducted were statistically significant, indicating that the children and adolescents in families from SS.SS.

differed by age on the set of variables relative to the adjustment evaluated, in moderately or highly relevant clinical terms.

With respect to the **family context**, the educational level and number of children in the home turned out to be significantly different and more favourable for preschool-aged children than for school-aged children.

With respect to **adjustment variables**, in the personal setting, preschool-aged children stood apart, in a manner statistically significant and clinically relevant, from school-aged children and adolescents in terms of the number of internalising problems and in terms of the degree of cooperation skills, in all cases showing better results in early childhood.

Similar results were found in the school environment, where preschool-aged boys and girls showed higher academic competence than school-aged children and adolescents. Nevertheless, the clinical relevance of these results was moderate.

Taking into consideration the global adjustment indicators, adjustment problems and, once again, academic competence were different for preschool-aged children, on the one hand, and school-aged children and adolescents, on the other. Concurrent with the previous results, the most favourable results were obtained from preschool-aged children, for which the clinical relevance of these results was moderate.

In summary, our analyses showed that, for the different aspects evaluated, preschool-aged children from families participating in SS.SS. obtained significantly better results although, on occasion, moderately relevant ones, when compared to school-aged children and adolescent boys and girls. Interaction effects for developmenta-educational stage*gender did not showed statistically significant results.

2.2. THE FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN SS.SS. AS CONTEXTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AT DIFFERENT AGES

This section of results explored the ability to predict the principal adjustment variables measured in this study, for school-aged children and adolescents who grow up in families from SS.SS., based on measurements of family functioning. The following is a synthesis of the main results.

With respect to **school-aged children** from families participating in SS.SS., mediation analyses showed that parental competence explained 2% of adjustment problems and social skills variability, as well as 1% of academic competence variability. Concretely, parental competence made this contribution indirectly through family cohesion. However, parental competence did not revealed any significant indirect effect through family adaptability. Parental satisfaction neither showed any significant indirect effect over school-aged children adjustment.

Concerning the regression models, all regression models showed statistical significance, indicating that the family factors measured were directly relevant for predicting adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence for the boys and girls.

In terms of these children's *adjustment problems*, once we controlled for gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, family variables explained 18% of the variance (11% specific, increased by variables regarding family functioning). Specifically, family cohesion in first place, parental satisfaction in second place and, marginally, the family's socio-demographic characteristics, were the variables that significantly contributed to the model. Thus, greater family cohesion, together with some more favourable socio-demographic characteristics (higher level of education, less family intervention and less risk to family) led us to predict fewer adjustment problems. With respect to parental satisfaction, the direction of the relation with adjustment problem was not conclusive in the school-age period.

In terms of the *social skills* of school-aged children, once we controlled for gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, family variables explained 38% of the variance (29% specific, increased by variables regarding family functioning). Specifically, family cohesion in first place, parental satisfaction in second place and, finally, adaptability within the family, were the variables that significantly contributed to the model. In this sense, both family cohesion and adaptability within the family led to us to predict positive social skills, while the role of parental did not showed a clear direction of its relation with social skills.

Finally, during the school-age period, we examined the predictability of family variables in terms of the child's *academic competence*. Once we controlled for gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, family variables explained 28% of the variance (18% specific, increased by variables regarding family functioning). On this occasion, family cohesion was the only variable that significantly contributed to the model, while gender and socio-demographic characteristics contributed marginally to such. In this respect, both family cohesion and, marginally, family socio-demographic characteristics led us to predict positive academic competence. Likewise, the order of inclusion of the categories of the gender variable in the model indicates that, in a marginally significant way, girls demonstrated a higher probability of obtaining positive results in terms of academic competence when compared to boys.

With respect to **adolescents** from families participating in SS.SS., mediation analyses showed that parental competence explained 1% of adjustment problems variability, as well as 2% of social skills variability. Concretely, parental competence made this contribution indirectly through family adaptability. Moreover, parental satisfaction explained 2% of adjustment problems variability, as well as 3% of social skills and academic competence variability. This contribution was made indirectly through family cohesion. However, parental satisfaction did not revealed any significant

indirect effect through family adaptability. Parental competence neither showed any significant indirect effect through family cohesion during adolescence.

Concerning regression models, all regression models showed statistical significance, indicating that the family factors measured were directly relevant for predicting adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence.

In terms of these adolescents' *adjustment problems*, once we controlled for gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, family variables explained 29% of the variance (28% specific, increased by variables regarding family functioning). Specifically, family cohesion and parental competence significantly contributed to the model. Greater family cohesion and parental competence were associated with fewer adjustment problems in adolescence.

In terms of the *social skills* of adolescents, once we controlled for gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, family variables explained 30% of the variance (26% specific, increased by variables regarding family functioning). Once again, family cohesion and parental competence significantly contributed to the model, while gender and parental satisfaction factored in marginally. Greater family cohesion and parental satisfaction were associated with more social skills. However, the role of parental competence did not reveal a clear relation. Likewise, the order of inclusion of the categories of gender in the model indicates that, in a marginally significant way, boys demonstrated a higher probability of obtaining positive results in terms of social skills when compared to girls.

Finally, during adolescence, we examined the predictability of family variables in terms of the adolescent's *academic competence*. Once we controlled for gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, family variables explained 17% of the variance (15% specific, increased by variables regarding family functioning). On this occasion, parental satisfaction was the only variable that significantly contributed to the model, while parental competence and family cohesion contributed marginally to such. Both parental satisfaction and family cohesion led us to predict positive academic competence, while parental competence had and unclear effect.

2.3. CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WHO GROW UP IN FAMILIES PARTICIPATING IN SS.SS. COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS

This section of results examines both the family context as well as the adjustment of children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. when compared to their peers. The following is a summary of the main findings obtained.

In terms of the **family context** of the children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. with respect to their peers, statistically significant and clinically relevant differences were found in all the developmental-educational stages studied. In this respect, the preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents from

families participating in SS.SS. were characterised by growing up in single-parent homes with a higher frequency than expected, different from the reference group whose structure was predominantly two-parent, although clinical relevance was moderate. Likewise, the families from both subjects groups showed overall statistically significant and clinically relevant differences in terms of the variables studied. Specifically, parents in families from SS.SS., regardless of the age of their sons or daughters, encouraged academic competence less in their children than did the parents of the peer group. Moreover, homes from SS.SS. with preschool-aged children and school-aged children were comprised of a larger number of people and children per nuclear family when compared to the reference group. Finally, although there was no difference in terms of the maternal employment situation in both groups, the parents receiving SS.SS. with preschool-aged children and adolescents had a lower educational level than the mothers of the reference group.

With respect to the **level of adjustment in children and adolescents** from families participating in SS.SS. with respect to their peers, statistically significant and clinically relevant differences were found in all the developmental-educational stages studied. In terms of the variables regarding the personal adjustment, in all developmental-educational stages studied, the children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. obtained less favourable results, although clinical relevance was moderate. In this respect, all the variables measured differed in a specific way between both groups, indicating that boys and girls from families participating in SS.SS. had more adjustment problems (internalising problems, externalising problems and hyperactivity) and fewer interaction and social skills (self-control, assertiveness and cooperation) than their peers. School-aged girls from SS.SS. sample showed specific vulnerability, as they scored worse than the female reference group concerning assertiveness and cooperation, and marginally concerning internalisation problems and self-control.

In terms of school adjustment, once again the set of variables studied differed significantly between both groups for all developmental-educational stages, while the clinical relevance of these differences during adolescence was low. With respect to the specific variables that contributed to these differences, the preschool-aged children in the families from SS.SS. were characterised by, on average, lower academic competence, intelligent behaviour, task orientation and consideration for others when compared to their peers. In the school-age period, the boys and girls from families participating in SS.SS. scored worse than their peers in all variables measured (academic competence, intelligent behaviour, task orientation, independence, extroversion and consideration for others). Moreover, these school-age boys and girls received academic support with a higher frequency than their peers. Girls specifically showed less intelligent behaviour, task orientation, independence and extroversion compared to the female reference group; their academic competence was also marginally lower.

Adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. were characterised by a greater need for academic support than their peers. The level of academic competence and the rate of repetition were significantly different between groups, indicating a greater level

of failure for adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. School adaptation was also a greater problem in adolescents from families participating in SS.SS., as these boys and girls demonstrated worse adaptation to the school as an institution than did their peers. Adolescent boys from SS.SS. showed marginally less adaptation to teachers, compared to the male reference group.

Finally, we verified that the children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. differed from their peers in terms of their overall level of adjustment. In this respect, statistically significant differences were found at all the developmental-educational stages, while the clinical relevance of these results was moderate for preschool-aged children and adolescents. Specifically, the variables of adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence showed differences for all stages studied between the peer group and the group of children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. In all cases, the boys and girls at risk showed a greater rate of adjustment problems, fewer social skills and lower academic competence than their classroom peers.

2.4. THE ROLE OF AGE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WHO GROW UP IN FAMILIES FROM SS.SS. AS COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS

This section of results explored the role of age for children and adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. compared to their peers, this is, group*developmental-educational stage interaction effects. In terms of the **family context**, the main differences accumulated in early childhood (level of education of the mother, number of persons in the home) and the school-age period (number of children per nuclear family and parental encouragement for academic competence). The interaction analysis also showed significant differents in terms of family structure (number of family members and children in the home).

With respect to children's and adolescents' **adjustment**, we measured variables regarding the personal, school and overall adjustment. In terms of the personal adjustment, no statistically significant interaction effects were found. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the greatest distances were produced with respect to the reference group during the school-age period, (internalising problems, self-control, assertiveness, cooperative skills), with the exception of externalising problems, which showed the greatest difference in early childhood.

With respect to the school adjustment, the analysis of academic competence also showed, once again, the greatest differences appeared in the school-age period. The interaction analysis for this variable was not significant, though it had a significance value of p = ,081.

The analysis of the overall variables of adjustment showed that the greatest discrepancies appeared once again during the school-age period, taking into account

adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence. The interaction analysis, however, was not significant in overall terms.

Finally, we showed these adjustment variables plotted by group of origin, age and gender. These graphs indicated that children and adolescents from the reference group showed a great parallelism concerning gender, females scoring better for every adjustment variables. Children and adolescents from SS.SS. showed a greater discrepancy concerning gender; these differences were moderate during school-age period (girls scoring worse than boys) and high during adolescence (boys scoring worse than girls).

3. Examining adolescent adjustment in families participating in SS.SS. from a school perspective

Until this point we have described the families from SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes and different adjustment indicators for the children and adolescents raised in these families during early childhood, school-age period and adolescence. This third chapter of results thoroughly analysed adolescents in families from SS.SS., paying special attention to school-related aspects. Specifically, we analysed adolescent adjustment and the family environments pertaining to the adolescents in families from SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes with a triple approach:

- In the first place, we explored variability during adolescence in families from SS.SS., noting the different adjustment variables studied thus far. Specifically, we described the different adolescent typologies with respect to their adjustment and characterised the sample that defines each typology. Thus, we examined the predictive capacity of some socio-demographic and family variables with respect to the scores obtained.

- In the second place, we examined the diversity of adolescent adjustment from a school perspective, noting situations of absenteeism. Specifically, we described the degree of access to school context for adolescents from families participating in SS.SS., as well as their socio-demographic profile and overall adjustment in terms of this variable. Likewise, we compared the family environment of absent adolescents versus adolescents who were not absent and we explored the predictability of variables that differentiated both groups for classification as absent/not-absent.

- In the third and final place, we once again studied variability in adolescent adjustment from a school perspective, on this occasion taking into consideration the situations of positive adaptation to the school environment. On the one hand, we described school adaptation with respect to peers, as well as the socio-demographic profile and overall adjustment of the adolescents adapted to school compared to those not adapted. On the other hand, we examined which

family variables predicted positive school adaptation for adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. with respect to their peers.

3.1. VARIABILITY DURING ADOLESCENCE IN FAMILIES FROM SS.SS. KEY FACTORS FOR COMPREHENSION

Personal and school adjustment of adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. indicated enough variability to establish three clusters of subjects differentiated by their level of adjustment. Thus, a first group was made of **adolescent boys and girls with personal and school adjustment problems**. This group was composed of adolescents with many externalising problems and little assertiveness, little cooperation skills and little self-control. Low academic competence predominated as did low adaptation to the school as an institution and low adaptation to the teachers. Nevertheless, members of this group stood out for their positive adaptation to their peers at school. This group was predominantly male and, compared to the rest of the groups, the adolescents from this group came from families with low family cohesion and primary caregivers who felt less satisfaction with their role as parents than other mothers.

A second group of **adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. was characterised by personal and relationship problems**. This group included boys and girls with high internalising problems, little assertiveness and school adaptation problems concerning teachers and classmates. Nevertheless, the boys and girls in this group showed good academic competence and didactic adaptation. In terms of notable family characteristics in this group, we found less specialised intervention for this group than the first group of adolescents.

Finally, we identified a third group of **adolescent boys and girls with a good level of adjustment**, where the adolescents were characterised by their high scores in the positive adjustment variables (social interaction, adaptation to the school context and academic competence) and by a low rate of personal adjustment problems (internalising and externalising problems). Their averaged results were as well or better than the obtained by the reference group. We noted that this group was composed overwhelmingly of girls.

It should be pointed out that the boys and girls who made up each group **were not differentiated**, in general, by age or by academic support received at the schools. Finally, some of the socio-demographic and family characteristics that differentiated the distinct groups of adolescents also led to a significantly and clinically relevant **predictability in terms of adjustment classification**, which allowed for the correct classification of 62,75% of the adolescent boys and girls. More positive parental satisfaction and a higher family cohesion made it three or four times more probable to remain in the group of personal and relationship adjustment problems over the groups with personal and school problems. In turn, greater family cohesion increased the likelihood of pertaining to the well-adjusted group by three over the group of personal

and relationship adjustment problems; being female also increased one's chances, although this was not clinically relevant.

3.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDING SCHOOL FOR THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENTS RAISED IN FAMILIES FROM SS.SS.

The analyses conduced in this section have shown that adolescents who grow up in families from SS.SS. had **difficulties in terms of school participation**. Specifically, we have noted the high rate of boys and girls who experienced absenteeism (31,88% of the sample), which occurred in the majority of cases prior to finishing the Required Secondary School (ESO) (95,56% of the time). The type of absenteeism was varied, ranging from intermittent absenteeism (31,82% of the absent adolescents), to total truancy (36,36%) and dropping out (31,82%).

The majority of the boys and girls who were fully absent or who had abandoned the school could not give a concrete reason for ceasing attendance (36,84%), although a considerable percentage of adolescents had abandoned the school to follow another type of informal education (26,,2%) or to work (21,05%). The remaining 15,79% of the boys and girls who provided this information stated that they skipped school because of illnesses or because the did not want to leave their homes.

Amongst those intermittently absent, we noticed that the majority of these adolescents (50%) missed between 25% and 50% of the classes without justification, although another impressive percentage (33,33%) missed more than 75% of the teaching hours without qualifying for total absenteeism.

A comparison of the adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. who regularly attended the school and those who were absent to some degree showed some **socio-demographic differences**: there were no differences in terms of gender or school year (form) although absent students where regularly characterised by being older than the boys and girls who attended school regularly. In terms of their **adjustment level**, overall both groups were differentiated in a manner statistically significant and clinically relevant in terms of personal problems and self-esteem. Specifically, the absent boys and girls demonstrated a higher rate of externalising problems and less family self-esteem. However, these differences were not found when comparing the adjustment of adolescents who were absent intermittently from school to those who never went to school or who had dropped out.

The comparison of the adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. who regularly attended school and those who were absent to some degree also showed that there were significant differences in **relevant variables regarding the home environment**. Thus, both groups of subjects pertained, overall, to different family contexts. A detailed analysis, variable by variable, showed that the absent adolescents grew up in homes with a degree of more specialised family intervention and less family cohesion. Likewise,

the mothers of the absent boys and girls felt less competent and marginally less satisfied than the mothers of adolescents who attended school regularly.

Finally, some of the socio-demographic and family characteristics that contributed to differentiating absent adolescents from those who regularly attended school showed significant and clinically relevant **predictability in terms of absenteeism**, allowing for correct classification of 84,81% of the adolescent boys and girls. Being older and displaying a higher rate of externalising problems increased the likelihood of absenteeism eight and four times respectively. Moreover, less family cohesion also increased this probability, although in a manner less clinically relevant.

3.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF A POSITIVE SCHOOL ADAPTATION FOR ADOLESCENTS WHO GROW UP IN FAMILIES FROM SS.SS. THE PROTECTIVE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

This section explained that the majority of **adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. who attended school were** moderately (56%) or highly (16%) **adapted to their schools** compared to their peer group in the same school year (form). Nevertheless, 28% of these boys and girls displayed negative adaptation to school as compared to the reference group.

The **profile of the boys and girls from families participating in SS.SS. who were positively adapted to school** was no different than that of the rest of the adolescents concerning their socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age and need for educational support). Nevertheless, these positively adapted boys and girls did stand out from the rest of the adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. in terms of their overall adjustment level in a way that was statistically significant and clinically relevant. The low rate of externalising problems, demonstrable cooperation skills and self-control, and high academic competence were the variables that specifically distinguished the boys and girls who were positively adapted to school from the rest of adolescents from families participating in SS.SS.

Likewise, an examination of the overall adjustment typology proposed above (3.1) allowed us to show that the majority of the boys and girls who were positively adapted to school in terms of their peers pertained to the cluster of adolescents who were well adjusted (43,86%), although other adolescents who were positively adapted to school showed personal and school adjustment problems (29,80%) or personal and relationship problems (26,32%).

Finally, adolescents from families participating in SS.SS. who were positively adapted to school were characterised by being raised in **educational environments that contributed to favouring school adaptation** in a statistically significant manner. Thus, once we controlled for age, gender and some socio-demographic characteristics, the model explained 23% of the variance of school adaptation for the boys and girls who were positively adapted to school (12% of this variance was increased exclusively by

variables related to family functioning). Specifically, the oldest adolescents scored the worst in terms of school adaptation. In terms of family variables, more positive family socio-demographic characteristics and growing up in homes that enjoyed greater adaptability and family cohesion favoured these results in terms of adaptation to school.

IV. Discussion

We have reached the end of the journey describing the development of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes. We will end by discussing the main findings and offering some reflections that have resulted from writing this dissertation:

- In the first place, we discuss the main results of the study vis-à-vis the proposed objectives and the theoretical framework.
- In the second place, we lay out some of the main limitations of this study as well as some possibilities for future research in light of some of the questions not answered in this study.
- Finally, we present a summary of the most important conclusions of this research, focusing on its practical implications for intervention with families at psychosocial risk.

1. Development of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes. The role of the family

The **main objective** of this study was to analyse distinct developmental facets of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, examining the role of these families as positive developmental contexts for their sons and daughters.

As we pointed out earlier, this general objective required being **extremely close** to these families and to their reality. Therefore, the first chapter of results provided a detailed description of the different aspects of these educational environments as well as of the children and adolescents who grow up in them.

As a result of this initial work, we have been able to take on various research tasks that have allowed us to comply with **specific objectives**. On the one hand, throughout the second results chapter we have tried to maintain a comprehensive view of the differences and similarities at the different developmental stages of children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk. On the other hand, in the third results chapter we have sought an in-depth examination of the adjustment of adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, paying special attention to their experience at school.

The following discusses the main findings included in this study's results, in accordance with our research objectives and in light of theoretical reflections and empirical data included in the theoretical introduction[6].

- In the first place, we reflect on the development of children and adolescents at different stages that grow up in families at psychosocial risk, seeking a comprehensive view of their development, paying particular attention to the role of these families as positive developmental contexts for their sons and daughters.

- In the second place, we reflect on the adjustment of adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, paying special attention to their experience at school and pointing out the role of the families in promoting positive adjustment.

[6] Some references to the theoretical introduction will be made in this section. The complete theoretical introduction is available for checking in the Spanish volume of this dissertation.

1.1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WHO GROW UP IN FAMILIES AT PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK IN TERMS OF FAMILY PRESERVATION

In our opinion, our working closely with families at psychosocial risk has given us a more comprehensive view of the development of the children and adolescents in these families than we had prior to the study. Without a doubt, we have still an incomplete view, with many unanswered questions; however, we believe we have met our first objective thanks to our multi-faceted approach. The following includes the arguments that have allowed us to better understand these children and adolescents:

- First, we discuss the psychosocial profile of the families participating in SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes.

- Second, we reflect on the results of different adjustment variables for the children and adolescents in families participating in SS.SS. at different ages.

- Third, we discuss the parent's perception of their role as parents and their perceptions of how the family functions as a unit to predict adjustment variables for children and adolescents.

1.1.1. The psychosocial profile of families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes

We began this dissertation defending the importance of the family as the primordial context to satisfy the needs of its youngest members. Likewise, we also pointed out family contexts in which said needs are not always met satisfactorily. From this perspective, understanding the development process of the children and adolescents who grow up at risk requires understanding their family environments. Therefore, we proceed to discuss the psychosocial profile of the families receiving social- and community-services interventions for family-preservation purposes who participated in this study.

The results obtained in terms of this psychosocial profile provides us, we believe, with three different aspects on which to reflect. First, the results of the study confirm the presence of variables that allow us to flag these families as being at psychosocial risk. Second, these results also indicate the presence of some strong points or, at least, of variables that do not compose a particularly negative profile in the family context. And third, the psychosocial profile of families participating in SS.SS. in this study, in general, turns out to be shared across the board, regardless of the age of the children or adolescents.

With respect to the first of the aforementioned aspects, our predictions centred around the presence of a **psychosocial profile with specific characteristics that would show these families at risk of fostering contexts for inadequate development of their sons and daughters**. A review of relevant literature regarding these educational contexts

and an evaluation by social workers of these families proved our predictions true. Different factors of these families' socio-demographic profiles as well as the characterisation of their educational environment has, at least partially, confirmed our expected outcomes.

On the one hand, the family socio-demographic profile obtained confirms our results. A detailed examination of these families as well as a comparison to other families not labelled as being at psychosocial risk (comparison group) has confirmed the existence of overburdened and complex family structures, the presence of caretakers with severe educational disadvantages and unsteady employment, a concentration of stress and risk factors in the family, and an increased need for extensive family intervention.

The homes where the children and adolescents of our study grow up are characterised by their *large households*, homes that include four or five people per nuclear family, of whom between two or three are children or adolescents. The size of these homes, which, in terms of their family composition, is significantly greater in general than that of the comparison group, is associated with some of the negative results, such as the need for more intervention for families with preschool and school-aged children as well as more family difficulties during adolescence. Nevertheless, more numerous households does not correspond to more caretakers. Nearly half of these families are single-parent households, a significantly higher percentage than the reference group.

The primary caregivers in these homes are characterised by *severe educational disadvantages and unsteady employment*. Approximately two thirds of participating mothers and fathers report that they are uneducated or have had some primary schooling and that their employment requires little or no skill. In terms of education, this percentage is significantly lower than that of the comparison group, and basically reflects families with low or no formal education and infrequent university studies. In terms of the primary caregivers' employment skill level, this percentage is significantly lower than that of the reference group, and basically reflects the infrequency of work requiring mid-level or specialised skills.

The families in the study participating in SS.SS. also present a high percentage of *stress and risk factors*. Although the percentage varies, the majority of these families experience between 5 and 20 stress and risk factors, which includes factors related both to the aforementioned precarious education/employment but also to experiencing difficulties in terms of family interaction.

Finally, as expressed in the method section, all families participating in the study receive group psycho-educational intervention as part of the Family Education and Support (FAF) Programme. The results of the study have shown, moreover, that the majority of these families receive additional intervention in the form of family coexistence and reintegration (CORE), which indicates a *high degree of family*

intervention to aid coexistence, participation and integration in social life. In our opinion, extensive intervention from social workers is an indicator of a family's high psychosocial risk and, as evidence, a higher concentration of stress and risk factors is associated with greater intervention in these families.

Specifically, the socio-demographic profile of these families reveals, from a contextual perspective, a concentration of multiple difficult circumstances. In the introduction to this dissertation, we stressed the important role that family difficulties specifically play in increasing the probability of developmental problems in children and adolescents (Atzaba-Poria, Pike, & Deater-Deckard, 2004), as well as the different paths whereby these elements can propitiate poor adjustment.

Among the different possible influences, we are interested in focused on the manner in which the negative impact, concentration and reinforcement of these circumstances can play out in a negative manner, particularly in caregivers responsible for children and adolescents (Cowan, Cowan, & Schulz, 1996; Masten & Wright, 1998). Belsky's process model (1980), Conger, Rueter, and Conger's family-stress model (2000), Repetti, Taylor, and Seeman's family-risk model (2002) and Rodrigo's and colleagues' model for parental functioning under stress (2008) are some of the well-founded and sometimes empirically contrasted examples of these influences, which can help define these educational environments as at psychosocial risk.

Not withstanding, without denying the importance of considering these types of factors, an exclusive examination of these circumstances is insufficient to establish a direct relationship with at-risk behaviours (Rodrigo et al., 2008). Therefore, together with an analysis of these factors, in order to understand how these families function as developmental contexts for their children, it is also necessary to examine the developmental aspects of the educational environment (Rodríguez, Camacho, Rodrigo, Martín, & Máiquez, 2006). In this respect, the results of this study reveal various factors that confirm an at-risk profile: specific parents' perception of their role as caregivers, homogeneity and reduced family adaptability, and low parental motivation for children's academic competence.

One of the aspects of the at-risk educational environment to which we have paid particular attention in this study concerns the *manner in which parents perceive themselves as caregivers*, specifically, parents' sense of their competence and their satisfaction with their caregiver role. Two findings underscore the manner in which these variables confirm a profile of psychosocial risk: rather unfavourable rates of parental satisfaction plus the fact that the sense of parental competence and satisfaction are not necessarily related to each other in situations of psychosocial risk.

Using the PSOC scale as the evaluation tool and taking into consideration the different research studies conducted to explore parents' perception of their role as parents, whether in the general community or in terms of family preservation, we note a reduced range of variability, at least when compared to what happens with perceived

parental competence (Combs-Orme & Thomas, 1997; Corapci & Wachs, 2002; Donenberg & Baker, 1993; Gwynne, Blick, & Duffy, 2009; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Ohan, Leung, & Johnston, 2000; Rodrigue, Morgan, & Geffken, 1992; Sanders & Woolley, 2005). Our results also point in this direction, indicating that there is high homogeneity in the manner in which the mothers of these families emotionally experience their roles as parents, that is to say in the degree to which they are satisfied with motherhood. Although this homogeneity per se is not indicative of negative results, it shows up accompanied by moderate satisfaction levels in general. Therefore, both findings together confirm the existence of a profile of psychosocial risk when this variable is experienced.

Save for some exceptions (Medora, Wilson, & Larson, 2001), research regarding at-risk parents' perception of their competence as parents has revealed less parental satisfaction with the caregiver role than reported in community population. Though we have not statistically contrasted our results with those of other studies, the mothers in our study report, on average, lower perception of competence levels than those reported in studies of the general community (Corapci & Wachs, 2002; Donenberg & Baker, 1993; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Ohan et al., 2000; Rodrigue et al., 1992; Sanders & Woolley, 2005) and levels similar to those reported in other studies concerning family preservation (Combs-Orme & Thomas, 1997; Gwynne et al., 2009).

One of the primary explanations for these results in published literature on the topic is that lower satisfaction in situations of psychosocial risk is a consequence of how stressful situations have emotional repercussions in the primary caregiver. That is to say, it has been argued that stressful circumstances influence parents' resources, leading to a more negative emotional response (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Lovejoy, Verda, & Hays, 1997; McBride, 1989). Nevertheless, our study has not confirmed an association between the concentration of stress and at-risk variables, on the one hand, and parental dissatisfaction, on the other.

A more likely explanation is that, more than the contextual variables that envelope the family, there are other circumstances at the heart of the family that contribute to less parental satisfaction. It is possible that the existence of child adjustment problems (which, as we will have the opportunity to discuss later, are present in these families) or more negative parent-child interactions lead to a heightened perception of the difficulty of the caregiver role, undermining these parents' sense of satisfaction (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Máiquez, Rodrigo, Capote, & Vermaes, 2000). It is also possible that the existence of this type of problems leads to a sense of less control over a parent's tasks as an educator, which leads to feelings of defencelessness in the education of his/her children, carrying over to dissatisfaction with his/her role as a parent (Máiquez et al., 2000).

Although, as we have pointed out in the theoretical introduction to this study, the perception of the difficulty in educational tasks and the feelings of control regarding such have not been examined with respect to parental satisfaction, there are indications

to support this relationship. Thus, the studies that have examined the parental role in terms of raising children with behavioural or emotional problems have reported that the caregivers heading these households tend to feel less satisfied than other parents, probably because of the role that their children's adjustment problems play in family functioning (e.g., Donenberg & Baker, 1993).

Along these lines, a notable aspect of our results is that greater parental satisfaction is not associated with a greater sense of parental competence, save for parents with school-aged children. These results contradict our main reviews of the topic, which point to a positive relationship between both variables (e.g., Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Jones & Prinz, 2005). Our results indicate a particular experience of the parental role in situations of psychosocial risk, such that, save for the school-age period, the most satisfied mothers do not feel like they are thee most competent mothers or, to the contrary, the less competent mothers do not feel the most dissatisfied.

We consider this particular association between both variables to be an expression more of the specificity of the parental role in situations of psychosocial risk, which could indicate the existence of other variables that moderate the relationship, like parents' feelings of control and of the difficulty in educational tasks (Jones & Prinz, 2005; Máiquez et al., 2000). As we have just argued, it is possible that these mothers do not feel control over the education tasks concerning their children and, therefore, their sense of satisfaction as mothers does not depend on the efficacy which they believe they implement the tasks of motherhood. Whatever the case, these are relevant questions that must be examined vis-à-vis adjustment and, therefore, will be addressed again further on.

In addition to the parents' perception of their role as parents, this study has examined *how the family functions as a unit*, taking into consideration family adaptability and family cohesion. The results obtained with respect to the former of these variables confirm the existence of a family profile marked by psychosocial risk.

Consistent with other research that has examined family adaptability using the three-dimensional circumplex model and the FACES III scales, the adaptability of the families in the study shows decreased variability. This decreased variability accompanies average scores that, while higher than the results reported in other studies of populations at psychosocial risk (Ben-David & Jurich, 1993; Smith, 1996), are quite far from the results obtained with the Spanish general community (Forjaz, Martínez, & Cervera-Enguix, 2002).

Forjaz' and colleagues' study (2002), conducted with a sample from Spain's general community, reported values relatively higher than other US studies in family adaptability, differences that were statistically significant when comparing the results obtained by the authors of the scale in the case of the adaptability variable, but not in the case of cohesion. These findings are consistent with some authors' claims that culture can play a noticeable role in influencing, to a greater or lesser extent, relations, family-

interaction rules and what is considered to be the ideal way a family functions (García & Peralbo, 2000). Olson has suggested that culture can moderate family expectations in terms of adequate cohesion and adaptability and, therefore, the evaluation of the family unit depends not only on absolute measurements of adaptability and cohesion, but also on normative predictions for these variables (Olson, McCubbin, et al., 1985; cit. in Amerikaner et al., 1994). Taking into consideration the findings of Forjaz and colleagues (2002), the results of our research and the ensuing reflections on the role of culture, we cannot confirm that family adaptability is a positive variable for the families in our study.

Other authors have pointed out that families participating in SS.SS. are characterised by inconsistent wielding of power, the presence of changing rules regarding family roles or extremely strict limits (Parr, 2000). The results of our research point to the existence of greater strictness in family roles and rules. These findings are consistent with the profile described in the theoretical introduction of families at psychosocial risk in terms of family-preservation purposes, wherein strict educational tactics predominate (Hidalgo et al., 2007; López, Hidalgo, Sánchez, Jiménez, & Menéndez, 2006).

In their model for parental functioning under stress, Rodrigo and colleagues (2008) suggest an explanation for these results. The authors propose that the caregivers under stress are characterised by a certain lack of perspective in evaluating their own role as parents as well as by a lack of understanding of their children's needs. These characteristics, together with the presence of stress factors in their lives, lead to parental behaviour that is characterised by a failure to observe their children's behaviours and habits, the exclusive use of previous habits in terms of educational tasks without taking into consideration situational information, and automatically processing information without reflecting. This parental behaviour begets parents' evaluation of educational situations in a manner that is simple, automatic and impulsive, educational actions that are more limited and greater repetition of the same strategy without taking into account situational needs.

The model proposed by Rodrigo and colleagues (2008) and the disciplinary styles reported in these types of families correspond highly to extremely strict families characterised by low adaptability, according to Olson and colleagues (1983); this includes, especially, exercising strict authority with high levels of control and autocratic discipline, with a pattern of rules for interaction that are rather inflexible and frequently reinforced, and a family situation that is highly impermeable to outside influences.

Finally, one variable that reflects psychosocial risk in these families concerns a specific aspect of development in school: *parents' motivation for their children's academic competence*. According to the teachers' perspective, the parents of at-risk families participating in the research project typically provide significantly less academic motivation for their children than the reference group. The comparison group reflects

high or very high marks of parental motivation for children's academic success, meanwhile SS.SS. families show average or low scores for this variable.

These results are consistent with earlier research on families at risk (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Menéndez, Jiménez, & Lorence, 2008) and, as stated in the introduction to this dissertation, three fundamental reasons have been proffered to explain these phenomena. In the first place, the interpersonal relations in at-risk families are not motivational as parents tend to have low expectations of their children's academic success and tend not to encourage their children with the educational strategies, attitudes and skills necessary to successfully carry out school tasks (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Pérez, 1981; Pérez, 2003). In the second place, there is a great discrepancy in at-risk families between the family and school contexts, such that family perspectives, values and requirements may not be consistent with those of the school (Díaz-Aguado & Baraja, 1993; Domínguez, 2005; Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Kearney, 2008; López, 2001; Pérez, 2003; Pérez & Castejón, 2000; Rodrigo, Martín, Máiquez, & Rodríguez, 2005; Rodríguez et al., 2006). In the third place, this discrepancy between family and school tends to be associated with a lack of relations and communication between the two environments (McDonald et al., 2006; Rodrigo et al., 2005; Rodrigo, Martín, Máiquez, & Rodríguez, 2007) and, for families at psychosocial risk, the school tends not to be considered, and is not used as, a source of social support (Rodrigo et al., 2005).

In short, the results in this dissertation reveal variables that situate the participating families at psychosocial risk. Nevertheless, our predictions in this respect have not been fully corroborated because **these families reveal some variables that do not confirm a negative psychosocial profile in all situations**. From the arguments, we can affirm the following: the existence of variability in experiencing some at-risk factors and the presence of family variables that do not paint a particularly negative profile.

Earlier we defined the socio-demographic profile of these families as a profile indicative of families at risk. Keeping this definition in general terms, we note certain variability in some of these variables, such as the concentration of stress and risk factors or average family income. Therefore, while in general terms we are dealing with families with a socio-demographic profile considered difficult, there are some exceptions presenting more favourable results. Likewise, we can confirm that parents in this socio-demographic group are characterised by low educational levels and unsteady employment. Nevertheless, these families demonstrate high levels of employment compared to the caregivers in the reference group. Therefore, although employment conditions are perhaps not optimal, we do not find high levels of unemployment in these families.

Other variables related to how the family functions as developmental context indicate the existence of variability and/or factors that do not encompass particularly negative results. In this sense, the examination of perceived parental competence and of family cohesion in these contexts do not allow us to draw conclusions in terms of at-risk families.

With respect to *perceived parental competence*, the results of our research coincide with those of other studies that have examined this variable among the general community using the same evaluation tool (Corapci & Wachs, 2002; Donenberg & Baker, 1993; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Ohan et al., 2000; Rodrigue et al., 1992; Sanders & Woolley, 2005). On the one hand, we were dealing with a factor that is highly variable, such that mothers in families at psychosocial risk differ each others in their self-evaluations regarding their competence. On the other hand, the values obtained in this study fall within the range reported in studies conducted with the general community.

Both in situations of psychosocial risk in general as well as in families participating in SS.SS., there is a notable sense of inadequacy felt by the parents in terms of how they perceive their performance as mothers and fathers (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; López, 2005). Other studies conducted within the framework of socioeconomically disadvantaged families have shown that the culture of poverty can influence how parents perceive their competence (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Elder, Eccles, Ardelt, & Lord, 1995). Nevertheless, we cannot confirm these results, at least in the general terms of our sample, because of the high variability of this parameter and our obtaining average values comparable to that of the general community.

It is possible that a statistical comparison of our results with the general community might confirm more negative results among the families in this study. Nevertheless, other studies conducted of families receiving targeted intervention, such as that of Gwynne and colleagues (2009), have also reported average scores similar to those of this study. Therefore, it is possible that in situations of families receiving intervention, perceived parental competence is not particularly dire.

As expressed earlier, one of the contextual factors most frequently cited for influencing the perceived competence of parents in families at psychosocial risk is parental stress (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Lovejoy et al., 1997; McBride, 1989). It has been argued that stressful circumstances affect parental resources, including those of a cognitive nature, leading to negative repercussions in how parents perceive their competence. In fact, there is somewhat significant statistical evidence in our study that greater perceived competence among parents with school-aged and adolescent children has been associated with a lower concentration of stress and risk factors. Nevertheless, this explanation does not justify the presence of some parental-competence variables that, in general terms, cannot be labelled as negative.

It is possible, as suggested by Rodrigo and colleagues (2008), that an egocentric view of parents' role and a lack of understanding of their children's cognitive needs result in dissatisfaction in the face of adjustment problems and negative factors regarding children's competence. Nevertheless, these parents, characterised by a generic parental role, may not know that their children's adjustment problems may be related to their parental competence and nevertheless feel that said problems are beyond their control. Grimaldi (2007), in a study with families participating in SS.SS. in Seville, claimed that

these parents demonstrate difficulty in acknowledging the existence of problems in the heart of the family.

Finally, it has been pointed out that positive perception of one's parental competence may act as a protective factor in stressful situations (Elder, 1995). It is possible that these families that receive social services in our community have a greater network of resources to strengthen their roles as parents than do other families at psychosocial risk who do not receive intervention. Promoting parental self-efficacy has been a fundamental aspect of intervention in many of the parental-support programs (Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009) and some studies in our country demonstrate the efficacy of this type of intervention to strengthen perceived parental competence (Hidalgo et al., 2007; Rodrigo, Correa, Máiquez, Martín, & Rodríguez, 2006). In any case, an examination of perceived parental competence with respect to children's and adolescents' adjustment, as we shall discuss later on, may clarify our interpretation of these results.

With respect to *how the family functions as unit*, family cohesion also fails to paint a particularly negative profile in these families. In our opinion, an examination of the distribution of this variable over the different developmental-educational stages (high concentration of very positive answers) and an analysis of our results compared to other studies does not leave room for a negative interpretation. On average, reported family cohesion in this investigation is far from that reported in other studies of families at psychosocial risk (Ben-David & Jurich, 1993) and, yet, is closer to the results obtained by the authors of the scale (Olson et al., 1985) and to other studies that have examined this variable among the general community via a linear interpretation of the circumplex model (Cook-Darzens, Doyen, Falissard, & Mouren, 2005; Forjaz et al., 2002; Vandeleur, Preisig, Fenton, & Ferrero, 1999).

In short, just as what has occurred with the variable measuring perceived parental competence, our results in terms of family cohesion contradicts the studies that have reported that, in families at psychosocial risk, there is greater vulnerability in terms of healthy functioning (Buelow, 1995; Gwynne et al., 2009).

Using a curvilinear interpretation of the model we could argue that we are dealing with extreme families such that the extreme scores at both ends of the scale lead to a moderate average score on par with the range of values reported for the general community (Olson, 1991). Nevertheless, as we have argued, family cohesion has not shown elevated variability, rather its score is concentrated on the positive end of the distribution scale. Therefore, we must find other explanations beyond possible method-based arguments.

It is possible that, because we are dealing with questions reported by the parents themselves, the parents might have reported the ideal cohesion they imagine in their family unit and not the actual situation that describes the family. Some authors have argued that mothers perceive their families as more cohesive and flexible compared to

male caregivers (Noller & Shum, 1990; Smith, 1996; Vielva et al., 2001). In this respect, some authors argue that this discrepancy between mothers and fathers may be due to the fact that women tend to experience matrimony and motherhood more profoundly than men (Smith, 1996), while other studies of dysfunctional families have suggested that parents may deny existent problems in the family in order to protect family members (Vielva et al., 2001). Nevertheless, we would expect a distortion of how the family functions to be reflected in the different variables measured, which has not been confirmed in the case of family adaptability.

Moreover, just as we argued with respect to perceived parental competence, it is possible that, in families at psychosocial risk, the presence of positive contextual factors protects how the family functions as a unit, leading to more healthy functioning (Arenas, 2008). As we have pointed out, the fact that these families receive social services in our community may mean they have a greater network of resources to strengthen their roles as parents than do other families at psychosocial risk who do not receive intervention. Although some authors have argued that social services can jeopardise how the family functions as a unit due that social services participates in the realm of family control and may favour the development of functional-adaptability patterns (Parr, 2000), our results do not support this line of thinking. Perhaps the intervention received by these families acts as a protective factor such that more positive results in these variables are related to positive intervention from social services to strengthen the family as a developmental context. The fact that the families in our study with a higher concentration of stress and risk factors receive more intervention provides an additional reading of earlier explanations, specifically that families needing more intervention are receiving more attention. In any case, once again it will be necessary to examine the role of family cohesion with respect to children's and adolescents' adjustment in order to proffer a more definitive interpretation of these results.

Finally, this work has examined the psychosocial profile of families with children of different ages. In our view, this study offers particularly relevant results since, as far as we know, there are no other studies that have explored the different family-functioning variables in families at psychosocial risk for preservation purposes throughout children's development. Despite earlier references in this respect, we hypothesised that the psychosocial profile of these families would be particularly negative in families with adolescents, resulting from the cumulative effect of the experience of negative family situations coupled with the particular vulnerabilities to which all adolescents are prone. Nevertheless, the results have not confirmed our predictions since **the psychosocial profile discussed in these pages is consistent across families with children of all different ages**.

Although we do not have longitudinal data, we have observed a pattern highly consistent among families at psychosocial risk with preschool-aged children, school-aged children and adolescents. With respect to these families' socio-demographic profile, their composition, the parent's education and employment information, the concentration of stress and risk factors, and the level of family intervention are all comparable.

Some differences have been found with respect to socio-demographic factors in families with preschool-aged children versus those with school-aged children, revealing a lower level of education in the mothers and fewer overall children in families with school-aged children. We could not ignore that we are dealing with a difference in the samples, since this is not a longitudinal study, although the differences in the education levels have proven to be marginal, and said education level do not differ in any particularly critical manner with respect to the reference groups.

Moreover, other variables concerning family dynamic reveal a consistent pattern over the course of development. Parental satisfaction and competence, family adaptability and cohesion as well as parental motivation for academic success have revealed a general tendency in these families that is similar across families with children of all ages. The relative results of self-perception of the parenting role are consistent with the published literature, while results related to how the family functions as a unit and to parental motivation for academic success show some contradictions when compared to earlier studies.

In terms of *parents' perception of their role as parents* and its possible variability in terms of the children's ages, studies conducted in the general community have generally focussed on families with children in a specific developmental period; when the role of age has been studied, save for a few exceptions (Rogers & Matthews, 2004), generally no difference in these variables has been evidenced (Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009; Johnston & Mash, 1989; McBride, 1989; Mullis & Mullis, 1982; Ohan et al., 2000). Our results show, consistent with the studies conducted in the general community, that the children's age does not seem to be a relevant factor to differentiate how parents rate their own competence as mothers nor their degree of satisfaction with motherhood.

With respect to *cohesion and adaptability*, we pointed out in the introduction to this study that there is no absolute consensus in terms of the relationship between these variables and the age of children in families of general population (Barber & Buehler, 1996; Koopmans, 1993; Noller & Callan, 1991; Olson et al., 1983). For example, Olson and colleagues (1983) have argued that the developmental-educational needs of adolescents may require greater adaptability and less family cohesion, while Noller and Callan (1991) have argued that family cohesion continues to be important during adolescence given the role that family support plays in development. In situations of psychosocial risk, there seems to be greater consensus, indicating that smaller children may be more vulnerable to family dysfunction (Attala & Summers, 1990; Smith, 1996). Given that this study has shown no difference in the general tendencies of family cohesion and adaptability among the different developmental-educational stages studied, it is necessary to examine the role of these variables with respect to child and adolescent adjustment separately.

Finally, *parental motivation for their children's academic competence* has revealed comparable patterns among families with children of all ages. Actually, during

the preschool-age and school-age period we have observed moderate motivation, while adolescence has revealed the coexistence of situations of lower and higher motivation. Nevertheless, considering the average values for these variables, we have not observed differences over the course of development in at-risk families, nor is one developmental-educational stage significantly more vulnerable with respect to the comparison group.

These results run contradictory to literature on the topic, which would predict a clearer decrease in parental motivation for academic competence as children grow, particularly during adolescence (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). The existence of differences in the degree of parental motivation between the population participating in SS.SS. and the comparsion group, even in families with preschool-aged children, may explain these results. Among general population, although the reasons are diverse, it is argued that the parents' motivation of their children's academic competence decreases because parents feel less competent with respect to academics and this leads to less parental participation in school as children move from one academic grade to another. As we pointed out earlier, the reasons for low parental motivation for academic competence in families at psychosocial risk are, nevertheless, distinct. These reasons are related to the particular interpersonal relations that are produced in the heart of these families, the discrepancy between the school and the context of the at-risk family, as well as the frequent lack of a relationship and support between the family and the school. Thus, it is possible that the families in our study have not shown significantly less parental motivation for their children's academic competence during adolescence because the families at psychosocial risk already register less parental motivation for their children's academic competence from the early childhood, which diffuses any expected decrease in motivation for children's success as the children grow.

In short, a review of the profile of families at psychosocial risk that receive social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, as described in this dissertation, confirms some results that have already appeared in literature, such as the presence of negative contextual factors and of negative factors related to family dynamics that place these families under strain. Moreover, we have had the opportunity to raise questions about which we previously had little information, such as parents' perception of their role as parents in these types of families as well as the family's educational environment for sons and daughters of different ages. Without a doubt, these results have applicable and practical applications, which we will consider later in this dissertation. The following discusses the profile of adjustment for children and adolescents who grow up in these families, for the purpose of providing a general view of their development.

1.1.2. Adjustment profile of children and adolescents who grow up in families who receive social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes

The results obtained with respect to the adjustment profiles of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, taken as a whole, offer some interesting evidence. In the first place, we have obtained a profile that places these children and adolescents at risk of experiencing adjustment difficulties throughout their development. In the second place, this general profile encompasses some exceptions, since not all variables studied reveal a negative pattern. In the third place, although we do not have longitudinal data, our results point to there being a greater risk for school-aged children over the course of their development. Finally, in the fourth place, when studying boys separately from girls, there is some indication of a shared adjustment profile, but there are some stages like during the school-age period where girls are particularly vulnerable, and there are other stages such as adolescence where boys are at the greatest risk of adjustment difficulties.

In terms of the adjustment profile of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving preservation intervention, our predictions were that adjustment indicators for boys and girls in these families would reveal **a specific profile, characterised by the presence of some negative variables compared to normative expectations for their age**. These predictions have been generally confirmed and are clinically relevant, and we can safely reflect on them. On the one hand, preschool-aged, school-aged children and adolescents in families at psychosocial risk reveal an adjustment profile that characterises them as a set. On the other hand, different school-adjustment factors consistently contribute to this particularly at-risk profile throughout the course of development. Finally, development processes for those at psychosocial risk may be understood from an organisational point of view, although there are some specific characteristics in at-risk environments.

In terms of the multiple variables of overall adjustment (adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence), the children and adolescents in families receiving intervention score lower than their peers during the preschool-age period, the school-age period and the adolescence. That is to say as a whole, children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk display a more negative adjustment profile than their peers. If we examine the individual versus the school variables separately, these results have also been confirmed for all the personal variables taken into consideration in this research (internalisation problems, externalisation problems and hyperactivity, as well as self-control skills, assertiveness and cooperativeness) and in terms of all the academic variables measured as school adjustment (academic competence and academic adaptation at school).

From what we have researched, there is no analysis of these characteristics in literature on the topic and conducted on families at psychosocial risk in terms of family-

preservation purposes. Nevertheless, with respect the concrete facets of development at different development stages, the available results generally coincide with the results of our study.

Research that has examined these questions among families receiving intervention has basically focused on reporting two types of results. On the one hand, various authors have documented the presence of a higher rate of *adjustment problems* (both internalisation and externalisation problems) among children and adolescents who grow up in these families throughout their development (Berry, 1991; Combs-Orme & Thomas, 1997; Denham & Burton, 1996; Gwynne et al., 2009; Repetti et al., 2002; Svedin, Wadsby, & Sydsjö, 2005; Thieman & Dall, 1992; Veerman, De Kemp, Brink, Slot, & Scholte, 2003; Wadsby, Svedin, & Sydsjö, 2007; Werrbach, 1992). Our results have been consistent with these studies, some of which report that, in families at psychosocial risk, indications of both internalisation and externalisation disorders in boys and girls are visible as early as the preschools years (Denham & Burton, 1996).

In partial contradiction to these results, Lorence (2008) did not report these differences regarding internalisation problems during adolescence in families from social services in comparison to community population. We also did not find, on average, more internalisation problems in adolescents overall, although they did show a lower probability of positive results in comparison to peers (Jiménez, 2007). It is possible that the procedure used to take the measurements (reported by the subjects in both studies and reported by the teachers in this case) explains these differences. Nevertheless, it is usually shown that the adolescents are who tend to report more internalisation problems than the teachers since the teachers may be at a disadvantage in recognising these types of problems (Achenbach, Dumenci, & Rescorla, 2002). As we will have the chance to discuss in the following chapter, it is possible that the specificity of adjustment problems faced by children and adolescents in families at psychosocial risk helps explain why other research studies have not reported said difference with respect to the population receiving intervention.

On the other hand, together with a greater number of personal problems, another aspect that stands out in terms of the adjustment of children and adolescents from families receiving intervention has to do with the high prevalence of academic failure. Various studies have reported that, from the time they enter school, children who grow up in these contexts are especially prone to experience academic failure (Ayoub & Jacewitz, 1982; Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel, Hennon, & Hooper, 2006; Rodrigo et al., 2004; Rodríguez et al., 2006; Saulnier & Rowland, 1985; Staudt, 2001; Wadsby et al., 2007; Werrbach, 1992; West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000). Once again, the results of our research have been consistent with these findings, albeit with respect to a positive aspect of school adjustment, such as *academic competence*.

The variables of *social skills* and *school adaptation*, nevertheless, have not been much explored in families receiving social- and community-services intervention. With respect to social skills, related information correlates to our findings for preschool-aged

children and adolescents (Denham & Burton, 1996; Ogden, 2003; Svedin et al., 2005), although we did not know what happens at the school-age stage. Our results confirm that this pattern of particularly poor adaptation is also revealed during this period.

S*chool adaptation* has been infrequently studied among families receiving preservation interventions, although less dedication to homework, less satisfaction with school in general and with peers in particular, more behavioural problems in school and less positive adaptation in general have been reported during adolescence (Jiménez, 2007; Rodrigo et al., 2004; Rodrigo, Máiquez, et al, 2006; Rodríguez et al., 2006; Wadsby et al., 2007). Our results, in terms of children and adolescents as a whole, confirm these findings for the more academic aspects of school adaptation, but not for the more social aspects of said adaptation, as we will have the opportunity to consider later in this dissertation.

In addition to an examination of these adjustment variables in families receiving intervention, when we described the different indicators in families at psychosocial risk in the introduction of this dissertation, we cited other populations that share some of the characteristics of families at risk for preservation purposes, such as a low socioeconomic level in the family, child abuse, and children and adolescents with particular emotional and behavioural problems. Although we have not had the opportunity to compare our results directly with those of other studies, an examination thereof allows us to consider the *shared and/or unique profile vis-à-vis other populations at psychosocial risk.*

With respect to the populations at a socioeconomic disadvantage, evidence points to the fact that the profile of academic competence is as negative as that reported for families participating in SS.SS., while adjustment problems, social skills and school adaptation has no reason to be necessarily as negative, at least not in preschool and school-age periods.

In the theoretical introduction of this dissertation, we reported that children and adolescents who grow up in socioeconomically disadvantageous situations are at a greater risk for more adjustment problems, fewer social skills and lower academic competence than other children and adolescents from the general community (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Gottfried, Gottfried, Bathurst, Guerin, & Parramore, 2003; Guillamón, 2003; Kaiser, Hancock, Cai, Foster, & Hester, 2000; Muni, Rath, & Choudhury, 1997; Qi & Kaiser, 2003; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Smokowski, Mann, Reynolds, & Fraser, 2004; Takeuchi, Williams, & Russell, 1991), while the results concerning school adaptation do not coincide (Muni et al., 1997; Stipek & Ryan, 1997). Some of the studies that have used the SSRS scale teachers version during the preschool and school years report average scores better than those reported in this study in terms of adjustment problems and social skills, particularly with respect to hyperactivity problems (Carpenter & Nangle, 2006; Carpenter, Shepherd, & Nangle, 2008; Izard et al., 2001). Academic competence, however, has revealed more similar average scores (Izard et al., 2001).

In situations of abuse, we referred throughout the introduction to contradictory studies reporting more adjustment problems, worse academic competence and lower school adaptation where in maltreating families compared to families receiving preservation intervention (Attala & Summers, 1999; Kernic et al., 2002; Kernic et al., 2003; Mammen, Kolko, & Pilkonis, 2003; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001) versus other studies that have reported similar results between both populations, particularly in terms of social skills (Kinard, 1999; Maughan & Cicchetti, 2002; Wolfe & Mosk, 1983). Given the fact that these studies are not conducted using the same evaluation scale as this study, we cannot predict the possible difference between these populations. Nevertheless, we can conclude that, at least when compared to the reference group, the children and adolescents in this study show particular difficulties in these areas.

In short, we believe these results show the need to take into consideration families receiving intervention in order to define preventive measures with respect to their sons' and daughters' adjustment, examining other elements beyond family socioeconomic disadvantage and in terms of dysfunctional family situations before child abuse occurs.

In addition to the general adjustment profile discussed in these pages, examining all the different variables together gives us clues about which aspects most strongly lead to differentiate the boys and girls who grow up in families at psychosocial risk from their peers. As we have seen, the literature on the topic has basically focussed on examining the problems of adjustment as a differentiating variable in these types of populations. Nevertheless, an analysis of the specific contribution of the different variables measured in this study shows that academic questions consistently are the greatest contributors in differentiating these children and adolescents from their peers during preschool years, school years and adolescence. These results have been shown both in the analysis of overall adjustment (in which academic competence is shown to be most influential) and in the specific analyses for separated facets of adjustment (where academic competence and school adaptation in terms of academics reveals a more consistent pattern throughout development).

One possible explanation for the particular contribution of academic aspects in defining a specific at-risk profile for these children and adolescents has to do with a methodological interpretation. Most of the information presented in this dissertation has been collected from teachers who, without a doubt, are notable for their understanding of their students' academic adjustment in comparison to other adjustment facets like personal-adjustment and social-skills issues. Nevertheless, the procedure used to evaluate school adaptation during adolescence is self-reported; academic aspects of school adaptation stand out from social aspects at this educational stage. Moreover, the teachers have been reported as reliable sources of information in the various studies because they have had the chance to observe various students whereby they could establish a reference group regarding expected behaviour throughout development (Bloom, Karagiannakis, Heath, & Konstantinopoulos, 2007) and because they have received specific training in terms of developmental psychology. Likewise, the SSRS scale

used in this study evaluated the adjustment indicators through observed behaviours, and therefore required a low degree of inference by the teachers, even with respect to internalisation problems (Carpenter et al., 2008).

Another explanation as to the particular role that academic adjustment plays in defining a specific at-risk profile for children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk has to do with a more theoretical component. We pointed out in the introduction that, while school adjustment is not one of the primary focuses of studies of families at risk for family-preservation purposes, it is one of the aspects most consistently documented in situations of socioeconomic disadvantage. All the general reports published in our country (Instituto de evaluación, 2007a, 2007b), as well as the various reviews of the topic (McLoyd, 1998) and other studies with more specific samples (e.g., Ramey & Ramey, 1988; Smokowski et al., 2004) reported on the particular vulnerability of children in terms of positive academic adjustment. A generalisation of the results to situations of psychosocial risk for family-preservation purposes could therefore explain the relevant role of academic adjustment in defining a characteristic profile of children and adolescents who grow up in these contexts.

When we presented the different factors that explain the development processes in the introduction, we pointed to the fact that the school is a very important factor as a source of support and encouragement to ensure child and adolescent adjustment in general and is a particularly important factor of encouragement for those from at-risk families (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Harter, 1990; McLoyd, 1998; Pérez & Castejón, 2000; Sánchez, 2001; Zabalza, 1999). Nevertheless, we also stated that the same authors that have made reference to the importance of the school as a source of support have noted that this institution is often not prepared to serve in this capacity. Given this disconnect, children and adolescents from at-risk families may be especially vulnerable to educational problems since these children and adolescents tend to require more academic attention in order to be academically successful. Likewise, it is also possible that the school as an institution attempts to impose an established culture in order to achieve a uniformity among the students, which is a condition for academic failure among those children and adolescents who come from places and situations other than those encompassed by this uniformity. Finally, it is possible that the school lowers its expectations for at-risk students and for the school itself in order to confront the tasks of educating these children and adolescents, thus giving them less attention, providing them with fewer learning opportunities and offering them less support for academic success. In short, there are many factors that explain why factors related to academic adjustment play a particular role in defining a specific at-risk profile for children and adolescents of different ages who grow up in families at psychosocial risk.

To end with a review of a profile that overlaps between children and adolescents in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, it should be noted that the results demonstrate that development in situations of psychosocial risk can be understood from an organisational perspective, although some specific characteristics of at-risk situations are apparent. Although we

have not conducted a detailed examination of the profiles of these children and adolescents at different ages from a methodological perspective centred on the individual (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006), we can reflect on the correlation between the different adjustment factors.

On the one hand, children and adolescents who grow up in these contexts and demonstrate problems in a given environment have a greater chance of showing negative results in other developmental facets. To put it another way, children and adolescents who demonstrate competence in one adjustment variable have a greater chance of scoring positively in other developmental areas. In this study, the majority of the variables examined have shown moderate or high correlation, including personal-adjustment variables, school-adjustment variables or both variables together. These results are consistent with the holistic development perspective such that all areas of development are in continuous, mutual interaction (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993; Wenar & Kerig, 2000). That is to say, it seems that in situations of psychosocial risk, development processes can also be understood from an organisational perspective, such that resolving concrete developmental tasks in a manner that is or is not adaptive is related to the manner by which other facets of development are confronted (Wenar & Kerig, 2000).

On the other hand, however, this organisational pattern has its particularities. A noteworthy exception to these results is that, consistently throughout development, the children and adolescents in our study do not confirm that greater internalisation problems relate to more externalisation problems. These findings contradict the findings not only in the reference group but also in literature on the topic in general, which has consistently pointed out that personal adjustment problems tend to be related, particularly as children grow, and reinforce problem situations (e.g., Lemos et al., 1992a; Lemos, Fidalgo, Calvo, & Menéndez, 1992b; Parra, 2005; Sandoval, Lemos, & Vallejo, 2006). Of course, it is possible that these results are a response to a methodological explanation, returning to the argument that the teachers may be at a disadvantage in evaluating the most internal adjustment aspects of their students. Nonetheless, as we explained above, various reasons lead us to distrust this interpretation. Latter we discuss some questions that can help to understand these results.

An analysis like the one we just presented undeniably demonstrates the existence of a specific profile for children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, characterised by the presence of some negative adjustment variables that do not correspond to normative expectations for their particular developmental stage. Nevertheless, other evidence also indicates that **not all developmental aspects are particularly negative in situations of psychosocial risk**. This affirmation stems from the specific results obtained from these children and adolescents as compared to their peers. On the one hand, preschool-aged children in our study do not reveal particularly negative results in some school-adaptation variables. On the other hand, the degree of poor school adaptation in the adolescents in the study has low clinical relevance in general, and the social aspects of said adaptation do not show to be particularly

negative. This variable did not place all children in a situation of difficulty but depending on the developmental stage in reference, and we will reconsider this below when we discuss the adjustment profile of these children and adolescents with respect to their age.

In terms of **these children's and adolescents' course of development**, we do not have longitudinal data to analyse our results in terms of continuity/discontinuity, although an examination of the set of different developmental stages provides interesting results. Specifically, we discuss three reflections. On the one hand, studying exclusively situations of psychosocial risk, the preschool stage establishes the difference in terms of these children's level of development. On the other hand, taking into consideration the peer group, being a member of a family receiving intervention does not translate to vulnerability during a specific stage, rather the presence of a specific at-risk profile is similar throughout the course of development. Nevertheless, the school-age period merits particular attention. Finally, there are some specifics in terms of the developmental stage vis-à-vis adjustment aspects that contribute to establishing this particular at-risk profile.

In terms of an age-specific analysis of the adjustment of children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, we predicted that adolescents would experience the most acute adjustment difficulties given the cumulative effect of the experience of negative family situations coupled with the particular vulnerabilities to which all adolescents are prone. Nevertheless, the results do not confirm our predictions. These results show that the preschool stage is the period that establishes differences with respect to the adjustment level of children who grow up in situations of psychosocial risk. Taking into consideration both overall adjustment variables as well as separate personal and school aspects, preschool boys and girls in situations of psychosocial risk stand out significantly from other children and adolescents in the same situation since the preschool-aged children show more positive adjustment variables, with a particularly high clinical relevance in terms of personal adjustment.

With respect to *adjustment problems*, the results of our research show that school-aged children and adolescents who grow up in situations of psychosocial risk present more problems, particularly internalisation problems, compared to younger children. These results were partially supported in literature on the topic since; while adolescents do experience a higher rate of problems, this is not the developmental stage that contributes to these differences.

In the normative course of development, we would expect an increase in adjustment problems with age that is particularly significant in adolescence compared to earlier stages (Achenbach et al., 1990; Goossens, 2006; Moren-Cross, Wright, LaGory, & Lanzi, 2006). In situations of psychosocial risk, the results comparing the different developmental stages are scarce and inconsistent. Thus, some authors have indicated that adolescence may be a particularly vulnerable period in which the stress of the demands at this developmental stage combines with the specific demands faced by

adolescents in situations of psychosocial risk (Petersen & Leffert, 1995). Other authors have argued that the preschool years can generate greater vulnerability to adjustment problems in these types of families since the very developmental demands of these ages can reinforce already existent family stress, creating unhealthy family development patterns that are particularly acute in these years (Attala & Summers, 1999).

Although we do not have longitudinal data, the most plausible explanation for our results relates, in our opinion, to reinforcing adjustment problems over time (Egeland, 2007; Fantuzzo, Bulotsky, McDermott, Mosca, & Lutz, 2003; Laucht, Esser, & Schmidt, 2001; Montague, Enders, Dietz, Dixon, & Cavendish, 2008; Moren-Cross et al., 2006; Serna, Nielsen, Lambros, & Forness, 2000). Adjustment problems in the preschool-aged children in our study are less noticeable than in children at other developmental stages. Nevertheless, the problems differ significantly from peers already at this early stage. Therefore, if adjustment problems appear earlier in situations of psychosocial risk than they do in the normative course of development, it is also possible that their reinforcement, consequently, is evidenced earlier as well.

In terms of *academic competence*, we have obtained results that are similar to those reported for adjustment problems such that school-aged children and adolescents who grow up in at-risk families show lower academic competence than younger children in the same situation. Although we do not have much data in this respect for the normative course of development for preschool and school-aged children, available data does not show a general decrease in academic adjustment as children go from preschool to primary school (Perry & Weinstein, 1998). However, some factors have been cited as leading to problems in the face of this transition and that, therefore, worsen academic adjustment. Likewise, compared to the lack of studies concerning earlier educational stages, the normal course of development has shown extensively that the transition from the school-age period to adolescence and, more concretely, from primary school to secondary school, lowers academic competence in boys and girls (Eccles & Roeser, 2003; Pérez-Díaz, Rodríguez & Sánchez, 2001). This evidence concerning the normal course of academic competence combines with the existence of a certain consensus on poor adaptation in the early school years being reinforced in children's academic future such that experiencing academic problems in earlier school years is associated with problems of this type into adolescence (Burchinal et al., 2006; Finn, 1989; Pérez-Díaz et al., 2001; Sánchez, 2001; Savage, Carles, & Ferraro, 2007; Savage & Carless, 2004).

Taking these statements all together, it is possible that growing up in families at psychosocial risk constitutes one of the factors listed in literature for experiencing a more negative early-education transition such that new requirements create a more demanding educational context compared to earlier years and thereby explain lower academic competence in the school-age period over the preschool stage (Perry & Weinstein, 1998). Given such, early poor adjustment being reinforced in the children's academic future could explain why both adolescents boys and girls as well as school-

aged children differ in this variable from preschool-aged children and why adolescence is not the turning-point stage where these differences are manifest.

Finally, in terms of *social skills*, generally children in families at psychosocial risk have revealed a comparable profile at the different developmental stages. These results clearly contradict the normal course of development for social skills, as we would expect an increase in social skills as the children develop.

As we pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, we would expect the normal course of development to demonstrate a significant increase in social skills in terms of both frequency and complexity demonstrated by boys and girls during the school-age period. Interaction in the formal educational context requires children to exercise more complex social skills, the demands of which are accompanied by greater cognitive, emotional and linguistic development that considerably favour improved social skills (Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002; Davies, 1999; Wenar & Kerig, 2000). Likewise, developmentally speaking, we would also expect an increase in these skills during adolescence since it is during these years that relations with peers reach their utmost importance, creating an ideal opportunity to acquire and manage improved social skills (Scholte & Van Aken, 2006; Steinberg & Silk, 2002; Wenar & Kerig, 2000) together with increased cognitive development (Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003).

Although we do not have longitudinal data, the fact that no differences have been found among the different developmental-educational stages in general may confirm the notion of intrapersonal stability in the expression of these skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996). Obradovic, Dulmen, Yates, Carlson, and Egeland (2006) have confirmed this pattern longitudinally in a socioeconomically disadvantaged sample throughout the course of development and have interpreted their results such as early positive adaptation contributes to subsequent accumulative positive adaptation. Other studies conducted in situations of psychosocial risk also show that advances in the acquisition of social skills present themselves at the preschool stage (Denham & Burton, 1996; Miller et al., 2003), although such is not as evident in the school-age years in this group as in the general community (Dennis, Brotman, Huang, & Gouley, 2007; Stuart, Gresham, & Elliott, 1991).

In short, given that the preschool boys and girls in our study show an early lack of social skills when compared to their peer group, it is possible that the school-aged children and adolescents in our study would also register lower social skills when they were younger. In terms of the notion of intrapersonal stability in acquiring these skills, experiencing difficulties in terms of social skills at this early stage would explain compromised future social competence and, in short, the fact that more social skills are not observed in older children.

In sum, the school-aged children and adolescents in our study are at a greater risk than younger children of experiencing adjustment problems and demonstrating lower academic competence and, yet, they are not in an advantageous position to enjoy more

social skills. In is interesting, now that we have described this profile over the course of development, to contrast what happens in the peer group. In this respect, our results show that being a member of a family receiving preservation intervention does not suppose vulnerability at a specific stage, rather the presence of a particular at-risk profile is similar throughout the course of development. In general, analyses of interactions between the different developmental-educational stages are not significant, indicating that no concrete stage is one of particular vulnerability for the children and adolescents. Given that all the stages examined reveal a particular at-risk profile for children who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, we can conclude that this profile is similar throughout the course of development.

Nevertheless, some considerations lead us once again to point to the importance of paying particular attention to adjustment during the school-age period for children in families at psychosocial risk. On the one hand, a graphical analysis of this interaction profiled shows that, in general, greater discrepancies with respect to peers are present during the school-age period. On the other hand, an analysis of the clinical relevance of the differences present with respect to the peer group shows that it is specifically during this stage where said differences prove more relevant.

As we stated earlier, these results contradict our initial predictions since we expected adolescents to show significantly more negative adjustment variables compared to other developmental stages and when compared to peer groups. As we have pointed out throughout this dissertation, it is possible that an at-risk profile in the earliest years reinforces the results of poor adaptation that manifests later, contributing to the fact that the school-age period figures as a particularly salient developmental stage for experiencing difficulties in at-risk family contexts.

Although we do not have longitudinal data to confirm this reinforcement, this hypothesis is consistent with the manner presently used to understand developmental processes. An organisational perspective defends the idea that psychosocial growth implies a process of growing complexity and organisation, in which new structures emerge thanks to others that appeared before. In this manner, continuous qualitative reorganisation assures that responses of successful or of poor adaptation in earlier experiences will be incorporated in subsequent functioning, such that the manner whereby children negotiate their early developmental tasks provides the basis for the way they negotiate subsequent developmental tasks (Egeland et al., 1993; Wenar & Kerig, 2000).

Nevertheless, this explanation does not help us completely to understand our results since we would expect greater problems during the school-age period as a consequence of reinforced results of poor adaptation at the preschool stage to lead to negative adjustment throughout development; indeed, we would then expect adolescents to reveal a more negative adaptation profile compared to their peers.

It is possible that families receiving preservation intervention with adolescent children have been receiving intervention from social workers for a longer period of time, which would diffuse the emergence of problems during adolescence. Although some authors who have found similar results have proffered this explanation (Svedin et al., 2005), the psychosocial profile of the families in our study shows overall similarity, in general, regardless of the children's ages; therefore, we believe there are other explanations for our results.

Other authors have argued that the influence of the family context during adolescence can appear reduced given the importance of the adolescents' participation in other developmental contexts. Specifically, it has been noted that peer groups in these years become a relevant context for socialisation (Oliva, Parra, & Sánchez-Queija, 2002). Given this interpretation, growing up in the context of a family at psychosocial risk may lead to fewer negative consequences than in earlier years due to the influence of other types of experiences. Although some studies have confirmed these results, specifically with respect to school adjustment (Pérez & Castejón, 2000; White, 1982), the evidence available is not consistent (Pérez-Díaz et al., 2001; Schoon, 2006). Likewise, the important role of the different aspects of the family dynamic have shown, in this study during adolescence, that this interpretation is not trustworthy.

In our opinion, we believe that the most plausible explanation is related to the special difficulties that boys and girls normatively experience in adolescence. This developmental period has been widely documented as a sensitive stage rife with difficulties compared to earlier developmental stages (Oliva & Parra, 2004; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Throughout this dissertation we have reiterated, from a developmental perspective, how we would normally expect different adjustment variables to have a more negative angle during this period in general for boys and girls.

It is possible, therefore, that the normal experience of particular difficulties during this developmental stage curbs the emergence of a specific at-risk profile during adolescence; specifically, the difficulties experienced in situations of psychosocial risk are not as evident because other boys and girls who grow up in more healthy family environments also experience these same difficulties during this stage.

To end with an examination of the adjustment profile of the children and adolescents in our study over the course of development, we should underscore that there are some specifics in terms of adjustment factors that lead to determining a particular at-risk profile in terms of the developmental stage in consideration. We revealed the existence of some common factors that allow us to talk generally of an at-risk adjustment profile for all ages of children and adolescents who grow up in families participating in SS.SS. interventions. Likewise, we pointed out the role of academic adjustment in defining this profile consistently over the course of development. Nevertheless, this examination also allows us make some differentiations since other variables contribute to specifically defining this profile at given developmental stages.

On the one hand, with respect to *personal adjustment*, social skills play an important role in preschool-aged children, but adjustment problems weigh more heavily in an at-risk profile during the school-age period and the adolescence. In this respect, it is possible that access to the school environment, loaded with new requirements in terms of interaction with others, places preschool-aged children from families at psychosocial risk in a position of acute vulnerability in demonstrating these skills, which leads to revealing greater differences compared to peers instead in other developmental stages, where children have had the opportunity to train said skills as they enjoy their expanding cognitive, emotional and linguistic development (Collins et al., 2002; Davies, 1999; Wenar & Kerig, 2000).

Complementarily, it is also possible that the emergence of adjustment problems in the preschool stage is not yet defined, which means this variable would not aid in the establishment of a characteristic at-risk profile during this early childhood stage. It has been argued that problems patterns tend to solidify throughout the course of development such that it is possible that preschool-aged children show distinct types of adjustment problems, thwarting clear identification. Nevertheless, in subsequent years, to the extent that these problems are consolidated, a more specific pattern tends to emerge, thereby favouring its identification (Kaiser et al., 2000).

On the other hand, with respect to *school adjustment*, noticeable differences have been observed in the manner in which the social aspects of school adaptation contributes to establishing a risk profile at different stages. Specifically, these more social aspects lead to the establishment of differences with respect to peers during the school-age period, but not during the preschool period and adolescence.

Given that social skills are the important ingredient during the preschool years for determining an at-risk profile, it is possible that these boys and girls interact with their peers but do not do so effectively. It has been documented that participation in school supposes access to a context with new learning and interaction opportunities such that this novelty favours heightened motivation to learn, to engage in school tasks and to relate with peers (Davies, 1999; Stipek, 1997). Therefore, it is possible that, although boys and girls in situations of psychosocial risk attend school with lagging social skills compared to their peers, they do not show problems in terms of school adaptation because they participate in educational activities, interacting with others and try to adapt to the new context.

The existence of these differences during the school-age period may be due to the teachers, who during this stage place more emphasis on academic factors, and this negative academic approval spills over into other aspects of the social factors of school adaptation (Wentzel, 1993). It is also possible that the most formal demands in the school environment have negative repercussions on school-aged boys and girls because, as we have argued, social norms at this educational stage in school are more demanding than those at the preschool stage (Davies, 1999). Likewise, consistent with the notion of reinforcement that we have already discussed at length, it is possible that the difficulties

experienced in earlier years in the school environment manifest themselves during this subsequent developmental period, affecting not only the most academic factors of school adjustment but also the social factors of school adjustment.

Finally, there are two possible interpretations of the fact that school adaptation does not contribute in a relevant manner to establishing a particular at-risk profile during adolescence, particularly with respect to the more social aspects of school adaptation. We have argued that, in situations of psychosocial risk, it is possible not to experience school-adaptation problems with respect to peers because these peers may share some negative characteristics evidenced in situations of psychosocial risk (Robertson, Harding, & Morrison, 1998; Véronneau, Vitaro, Pedersen, & Tremblay, 2008). Given that the adolescents in this study have report on their own school adaptation, it is possible that they do not perceive themselves as having particular adaptation problems with respect to other boys and girls who share the same problematic characteristics.

Nevertheless, this explanation is not sufficient to understand the lack of differences in adolescent school adaptation as reported by the teachers. One complementary explanation is that the problems of normal adolescent development curb differences in situations of psychosocial risk. As we have shown, in adolescence teachers take on a secondary role in development, and not all adolescents feel that teachers serve as sources of support (Flammer & Alsaker, 2006). Thus, the change in the educational stage that accompanies adolescence may lead to school adaptation problems in general for all adolescents since it produces not only a change in peers and in teachers but also in the configuration of the school context itself (Eccles, 2004; Eccles & Roeser, 2003).

Up to this point we have discussed the adjustment profile of children who grow up in families participating in SS.SS. for family-preservation purposes throughout the course of their development without making distinctions based on gender. Nevertheless, one of our predictions was that this profile would encompass different characteristics for boys and girls, a result of some of their personal characteristics and their different socialisation experiences. Our results partially confirm these predictions, since **some variables lead to a shared adjustment profile, but the school-age period is a moment of particular vulnerability for girls, while adolescence is characterised by a greater risk for boys**. Two results support this statement. In terms exclusively of situations of psychosocial risk, adolescent boys are at greater risk of revealing negative adjustment results than girls. In terms of the profile of these children when compared to their peers, school-aged girls are at greater risk of revealing negative adjustment results than boys.

An examination of the adjustment of children in families at psychosocial risk in terms of gender has shown, in general, that adolescent boys are at a greater risk of revealing negative adjustment results than are girls, save for internalisation problems, which are more negative in adolescent girls. School-aged children from families at psychosocial risk reveal a similar adjustment profile concerning gender. Nevertheless,

adolescent boys show more difficulties in terms of different variables (externalisation problems, self-control, adaptation to teachers and, marginally, adaptation to the school) when compared to adolescent girls, who stand out only for their higher rate of internalisation problems.

Literature on the topic has not revealed consistent evidence of a comparable or differentiated pattern between boys and girls who grow up in families at psychosocial risk. Indeed, the findings of this study, both those that indicate a similar pattern as well as those that indicate gender-based differences, are consistent with some earlier studies and contradict others.

In terms of research conducted in the general community, the most consistent evidence points to the boys' tending to experience more problems of school adaptation (e.g., Bruyn, Dekovic, & Meijnen, 2003; Clemente, Albiñana, & Doménech, 1998; Clemente, Doménech, & Albiñana, 2000; Jiménez, 2007; McClelland, Morrison & Homes, 2000; Moreno, Muñoz, Pérez, & Sánchez-Queija, 2005; Naya, 1993; Pérez-Díaz et al., 2001; Rodrigo et al., 2004; Steinhausen & Metzke, 2001; Wentzel, 1993), while girls —particularly in adolescence— tend to have more internalisation problems (e. g., Dekovic, 1999; Lemos et al., 1992a, 1992b; Lemos, Vallejo, & Sandoval, 2002; Rescorla et al., 2007; Sandoval et al., 2006; Steinhausen & Metzke, 2001). These findings are consistent with the results of our study during adolescence.

With respect to experiencing more positive *school adaptation*, it has been argued that different socialisation processes according to gender possibly favour adaptive behaviours in the school context, particularly for girls. Likewise, the fact that adolescent girls have a more positive outlook of family and school environment may be a major influence in both contexts to positively affect adjustment in the school context (Basow & Rubin, 1999). These differences may be particularly clear in adolescence because it is in this developmental period when the influence of other contexts is most evident (Oliva et al., 2002). Therefore, identifying more closely with the family unit may have favourable repercussions for girls than for boys. From this point of view, we can also understand the reasons the difference in the level of school adaptation in terms of gender that were manifest in our study did not hold true for the adaptation to peers. Some studies conducted in situations of psychosocial risk are consistent with these arguments (Jiménez, 2007), while others have not reported these differences (Muni et al., 1997).

In terms of *internalisation problems*, different interpretations have been proffered to explain the differences in terms of gender, although there is wide consensus that said differences are acutely present in adolescence, while in earlier developmental stages the differences depend on the concrete factor in reference (Wenar & Kerig, 2000). It has been argued that perhaps girls are more vulnerable than boys are to interaction with others, given their greater concern for relations with others and their feeling more pressure to adapt to the expectations of their peers and families, which may lead to more emotional problems (Calvete & Cardeñoso, 2005; Graber, 2004; Parra, 2005).

Likewise, it is possible that a greater capacity for critical thinking and reflection, which is more predominant in girls, engenders more negative thoughts and, therefore, more emotional problems (Calvete & Cardeñoso, 2005; Sandoval et al., 2006). Finally, another hypothesis that has been suggested, specifically during adolescence, has to do with girls' experiencing greater stress levels than boys during this stage. Given that girls physically mature before boys do, it is possible that physical development occurs when girls have not yet developed the skills or competence needed to deal with the new situations they confront with their new bodies, thus creating higher levels of emotional instability (Graber, 2004). Once again, some studies that have explored these questions during adolescence in situations of psychosocial risk are consistent with these interpretations (Davis, Tang, & Ko, 2002; Lorence, 2008; Lozano & García, 2000), while others have not reported these differences (Jiménez, 2007; Lipschitz-Elhawi & Itzhaky, 2008).

Despite the discrepancies in the studies of situations of psychosocial risk, available literature concerning the general community provide a consistent framework from which we can understand the differences found in this study in terms of gender with respect to the variables of school adaptation and initialisation problems. However, the same is not true in terms of externalisation problems and self-control skills.

With regards to *externalisation problems*, the majority of studies that have been concerned with documenting possible differences in terms of gender have examined the question during adolescence, reporting said differences in the general community (Dekovic, 1999; Lemos et al., 1992a, 1992b; Lemos et al., 2002; Zubeidat, Fernández-Parra, Ortega, Vallejo, & Sierra, 2009). However, other studies have not reported differences between boys and girls in terms of externalisation problems (Parra, 2005; Rescorla et al., 2007; Sánchez-Queija, 2007; Wentzel, 1993) and, as we stated earlier, available information in situations of psychosocial risk in not consistent (Lorence, 2008; Lozano & García, 2000).

Researchers who have documented the existence of differences in experiencing externalisation problems in terms of gender have argued that boys justify aggressive actions more than girls, and boys are characterised by more impulsive behaviour that reduces their repertoire of alternative behaviours (Calvete & Cardeñoso, 2005). In turn, the authors who have reported similar results for boys and girls have justified such based on the greater tendency for girls to engage in problematic externalising behaviour as a consequence of the progressive tendency for more equal socialisation among both genders (Sánchez-Queija, 2007). Thus, it is possible that, for the adolescents in this study, both interpretations are helpful to explain the higher rate of externalisation problems for boys. That is to say, it is possible that boys justify their aggressive acts and display more impulsivity than do girls. In turn, it is possible that more equal socialisation for both sexes is a reality in the general community, but not in situations of psychosocial risk.

The former of these interpretations is more consistent with the finding that the adolescent boys in our study were characterised not only by greater externalisation problems but by *less self-control*. As we pointed out earlier, there is a certain consensus in considering that boys and girls experience interactions in their particular ways, which means not only girls present greater concern for these factors, but also a greater degree of complexity in understanding and expressing their social and emotional experiences (Davies, 1999; Henning-Stout, 1998; Rose-Krasnor, 2006). However, these reflections have not translated into conclusive results in terms of the differences in the levels of social skills between boys and girls in the general community (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Rinaldi, Kates, & Welton, 2008; Rose-Krasnor, 2006; Wentzel, 1993) nor in situations of psychosocial risk (Carpenter & Nangle, 2006; Muni et al., 1997; Obradovic et al., 2006; Svedin et al., 2005).

With the exception of this view, studies conducted of children and adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems have consistently shown greater vulnerability to experiencing less developed social skills among adolescent boys, reporting less positive social guidance, less self-control and less empathy (Davis et al., 2002; Hesmtreet & Flicek, 1994; Kuperminc & Allen, 2001). Considering the results of these studies, it is possible that the lack of self control that the adolescent boys in our study demonstrated are not related to problems of skills in general, but to their greater externalisation problems. As we have already said, this interpretation would justify the existence of a higher rate of externalisation problems among adolescent boys, and this association is widely documented in literature. Thus, it has been consistently argued that the lack of self-control leads to the development of disruptive and impulsive at-risk behaviours because the lack of self-control means not taking the consequences of one's actions into account, not following rules and instructions, and not delaying gratification (Dennis et al., 2007; Fishbein et al., 2006; Schatz, Smith, Borkowski, Whitman, & Keogh, 2008).

An examination of the adjustment profile of the children and adolescents in our study compared to their peers differentiated by gender provides some interesting evidence in addition to that already discussed. This examination has shown that school-aged girls are especially vulnerable to experiencing negative adjustment factors compared to their peers. Specifically, school-aged girls in families participating in SS.SS. reveal, when compared to their school peers, particular hindrances in their social skills (self-control, assertiveness and, marginally, cooperativeness), in school adaptation (intelligent behaviour, work guidance, independence and extroversion) and marginally in terms of academic competence (lower) and internalisation problems.

Our interpretation of these results has to do with the particular problems that the school-aged children in our study experienced. On the one hand, these results paint a profile of particularly poor adaptation in practically all adjustment factors measured in this study, which, save for internalisation problems, do not tend to be particularly negative in girls in the course of normative development. On the other hand, this girls' profile is significantly different when compared to the group of peers but, save for

internalisation problems and cooperation skills, did not differ from the sample of school-aged boys in families at psychosocial risk.

In short, it is possible that the particular problems that the school-aged children have demonstrated in our study are more evident among girls compared to their peers because, in general, we are dealing with factors that, under the course of normal development, tend to be more pronounced in the female population, which makes the differences more noticeable. The fact that, as we have explained, the school-aged children in our study are particularly poorly adapted in general when compared to their peers may contribute to these differences becoming evident in this developmental stage. In any case, we are dealing with relevant results that place these girls in a more vulnerable position than their peers in terms of experiencing several adjustment problems during primary school.

In short, an examination of the adjustment profile of children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation provides relevant information regarding their level of adjustment as a whole, differentiated in terms of age and differentiated in terms of gender. Nevertheless, we can draw one general conclusion based on these results: these children and adolescents are at risk of experiencing developmental difficulties. Therefore, it behoves us to reflect on the role of the families in which these children and adolescents grow up as vehicles to promote positive adaptation.

1.1.3. The role of the family for a positive development in psychosocial risk situations in terms of family preservation

Having examined the adjustment profile of the children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, we proceed to discuss the results concerning these families' roles on the positive development of their sons and daughters at various ages. In this respect, our most general expectations were that said role would indeed be relevant. Our results, although they referred to a limited number of variables in the family context, confirm these predictions: the manner in which the educational facet figures in situations of psychosocial risk is relevant in terms of the adjustment of the children and adolescents who grow up in these contexts.

We reached this general conclusion from two reflections. In the first place, parents' personal factors affect their children's adjustment, partially through the indirect effect on factors of family dynamics. In the second place, various factors concerning how the family functions as a unit (including parents' individual variables) directly relate to child and adolescent adjustment.

In terms of the former of these reflections, although we do not have the longitudinal data, we have decided to explore the possible mediator effect of the variables related to family functioning (family adaptability and cohesion) with respect to parents' perception of their parental role (parental satisfaction and perceived

competence), given that literature on the topic has been concerned primarily with documenting the important role of perceived parental competence and parental satisfaction in mothers' and fathers' taking on educational tasks.

In this respect, we expected that parents' perception of their parental role would affect various adjustment factors primarily through the indirect effect on other factors of family functioning. These predictions have been partially confirmed, since the **manner in which the parents perceive their parental role indirectly affects child and adolescent adjustment, but this indirect contribution is reduced**.

These results have revealed that there is a consistent indirect effect of parents' perception of their parental role on adjustment through the different variables of how the family functions as a unit. The consistency of this indirect effect is related more to the developmental stage and to the area of family dynamic influenced by it than to the evaluated adjustment factor. That is to say, although the magnitude of the effect is small, it is consistent, both in the developmental stage studied as well as in the family dynamic upon which it manifests its influence.

Specifically, parental competence is indirectly related to different facets of adjustment (adjustment problems, social skill and academic competence) through the mediation effect of family cohesion during the school-age period. In adolescence, this indirect effect of parental competence with respect to the different facets of adjustment (adjustment problems and social skills) is mediated by the adaptability variable. The study reveals that parental satisfaction, in turn, is indirectly related to the different adjustment factors (adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence) only during adolescence, through a mediator effect of family cohesion.

To our knowledge there has been no study of the indirect effect of parental competence with respect to child and adolescent adjustment through family cohesion and adaptability. However, some results reported in the literature offer insight into these relationships.

Using a circumplex model, family cohesion has been defined as the emotional vehicle or the effective link between members of the family unit and the degree of individual autonomy that a family member experiences in said system (Olson et al., 1983). Although we do not known their relationship to parents' perception of their parental role, there is evidence that both satisfaction as well as parental competence are relevant factors in terms of emotional factors in parent-child relationships (such as warmth, addiction and responsiveness) and parental alliance (Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Ohan et al., 2000).

Family adaptability, in turn, has been defined as the family unit's capacity to change its power structure, the relationship roles that compose it and the rules of the relationship in response to situational and developmental stress (Olson et al., 1983). It has been documented that low levels of parental competence and satisfaction correlate

to more coercive, authoritarian, reactive and aggressive parenting even in situations of psychosocial risk, factors that can make it difficult to create an adaptive environment (Bor & Sanders, 2004; Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Henry & Peterson, 1995; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Rogers & Matthews, 2004).

Nevertheless, although the literature provides some insight into how the parents' perception of their parental role can be relevant to both variables of family functioning (family adaptability and family cohesion), this study has found the specific role of satisfaction exclusively with respect to family cohesion. In our opinion, these results may relate to the particular role that parental satisfaction plays with respect to other personal-adjustment factors, such as personal satisfaction and marital satisfaction (Bor & Sanders, 2004; Henry & Peterson, 1995; Rogers & Matthews, 2004), which are particularly relevant for obtaining positive family cohesion, and not so much for healthy family adaptability.

The literature on the topic of the specific roles that the variables of the parents' role play in different developmental-education stages does not reveal consistent results from which to interpret these findings. Thus, parents' perception of their parental role has been frequently examined among populations with small children, but the results have not reported a relationship between this role and the child's age (Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009; Johnston & Mash, 1989; McBride, 1989; Mullis & Mullis, 1982; Ohan et al., 2000); and, when said associations have been mentioned, it has been to establish greater relevance in terms of satisfaction of parents with younger children (Rogers & Matthews, 2004).

Our results point to the presence of this indirect effect during the school-age period and adolescence. Therefore, it is possible that it is the role of family functioning, and not the parental role, that explains these relationships at different developmental stages.

In the introduction to this dissertation, we already expressed that Olson and colleagues (1983) argued that high levels of cohesion in adolescence could be a problem, while Noller and Callan (1991) claimed this variable remains important during adolescence given the role family support plays in development. Our results indicate that, to a lesser degree, family cohesion is relevant both during the school-age period as well as during adolescence.

With respect to family adaptability Olson and colleagues (1983) have pointed out that during the school-age period adaptability is less important than routines and developmental rules; nevertheless, in adolescence, the changes inherent to this developmental stage require greater family adaptability. In this sense, it is possible that the indirect effect of parental competence through family adaptability becomes noticeable during adolescence in our study because it is this developmental stage where adaptability plays a more important role in development.

Finally, it is noteworthy to point out an exception to the consistency of these findings regarding various adjustment factors: the indirect effect of parental competence on adolescent academic competence by means of its relationship to family adaptability. That is to say, parental competence demonstrates an indirect effect with respect to adolescents' adjustment problems and social skills through family adaptability, but not with respect to academic competence. It is possible that family adaptability per se is not a relevant variable for academic competence in adolescence, and the indirect effect of parental competence during adolescence is not demonstrated through such variable. It is also possible that, in this relationship, parental competence plays a more direct role or is not such a relevant variable. In a broad review of the topic, Jones and Prinz (2005) concluded that the association between perceived competence and parental behaviours that promote academic competence is less evident in literature than its relation with other developmental factors.

In short, these results show consistently with other authors' reflections on the topic, in at-risk situations parents' positive perception of their parental role can act as an important protective factor (Elder, 1995) and allow those parents with a healthy perception of their parental role to create an adequate family environment despite adverse circumstances (Coleman & Karraker, 1997). However, given the small magnitude of these effects, other direct relationships with adjustment must be examined.

Apart from exploring the indirect role of parent's perception of their parental role in terms of children's adjustment through the relationship with how the family functions as a unit, we proffer a second insight that reflects the role of family-environment factors in children's and adolescents' adjustment: **distinct factors of family functioning, including the parents' most individual factors, directly relate to children's and adolescents' adjustment**.

To this extent, we would like to share two reflections. In the first place, different factors of family functioning are more significant to the adjustment of these children and adolescents in different stages than other socio-demographic factors. In the second place, parents' perceived competence and family adaptability relate to adjustment in a specific manner in each concrete developmental-educational stage, while parental satisfaction and family cohesion relate to adjustment in a consistent manner throughout the stages. Likewise, family adaptability plays a specific role in terms of social skills, while the other variables of family dynamics (parental satisfaction, perceived confidence and family cohesion) have turned out to be relevant in different aspects of adjustment.

In terms of the former reflection, our general predictions were that the variables related to family dynamics evaluated in this study would play a relevant role in predicting children's adjustment. Specifically, we expected this role to be particularly important during the school-age period, given the influence of peers and the experience of other difficulties during adolescence. Our predictions have been partially confirmed, since several family-dynamics factors contribute to predicting different adjustment

aspects in these children during school-age years and adolescence stronger than other socio-demographic factors.

An examination of effect size of the linear regression models included in the results section demonstrates that the different models proposed explain between 17% to 38% of the variance in terms of the variability in the school-aged children's and adolescents' adjustment problems, social skills and academic competence.

Without a doubt, these results demonstrate that other factors not considered in this research are relevant for children's and adolescents' adjustment. As we pointed out in the introduction, there are many multi-tiered factors in the ecological environmental that affect children's adjustment, from personal characteristics, such as cognitive processes or self-esteem, to factors outside the family, such as social support or the quality of the school environment, to other relevant variables of family dynamics, such as educational practises or the quality of the home environment.

Nevertheless, it is notable that the variance expressed in these models corresponds to the actual variables of family functioning and not to the child's, adolescent's or family's socio-demographic characteristics. Thus, once we introduce parents' perception of their role as parents and family functioning into the different models, the child's or adolescent's gender, the primary caregiver's level of education, the concentration of stress and risk factors in the family and the degree of family intervention no longer offer a statistical contribution to our analyses or are rendered practically statistically insignificant.

With regard to the second of the aforementioned reflections, the linear regression models in this dissertation show that perceived parental competence and family adaptability have a specific effect in a specific developmental-education stage, while parental satisfaction and family cohesion affect adaptation consistently across the stages. Likewise, family adaptability plays a specific role with respect to social skills, while the other variables of family dynamics (parental satisfaction, perceived competence and family cohesion) are relevant in different facets of development.

Specifically in this study, *family cohesion* has shown to be the family-dynamic variable that most affects child and adolescent adjustment. Two results confirm this claim. On the one hand, family cohesion is the variable that most comprehensively affects child and adolescent adjustment, being a relevant variable in all the models proposed. On the other hand, family cohesion is the variable with highest specific effect size contributing to the predictions.

The role of family cohesion in this study is consistent with the findings presented in the three dimensional circumplex model included in the introduction, in which the highest scores correspond to the healthiest families, that is to say families where the members are independent and, simultaneously, the family as a whole is united (Gorall & Olson, 1995; Vielva et al., 2001).

The results are consistent with the literature on the topic, in which family cohesion affects the different factors of personal and academic adjustment, indicating that healthy family functioning, particularly with respect to family cohesiveness, promotes comprehensive adjustment (Farrell & Barnes, 1993; Shipley, 2000). Consequently, there are various studies that confirm these relationships over the course of development (Hill & Bush, 2001; Nurmi, 2004; Pichardo, 2003; Prevatt, 2003; Vandeleur et al., 1999) and particularly during adolescence (Barber & Buehler, 1996; Dekovic, Janssens, & Van As, 2003; Estévez, Martínez, & Jiménez, 2003; Farrell & Barnes, 2003; Gutiez, 1989; Koopmans, 1993; Moreno, Vacas, & Roas, 2000; Oliva, Jiménez-Morago, & Parra, 2009; Pichardo, Fernández, & Amezcua, 2002; Resnick et al., 1997). This comprehensive role of family cohesion affecting adjustment has also been in situations of psychosocial risk (Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, DaCosta, & Akman, 1991; Felner et al., 1995; Meyerson, Long, Miranda, & Marx, 2002; Shipley, 2000; Tolan, Gorman-Smith, Huesmann, & Zelli, 1997), although less consistently (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2000; Campbell, Pungello, & Miller-Johnson, 2002).

The authors who have sought to examine these relationships have argued that the family climate created when there is optimal functioning generates a support context for the children and adolescents that favours their emotional well-being: their trusting in their own skills, their participating effectively in other contexts and, in short, their confronting the developmental-educational tasks pertaining to each age in a satisfactory manner (Clark, 1995; Gutiez, 1989; Moreno et al., 2000; Pichardo et al., 2002). Nevertheless, it has also been argued that proper family functioning can also indirectly promote positive development, buffering the effects of psychosocial stress and promoting some efficient confrontation strategies (Brooks & Coll, 1994; Carbonell, Reinherz, & Giaconia, 1998; Clark, 1995; Oliva et al., 2009). This question is particularly relevant for children and adolescents who grow up in situations of psychosocial risk, given the non-normative difficulties they face in their day-to-day lives.

In short, family cohesion facilitates compliance of some fundamental family functions to satisfy the children's and adolescents' most important developmental-educational needs, establishing an affectionate and supportive environment in which the family creates a psychological point of reference for its younger members (Bradley, 2002; Palacios & Rodrigo, 1998; Rodrigo & Acuña, 1998). Indeed, the weight of this variable, both during the school-age period and during adolescence, confirms that family cohesion continues to be important for adolescents in situations of psychosocial risk (Noller & Callan, 1991).

Parental satisfaction, like family cohesion, has also shown to play a relevant role in various adjustment variables in both the school-age period and adolescence, although the role is less comprehensive than that of family cohesion.

During adolescence, greater parental satisfaction translates to higher academic competence and somewhat to better social skills. These results are consistent with the literature on the topic, indicating the importance of parental satisfaction on the overall

adjustment in this developmental period. During the school-age period, parental satisfaction can predict children's adjustment problems and social skills. However, we have not been able to establish the direction of this relationship, such that greater satisfaction is not necessarily associated with fewer adjustment problems and greater social skills during this developmental-educational stage.

The literature on the topic has consistently shown that both children and adolescents with less satisfied parents present more adjustment problems (Johnston & Mash, 1989; Ohan et al., 2000) and, during adolescence, greater parental satisfaction has been related to greater social competence (Henry & Peterson, 1995). In situations of psychosocial risk, the mothers and fathers in charge of children with behavioural or emotional problems have reported a relationship between greater parental satisfaction and fewer adjustment problems from the preschool stage through adolescence (Cunningham & Boyle, 2002; Donenberg & Baker, 1993; Johnston, 1996; Johnston & Patenaude, 1994; Knight, 2006). As we argued when we presented the studies, it is possible that we are dealing with a bidirectional relationship in which adjustment problems have repercussions in parental satisfaction. Nevertheless, this explanation does not justify our results in terms of parental satisfaction during the school-age period.

Beyond the studies conducted on the problems of children and adolescents, we have reported that we are unaware of other studies that have examined direct relationships between parents' perception of their role as parents and different variables in the development of children and adolescents in situations of psychosocial risk. In earlier research studies, our team has found results consistent with those presented in this study, such that, once we account for different variables like quality of home and social support, greater parental satisfaction serves to predict more child and adolescent adjustment problems (Jiménez, Dekovic, & Hidalgo, 2009).

It is possible that the results obtained during the school-age period respond to a methodological problem. Nevertheless, the confidence index of this scale is acceptable. Likewise, on this occasion we have conducted a more in-depth analysis in order to contrast possible methodological lapses, examining bivariate correlations between the variables' direct scores, the dispersion graphics in the regression models, the item-to-item correlation of the scale to the adjustment variables, and possible moderation effects among family factors included in the models. However, these analyses do not explain our results.

In addition, as we reported earlier, parental satisfaction does not seem to have an indirect effect on child adjustment through repercussions in other family-dynamic variables evaluated in this study. Given that this variable is significant in the regression models but not in the bivariate correlations, it appears that parental satisfaction relates to adjustment problems and social skills during the school-age period only once we have controlled for the other socio-demographic and family-dynamic variables.

Taking into consideration these methodological premises, the results published in other studies and the fact that parental satisfaction has also been shown to play a positive role in adolescent adjustment in these families, our interpretation of the results during the school-age years focuses on the fact that there are other important factors in the parental satisfaction of mothers with school-aged children and who are participating in SS.SS. that this study has not taken into consideration.

Although this study has controlled for the mother's level of education and the concentration of stress and risk factors in the family, we have not taken into consideration other factors that may help explain these results. In our introduction, we already pointed out the complex relationship between the different factors that constitute parents' perception of their role as parents, including not only parental satisfaction and parental competence, but also ability to control or engage in educational tasks. In this respect, it has been pointed out that the perception of limited control in the educational sphere can lead to feelings of defencelessness in this area. Although some authors have underscored that these feelings of defencelessness may be associated with greater dissatisfaction in terms of parenting (Máiquez et al., 2000), it has also been argued that it is possible said feeling of defencelessness provokes an exaggeration in terms of reporting competence and a minimisation of childhood problems (Bugental et al., 1995; cit. in Lovejoy et al., 1997). According to this second interpretation, greater parental satisfaction would not necessarily relate to fewer childhood problems or more social skills in children and adolescents.

It is also possible that the perception of the difficulties of child caregiving helps explain these results. In families at psychosocial risk, Martín (2005) has pointed out that it is possible that a lack of understanding of the educational tasks and little in-depth grasp thereof lead to parents' considering parenting as a simple, or at least satisfactory, task, independent of the true repercussions on child development. Rodrigo and colleagues (2008) have argued that the parents' mental representation of their own educational actions can attain various levels of complexity, such that greater levels of complexity allow one to account for the short- and long-term causes and consequences of their actions and to control educational activity. Therefore, it is possible that this greater control contributes not only to greater parental effectiveness, by also to a greater awareness of the difficulties such entails.

In the introduction we referred to the study by these authors that evaluated the structure of mothers' reasoning in situations with abusive behaviour (negligence and coercion), in situations where there was no child abuse despite having to deal with many adversities in life (resilient) and in control situations including mothers with the same level of education as the others for comparison purposes (Rodrigo et al., 2008). Among the various findings from this study, the authors have reported that the resilient mothers appear like those in the control group (and, therefore, were distinct from the coercive and negligent mothers) because they centred reasoning in terms of their child's needs but not concerning their own needs. These authors argue that this type of reasoning indicates that the resilient mothers have individualised the child and

established a concrete, not generic, parental role. Generalising from the results of that study, it is possible that the mothers in our research with school-aged boys and girls have assumed a more generic role of parenting that allows them to feel satisfied regardless of the level of adaptation displayed by their children.

Finally, we must consider that the school-aged children in our study have demonstrated a particularly negative adjustment profile, in comparison both to their peers and to younger boys and girls. Given that the characteristics of the boys and girls influences not only parent-child interaction, but also parents' representation of their educational roles, it is possible that these particular adjustment variables are particularly influential in some of the factors discussed here (Rodrigo et al., 2008).

Given the fact that we do not have longitudinal data, it is possible that mothers with school-aged children display some particular characteristics in the other variables to which we have referred (controlling education, perception of difficulty of influencing educational tasks, or tendency towards a more generic/specific role as a parent). Nevertheless, given the fact that the levels of parental satisfaction do not distinguish these mothers from those who have adolescent children, it is also possible that, during the school-age period, these uncontrolled variables affect the satisfaction of mothers in situations of psychosocial risk. The mothers in our research report comparable levels of parental satisfaction in several developmental periods. However, during adolescence this satisfaction may be related directly to the adolescent's adjustment, while adjustment during the school-age years may be related to additional variables.

In any case, parental satisfaction plays an important role in terms of the different factors in the adjustment of children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, and this role is more comprehensive than that reported for the general population. Therefore, the role of parental satisfaction, and probably other related variables, should be taken into consideration in at-risk situations.

Finally, parental competence and family adaptability play a more specific role in child and adolescent adjustment than do the other variables mentioned thus far, given that parental competence predicts adjustment problems and social skills in adolescence, while family adaptability predicts social skills in the school-age period.

In terms of perceived *parental competence*, the mothers who feel more competent have adolescent with fewer adjustment problems. Nevertheless, the role of this variable in social skills is not clear. Once again, we have compared this to possible methodological explanations, although the results are not conclusive, indicating the presence of other elements that may account for this relationship, like for parental satisfaction.

Moreover, in this case we have found an indirect effect of the relationship between parental competence and adjustment problems/social skills by the mediator effect of family adaptability. Although the effect is small it indicates that the relationship

between perceived parental competence and social skills is partially and indirectly explained by the mediator role of family adaptability.

With respect to a direct interpretation of these results, early studies have consistently reported direct relationships between perceived parental competence and positive results in social and emotional adjustment, including interaction with others (Jones & Prinz, 2005). Although the relationship between parental competence and adjustment problems has been infrequently reported in the general population (Dekovic et al., 2003; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Lovejoy et al., 1997), it has been notable in families with children with behavioural or emotional problems (Cunningham & Boyle, 2002; Donenberg & Baker, 1993; Johnston, 1996; Johnston & Patenaude, 1994), probably because of the role these problems play in family functioning.

Our results confirm the relevant role of perceived competence in terms of adjustment problems in situations of psychosocial risk, which is consistent with the authors who proffer that perceived competence is a fundamental factor to promote in situations of psychosocial risk (Elder, 1995; Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009). The role of perceived competence with respect to social skills, however, is not so clear, indicating that other factors not included in this study may play an important role.

In any case, these relationships underscore the relevance of parental competence in situations of psychosocial risk in terms of affecting child and adolescent adjustment. These findings, moreover, confirm the importance of parents self-evaluations even during their children's adolescence, the developmental period in which these relationships had not been documented in literature. As we have shown, parents' perception of their role as parents can assume a protective role in highly stressful situations, which would justify this variable's relevance in various developmental periods in this study (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Elder, 1995).

Finally, *family adaptability* has been shown to play an important role with respect to social skills during the school-age years, indicating that greater adaptability in the family relates to more positive social skills.

The results are consistent with the linear interpretation of this variable in the three dimensional circumplex model as higher scores correspond to healthier families, who demonstrate a diverse behavioural repertoire and communication skills that allow them to adapt to situational stresses or developmental changes in an organised and consistent manner that does not unravel family identity (Gorall & Olson, 1995; Vielva et al., 2001).

The specific role of family adaptability in this study is consistent with the studies presented in the introduction, wherein this variable is less frequently related to several adjustment variables in a comprehensive manner than is family cohesion. Overall, family adaptability favours more adaptive behaviour in early childhood (Pichardo, 2003) and,

during adolescence, has also been shown to be associated with more positive relations with peers (Engels, Dekovic, & Meeus, 2002), although not all studies have proven this variable's relevance in the sphere of social competence (Moreno et al., 2000; Pichardo et al. 2002).

Just as with family cohesion, the variable of adaptability has the ability to favour satisfactorily confronting developmental-educational tasks specific to each age, to buffer psychosocial stress, and to promote successful confrontation strategies (Oliva et al., 2009). Family adaptability leads to creating a regulated environment that favours children's and adolescents' openness in other contexts (Bradley, 2002; Palacios & Rodrigo, 1998; Rodrigo & Acuña, 1998). Therefore, it is understandable that this variable plays a particular role with respect to children's and adolescents' social skills.

Nevertheless, one would expect that the relationship between this variable and development would be clear in adolescence, since it has been argued that the changes associated with this developmental stage require greater adaptability. As Olson and colleagues (1983) have argued, this role may be missed because the families may not known to administer the right doses of said adaptability, a characteristic that may well defined the families in psychosocial risk. It is also possible, as other authors studying psychosocial risk have argued, that in these situations the youngest members are the most vulnerable to a dysfunctional family environment and, therefore, the role of this variable is more important in the school-age years than in adolescence (Attala & Summers, 1999).

Finally, we must point to the use of regression models as a methodological strategy does not guaranty a causal relationship. We do not have longitudinal data and, even if we did, we made it clear in the introduction the need to understand the development processes from a probabilistic perspective that accounts for multiplicity, circularity and the dynamic nature of the relationships that compose said processes, as well as the active role played by those members undergoing development. In the end, we believe the results express the importance of various factors in the family dynamic with respect to the adjustment of the children and adolescents at psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation. These implications will be considered further in the conclusions. The following is a detailed examination of variability in the adjustment of adolescents at psychosocial risk, with special attention given to their experience in the school environment.

1.2. VARIABILITY IN ADOLESCENT ADJUSTMENT IN FAMILIES AT PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK IN TERMS OF FAMILY PRESERVATION. THE RELEVANCE OF THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

The second specific objective of this investigation consisted of an in-depth examination of the adjustment of adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services-intervention for family-preservation purposes, paying special attention to these adolescents' experience in school. In the previous section, we had the opportunity to discuss the fact that the results of our research do not point to the adolescent stage as a period of particular vulnerability in situations of psychosocial risk. However, our predictions certainly were that this period would be one of vulnerability given the literature on the topic and the experience of the professionals who work with these families. All told, we believe that this examination provides some interesting results, specifically:

- First, we discuss the variability in adjustment for adolescent boys and girls who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes.

- Second, we reflect on the school experience of these adolescents, analysing both the difficulties they experience as well as on the importance of their positive school experience for development.

- Third, we discuss the role of families at psychosocial risk with respect to variability in adolescent adjustment in overall terms and specifically for promoting a positive school experience.

1.2.1. Variability in adolescent adjustment in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes

As we have already discussed, children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes are characterised, on the whole, by an adjustment profile that situates them at risk of experiencing certain difficulties. We have pointed out throughout this dissertation that this overall image, while it allows us to draw interesting general conclusions, makes it difficult to understand the heterogeneity that can be present in the development processes of the adolescents who grow up in these situations of psychosocial risk.

This dissertation has made an effort to examine this heterogeneity, analysing the adjustment of adolescents who grow up in situations of psychosocial risk from a person-focused perspective (Magnusson & Stattin, 2006). Our results confirm our predictions in terms of said heterogeneity, indicating that **there is variability in the level of adjustment felt by adolescents at psychosocial risk that allows us to identity specific overall adjustment profiles, as well as with respect to adolescents' experience in the school context**. This general conclusion leads to three reflections. In the first place, there are

different profiles of adolescent adjustment in situations of psychosocial risk, such that it is necessary to consider the adjustment of these adolescents as heterogeneous. In the second place, this variability allows us to understand the development processes of these adolescents from an organisational perspective. However, in the third place, our results also indicate that the organisation of developmental processes is not absolute, such that understanding these processes requires a comprehensive examination of different adjustment factors.

In terms of the first of these reflections, the results of our study show that the adolescent boys and girls in situations of psychosocial risk can be grouped according to adjustment profiles: adolescents with personal and school adjustment problems in one group, adolescents with personal and relational problems in another group, and adolescents with optimal overall adjustment levels in a third group.

This overarching group entitled *Adolescents with personal and school adjustment problems* is composed of adolescents who have a particularly negative adjustment profile with respect to the other boys and girls for all adjustment variables measured, with the exception of internalisation problems and school adaptation in terms of relations with their peers. Specifically, this profile is characterised by adolescents, particularly adolescent boys, with many externalisation problems and little assertiveness, cooperation and self-control. Likewise, this profile is also characterised by low academic competence, low adaptation to the school as an institution and a lack of adaptation with respect to teachers.

The majority of these results are consistent with literature on the topic. The foregoing section explains that the various studies on adjustment for adolescents in situations of psychosocial risk have documented the presence of negative factors related to factors of both personal and school adjustment. Therefore, it is understandable that nearly one in every three adolescents evaluated in this study fits an adjustment profile characterised by clearly negative characteristics.

Although an examination of the variability in at-risk-adolescent adjustment from a person-focused perspective has not been frequent, other authors who have concerned themselves with analysing these questions have consistently documented the existence of one or more profiles with particularly negative characteristics for positive adaptation in at-risk situations (e. g., Anthony, 2008; Daignault & Hebert, 2009).

However, it is interesting to note that not all adolescents in our research demonstrate having the same profile of negative adjustment. Indeed, we have documented that approximately one third of the adolescents in this study are *Adolescents with personal and relational problems*. These adolescents fit a profile characterised by some negative adjustment factors, but these factors are different than the first profile. This second profile is composed of adolescents who display internalisation problems and show a lack of assertiveness. They demonstrate difficulties in adapting to school in the relational sphere (relating to teachers and classmates),

although they are not characterised by particular externalisation problems and they do demonstrate solid academic competence.

Our research also found a third profile for this group, known as *Adolescents with an optimal level of adjustment (*or *Well-adjusted adolescents)*. This is a group of adolescents characterised, unlike the other profiles, by a low index of adjustment problems, a high degree of personal interaction skills, good adaptation to the school context in all areas evaluated and high academic competence. An examination of the average scores of this group of adolescents shows, moreover, that the results are as good as, or even better than, the average scores for the reference group.

Other authors who have examined the variability in at-risk-adolescent adjustment have reported similar results, indicating the presence of negative adjustment profiles but also of groups of adolescents who are resistant to their adverse situations. For example, Daignault and Hebert (2009) recently published a study on adolescent girls who had been sexually abused. These authors report the variability in development processes in abusive situations, expressing distinct adjustment profiles. Thus, they found one multi-problematic profile that encompassed various types or personal-, social- and academic-adjustment problems. However, one group of girls who had been abused was characterised exclusively by problems at school, while another profile was defined by externalising and internalising problems without social and academic repercussions. It is particularly interesting to note that these authors reported a resilient profile, indicating that, in cases of severe abuse, such as sexual abuse, there are protective elements that allow these girls to enjoy good adjustment.

In turn, Anthony (2008) has focused on examining at-risk and protective profiles of adolescents who grow up in neighbourhoods with high poverty indicators. Without a doubt, difficult contextual and family conditions can be associated with adolescent developmental problems. Thus, this author found an overarching group composed of high-risk adolescents, in which there was a concentration of academic failure and a high rate of personal adjustment problems. Nevertheless, this overarching group was not characterised by problems in terms of peer relations. Another cluster, known as the connected cluster, was also characterised by its high level of academic failure and adjustment problems with peers. Moreover, this author reported an intermediate profile, known as adolescents with coping skills, which profiled boys and girls with feelings of solitude and low levels of self-esteem, but who demonstrated good coping skills and adequate academic competence. This study also reported a cluster known as protected adolescents, a group that included high coping skills and self-esteem, commitment to school, few adjustment problems and few problems with peers.

Consistent with these studies and as expected, our results indicate that the majority of the boys and girls who grow up in families at psychosocial risk have a particularly negative adjustment profile. However, these results also point to the need to consider problem situation as heterogonous, since situations of poor adaptation can

take various forms. Moreover, it is also particularly interesting that there are some adolescents who demonstrate positive adaptation in hard situations.

It is noteworthy, in this sense, that the boys and girls with clearly negative profiles in various facets of school adjustment do not receive more educational support than other children. It is possible that there is no difference because the boys and girls who are well adjusted show positive results precisely because they have received the educational support. In any case, considering the results from the most negative group, it is clear that the support offered to these children is insufficient to guarantee their adaptation, probably because they require more specialised educational interventions.

Moreover, we can reflect yet further on these results. Indeed, this variability allows us to understand the development of these adolescents from an organisational perspective, as we have been pointing out throughout this dissertation. That is to say, in situations of psychosocial risk, once again it is noteworthy that adaptation is composed of a multi-dimensional process in which the adaptive or non-adaptive resolution of concrete developmental tasks influences other facets of development (Wenar & Kerig, 2000). Interestingly, this relationship between different facets of adjustment that responds to the developing persons' understanding from a holistic point of view reinforces both positive and negative adaptation. Thus, there is a group of adolescents that is characterised by negative adjustment in various facets of development, but there is another group of adolescents that shows more comprehensive positive adaptation in various facets of development.

The introduction already pointed out that there is ample literature on the topic that is concerned with documenting and debating these kinds of relationships. For example, consistently with earlier studies, our results indicate that *boys and girls with more externalisation problems also stand out for their lack of social skills* and *adolescents with a low rate of externalisation problems stand out for their positive social skills* (Carpenter et al., 2008; Jurado, Cumba, Collazo, & Matos, 2006; Kaiser et al., 2000; Rinaldi et al., 2008; Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005). We have argued that a lack of social skills is associated with lower ability to process information: less ability to pick up on social clues, less understanding of others' feelings, and responding in a hostile manner to others, leading to more aggressive, less social and less empathetic behaviour (Fishbein et al., 2006; Izard et al., 2001). Thus, adolescents whose social skills are wanting tend to have problems adopting perspectives and use ineffective problems-solving strategies (Rinaldi et al., 2008). Finally, it has also been argued that it is possible that adjustment problems are related to inadequate earlier socialisation experiences that favour patters of dominance in relations with others and where the social skills considered in this study are not applied (Kemp & Center, 2001).

Boys and girls with externalisation problems also demonstrated lower academic competence, while *well-adjusted adolescents not characterised by externalisation problems stood out for their academic competence*. This relationship has also been documented in earlier studies (Wentzel, 1993). One reason for this occurrence is because

children with externalisation problems place more importance on goals related to social image in their peer group (participating in disruptive activities, exercising freedom and autonomy) instead of goals related to academic image (Carroll, Durkin, Hattie, & Houghton, 1997). Another explanation for this phenomenon is that externalisation problems can disturb positive school adaptation, undermining interactions in the classroom and, therefore, definitively affecting academic competence (Wentzel, 1993). Finally, some authors have pointed out that school failure can lead to externalisation problems, since, as a consequence of identifying less and having less commitment to the school system in cases of school failure, externalisation problems may serve to demonstrate a student's lack of conformity with the educational system (Finn, 1989).

Moreover, *adolescents characterised by a high level of externalisation problems demonstrate negative school adaption with respect to relations with teachers,* while *boys and girls who show positive adaptation to teachers also demonstrate low externalisation problems* (Stuart et al., 1991). In this sense, it has been argued that deficiencies in the ability to effectively regulate the negative affection in the context of interpersonal interactions that is characteristic of children with behavioural problems plays out in the form of irritability, low tolerance for frustration, inability to curb negative behaviours like aggression in social situations, and an inability to respond with flexibility and strategically; this many explain their relations of less adaptation to teachers (Pope & Bierman, 1999). On a positive note, our results are consistent with authors who argue that the school can act as a protective factor since adolescents who commit to the school spend more time in school activities, and at-risk behaviour is less frequent if students feel closely connected to their teachers (Mancini & Huebner, 2004).

We have also shown that adolescents who stand out because of *greater level of school adaptation in terms of academic aspects have fewer externalisation problems* and, conversely, *boys and girls with more behaviour problems show poorer adaptation in school* (Crosby & French, 2002; Flanagan et al., 2003; Jiménez, 2007; Mancini & Huebner, 2004; Perry & Weinstein, 1998). One explanation for these results is that adjustment problems place minors at risk of experiencing problems in learning processes that prepare them for school, since the presence of disruptive behaviour may affect their abilities to adapt to the norms of the educational context and may affect academic tasks (Cheney, Flower, & Templeton, 2008; Fantuzzo et al., 2003; Smokowski et al., 2004). These difficulties, which may appear as early as the preschool years, may have an accumulative effect that become acutely apparent particularly in adolescence.

Likewise, in the different profiles presented, *children who demonstrate solid academic competence tend to be more positively adapted to the academic aspects of school*, while *children who demonstrate low academic competence tend to be more negatively adapted to the school in general* (Bruyn et al., 2003; Clemente, 1983; Jiménez, 1988; Moreno et al., 2005; Pérez, 1981). Given this, it has been argued that the academic aspects of school adaptation can favour academic competence in two directions. On the one hand, development of well-adapted behaviour in terms of school leads to more positive attention from teachers and from peers, increasing chances to

participate in positive interactions and to participate in school activities, which favours academic competence. On the other hand, it is possible that active participation in school life promotes a greater sense of belonging, favouring greater interest and motivation in academic life and, in short, greater effort in terms of school work and, thus, better academic competence (Bloom et al., 2007; Carlson et al., 1999; Crosby & French, 2002; Miranda, Jarque, & Tárraga, 2005; Perry & Wenstein, 1998; Smokowski et al., 2004; Stedman & Adams, 1972; Walden & Ramey, 1983; Wentzel & Looney, 2007).

However, although what we have argued thus far is true, there are other results that lead us to consider that the organisation of development processes is not absolute, such that understanding such requires a comprehensive examination of different adjustment factors. Two results allow us to make this statement. On the one hand, the existence of different at-risk profiles, in which not all the aspects evaluated are negatively associated with each other. On the other hand, the combination of these profiles with respect to positive school adaptation does not necessarily lead to adolescents positively adapted to the school showing a overall positive adjustment profile.

With respect to the former of these questions, it is notable that the *boys and girls with a more negative adjustment profile cannot be specifically characterised, compared to the rest of the profiles, by their internalisation problems or by adaptation problems to their peers*. In fact, the adolescents' adaptation level to their peers is comparable to that of the well-adjusted group of adolescents.

These results are consistent with the study by Anthony (2008) referred to earlier whereby the overarching group formed by adolescents at high risk, with a high concentration of academic failure and a high degree of personal adjustment problems was not characterised by problems in terms of peer relations.

Some authors have pointed out that these adolescents use aggression for instrumental purposes, such that there would be no reasons to associate such with problems in terms of peer relations (Pope & Bierman, 1999; Rinaldi et al., 2008). However, the adolescents of this study are characterised by a clear lack of social skills compared to other adolescents, so we can assume that there is a lower capacity to effectively regulate the negative affection in the context of interpersonal interactions and that such is not an expression of instrumental use of said aggression (Pope & Bierman, 1999).

A more plausible explanation is that adolescents with externalisation problems in this study tend to relate with other adolescents who share this same profile, which would explain why various studies have failed to confirm the association between externalising problems and peer-adaptation problems (Robertson et al., 1998). Those with the same behaviour problems tend to share a history of academic failure, rejection of the educational system and poor relations with peers and with teachers, reinforcing

models and behaviours that are incompatible with academic success (Véronneau et al., 2008); this would explain why the relationship with teachers, the most academic aspects of school adaptation, and academic competence are all particularly negatively affected in this group of adolescents.

In an interesting study with adolescent boys and girls who live in a socioeconomically depressed community, Gorman, Kim, and Schimmelbusch (2002) documented how school adaptation with peers can play different roles, such that a positive relationship with peers in the school environment does not necessarily go hand in hand with the best personal and academic results. Thus, in their study, some cases illustrate that those well adapted to their peers were associated with less prosociality, more academic failure, more aggression and more unjustified absenteeism. However, another group of well-adjusted adolescents in terms of peers demonstrated greater prosociality and assertiveness, better academic competence and insignificant rates of school absence. The positive peer adaptation in this latter group of adolescents correlated to positive adaptation with teachers. These authors also indicated that peer characteristics from one group to the next were different, since the students well adapted exclusively in terms of their peers were, at the same time, less prosocial, performed worse academically and showed poorer adaptation to their teachers.

These results are consistent with the arguments that, in adolescence, and particularly in situations of psychosocial risk, support offered by peers and teachers meets different needs, and the combination of both is related to more positive results in development (Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002).

Moreover, more negative adjustment profiles also help us understand the lack of continuity in these adolescents' development processes. We have documented that *a second group of adolescents is characterised by personal and relational problems, but not by disruptive behaviour, lack of cooperation, lack of self-control or low academic competence.*

These results show that differentiated negative-adjustment profiles may emerge in hard situations. These results help us understand the lack of a relationship between the internalisation and externalisation problems to which we referred earlier in this discussion. In situations of psychosocial risk, two different profiles of adjustment problems seem to co-exist that can be associated with a distinct set of problems. This interpretation would explain why some studies fail to find differences in adjustment problems in adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk compared to those who grow up in the general population. If there is sufficient heterogeneity in the adjustment profile of adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk, it is understandable that the consideration of these boys and girls as a whole draws upon the areas that require greater attention. Although our study has reported these differences, we have discussed the results of other colleagues in this field whose results have not corresponded to ours. Thus, Lorence (2008) did not report that internalisation problems in adolescents from families at psychosocial risk differed significantly from those in the

general population; and we also did not report more overall internalisation problems on average in other study, although we did report a lower probability of obtaining positive results comparing to the general population (Jiménez, 2007).

Another result that points to the existence of distinct, specific adjustment profiles has to do with social skills in the different adolescent groups studied. As expected, the boys and girls with more externalisation problems, lower academic competence and a lower degree of school adaptation are characterised by a clear deficit in their social skills. Likewise, adolescents with a low rate of adjustment problems and better academic results display, on average, better social skills. Nevertheless, it is notable that the group characterised by personal and relational problems stands out for its good academic competence, internalisation problems and various difficulties in the realm of relations (poor adaptation in relations with peers and teachers, as well as a lack of assertiveness) and, yet, is not characterised by a lack of self-control and cooperation skills.

One explanation for these results is that experiencing internalisation problems is a precursor to other types of problems and, thus, is the key factor in the profile of adolescents with personal and relational problems. Various studies have stated that a lack of assertiveness is frequently related to internalisation problems, while this relationship is not always corroborated with cooperation skills and self-control (Carpenter et al., 2008; Dennis et al., 2007; Hay & Pawlby, 2003; Ogden, 2003). Therefore, it seems that adolescents may have no reason to experience deficits in terms of their social skills that lead them to feel dissatisfied and frustrated (Izard et al., 2001; Jurado et al., 2006; Walthall, Konold, & Pianta, 2005); indeed, it is possible that experiencing personal psychological difficulties impedes the cultivation of adequate goals in terms of interaction, such as being able to appropriately express one's desires before others (Rinaldi et al., 2008).

Likewise, some studies have shown that internalisation problems relate to lower school adaptation and academic competence (Fantuzzo et al., 2003; Jiménez, 2007; Russell & Russell, 1996; Smokowski et al., 2004). It is possible that school-adaptation problems create feelings of frustration and sadness in these boys and girls, although this interpretation is not valid for academic competence, since academic competence is shown to be a particularly positive aspect among this group of adolescents (Miranda et al., 2005).

Another possible explanation is that these adolescents have emotional problems that are not related to the school experience, yet the school does not know how to meet the specific needs of these boys and girls, which then sets off a chain effect leading to a less positive school adaptation in terms of personal relations (Fantuzzo et al., 2003). This situation can also be produced by the fact that these adolescents with internalisation problems initiate fewer interactions with their peers and teachers and participate in fewer classroom activities, thus enjoying fewer opportunities for social interaction (Shields et al., 2001).

In any case, we are dealing with very important results that underscore the particular needs that these boys and girls present and that seem not to be satisfied in their school environments. Because these adolescents do not show severe problems of disruptive behaviour and are not noted for academic failure, they are in a particularly vulnerable position compared to other boys and girls, failuring in identify problems in this group and receiving no adequate intervention (Harter, 1990; Redden et al., 2001).

With respect to the second question that leads us to believe that the organisation of development processes is not absolute, it is necessary to examine the overall adjustment profile of boys and girls who are well adapted to the school context in terms of their peers. We will have the opportunity to discuss later on how these boys and girls are generally characterised by more favourable adjustment factors than those who are not adapted to the school context, which points to the continuity and organisation of development processes. However, not all boys and girls who are positively adapted to the school context are characterised by a positive overall adjustment profile.

Consistent with an organisational perspective of the processes of development, practically all adolescents who showed a good level of overall adjustment were positively adapted in the school context in terms of relations with peers. However, a detailed examination of the adolescents who were well adapted in the school context shows that a good level of school adaptation does not correlate to positive overall adjustment for half the adolescent boys and girls we studied.

In short, our results show once again the need to consider the organisation of development processes from a probabilistic point of view, since, while positive adaptation in some areas of development correlates to positive results in other facets, this is not an automatic process and thus not always guaranteed (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the adjustment of adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk in a comprehensive manner, having in mind different factors that reinforce or not positive results (Lerner, 1986). Specifically in the final sub-section in this discussion we will examine some family variables that can help us to understand the developmental processes of these boys and girls. In the following section we examine the experience in the school environment as felt by adolescents from families at psychosocial risk.

1.2.2. The importance of the school experience for adolescent development in situations of psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation

The study precursor to this doctoral thesis demonstrated the importance of the school experience for adolescent boys and girls who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes; that is why this study has sought to delve into this question, examining the experience of school absenteeism as well as the situation of positive adaptation to the school context.

The results of this dissertation lead us to conclude that **experience in the school context is a critical element for adolescent boys and girls who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes**. On the one hand, these adolescents demonstrate particular difficulties in terms of the degree of their school participation, and said difficulties are related to problems in other areas of their adjustment. On the other hand, a majority of the boys and girls who attend to school demonstrate positive adaptation, and this positive adaptation is associated with better adjustment in other spheres.

With respect to the first aspect above, our predictions were that there would be clear difficulties with in terms of the school participation of adolescent boys and girls who grow up in families at psychosocial risk. The available evidence has confirmed our expectations, as these boys and girls report a degree of school absenteeism that is higher than would be expected for their developmental stage; moreover, their absenteeism leads to difficulties in other areas of development.

Approximately one third of the adolescents who participated in this study miss school frequently; nearly every time they are absent, they end up not finishing their obligatory studies. An examination of these results with respect to available data indicates that *boys and girls in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes, particularly older adolescents, have a particular problem in terms of their degree of participation in school*.

These results are consistent with the research that has found the experience of school absenteeism to be a problem characteristic in situations requiring family preservation (Rodríguez et al., 2006), in other situations where there is psychosocial risk for various reasons (Kernic et al., 2002; Trigo, 1997), and in the context of families who are socioeconomically depressed (Gutman et al., 2002; Maani & Kalb, 2007; McLoyd, 1998; Pérez & Castejón, 2000; Schoon, 2006; Smokowski et al., 2004; Véronneau et al., 2008).

Although we are unaware of official data in our context, in the United States, for example, it is expected that some 20% of the general population and some 17% to 25% of the underprivileged population in the eighth grade will miss at least one class in a month-long school period (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). In comparison, 31,88% of the boys and girls in our sample miss more than 25% of the classes in a full school month. The results of our study show, therefore, a higher degree of school absenteeism, even when compared to American students who grow up in disadvantaged families.

Likewise, of the total number of adolescents in our study, 11,59% of the them report having permanently dropped out of the education system, practically all of them without obtaining their ESO (obligatory secondary school) graduate degree. The early dropout rate in the United States school system is approximately 5%, while those from socioeconomically disadvantaged households have a dropout rate of 10,7% (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Once again, our results point to the existence of a particular problem with respect to access to school in situations of psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation.

We have already argued that the educational context, particularly in adolescence, does not tend to serve as a support context for the boys and girls who attend school coming from at-risk families. Half the adolescent boys and girls in our study who reported the reasons for not attending school or for having dropped out of the school system stated that they had done so in order to follow some other type of non-regulated education or to work. These arguments indicate that the school context is not capable of responding to the educational and professional objectives of some of these adolescent boys and girls in a manner sufficient enough to provide an incentive to remain within the school system (Instituto de la Juventud, 2008; Pérez & Castejón, 2000; Zabalza, 1999).

Moreover, an examination of the reasons provided by the drop-outs and absent adolescents in our study also indicates other problems affecting these boys and girls. Some of these adolescents report missing school because of severe illness or because they do not want to leave their homes. Even more worrisome, the majority of these adolescent boys and girls do not provide any concrete reason for no longer attending school. According to official data in the Spanish context, these reasons (or lack thereof) are very infrequent in the general population; thus adolescents who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes may experience difficulties in addition to those that are reported in the general population, such as the pressure to find work (Instituto de la Juventud, 2008). Further on we will have the opportunity to examine some of the family variables that will help us make sense of these results.

With respect to the profile of the absent adolescents in our research, it should be pointed out that both boys as well as girls fit this description. These results are consistent with the arguments proffered by the Instituto de la Juventud that we have described as a historical balance point: whereas in the past it was more common for girls to drop out of the school system early, recently this situation has become common among boys, and it appears that this situation is just about evening out (Instituto de la Juventud, 2008). This situation can explain why we presented in the theoretical introduction to this dissertation some studies that indicate that adolescent boys are more vulnerable to experience school absenteeism or to drop out altogether from the school system compared to girls in the general population (Egger, Costello, & Angold, 2003; Instituto de la Juventud, 2008; Maani & Kalb, 2007) and other studies that have not been able to confirm this vulnerability (Duarte & Escario, 2006; Lemos et al., 1992a; Wentzel, 1993). There are also no conclusive results in situations of psychosocial risk (Flisher & Chalton, 1995; Lagana, 2004; Sánchez, 2001). According to the findings of our study, it seems that both the boys and the girls offer arguments to no longer attend school.

In terms of the *developmental course of these problems*, the oldest boys and girls miss class most frequently, although this is not the case for adolescents in more advanced courses of academic study. In our opinion, these results are probably due to the fact that those boys and girls who experience more failure in school —and, indeed, who are older despite not being in the more advanced academic courses— experience higher rates of school absenteeism. Thus, the regression model used to predict cases of absenteeism demonstrates that being one year older increases the probability of becoming an absent student by a factor of eight.

This interpretation is consistent with the studies that have regularly demonstrated that failure in school is one of the most relevant predictive indicators that a student will be absent from or drop out of the school system (Dixon-Floyd & Johnson, 1997; Flammer & Alsaker, 2006; Gutman et al., 2002; Kearney, 2008; Lagana, 2004; Maani & Kalb, 2007; Ramey & Ramey, 1998; Ripple & Luthar, 2000; Smokowski et al., 2004; Véronneau et al., 2008). In this sense, on the one had it has been argued that negative academic experiences in the school context create frustration and lead to low academic self-esteem, such that boys and girls skip class to avoid the psychological distress they feel in the face of negative evaluations in the school context. On the other hand, it has been shown that academic failure hinders school motivation and curtails expectations of future success, thereby leading to a negative relationship with school for those adolescents who do not feel reinforced by their attending.

Moreover, *the relevance of school absenteeism among adolescent boys and girls from families at psychosocial risk has been made clear not only in the severity of these situations but in their significant and clinically-relevant association with other difficulties*. Specifically, boys and girls who are absent from school have a higher rate of externalisation problems and lower family self-esteem, independently of whether they are regularly absent from school, whether thy never attend school or whether they have definitively dropped out from school. Indeed, the externalisation problems experienced by these adolescents plays a very important role in these situations, increasing the probability of being absent from school by a factor of four.

These results are consist with literature on the topic, which points out that boys and girls who are absent from school have a greater chance of reporting negative results in their quality of life and their wellbeing (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005). More specifically, the most frequent factor documented has been the association between greater school absenteeism and drop-out rates among boys and girls with adjustment problems. In this sense, some studies have indicated that situations of school absenteeism may be assumed as a risk factor for subsequent behavioural problems, particularly during adolescence (Kearney, 2008). However, this association has generally been discussed in a different sense, such that situations of school absenteeism and dropping out are just another manifestation of earlier adjustment problems (Cheney et al., 2008; Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Duarte & Escario, 2006; Fergusson & Woodward, 2000; Flisher & Chalton, 1995; Kearney, 2007; Kearney, 2008; Smokowski et al., 2004).

It has been argued that the reasons that lead adolescents with behavioural problems to experience lower school adaptation and academic competence make these adolescent boys and girls feel less reinforced by the school system (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Kearney, 2008; Véronneau et al., 2008). Moreover, these adolescents may feel a particularly weak bond with the school context where academic aspects are more valued than psychological-adjustment aspects, given that the social and emotional needs of these boys and girls appears thus not to be satisfied (Robertson et al., 1998). This feeling of no-connection is particularly important: when boys and girls must remain in the school system, although they do not share the objectives for being there, these behavioural problems, academic failure and school absenteeism can become noticeably aggravated (Pérez-Díaz et al., 2001). Moreover, as the school does not feel comfortable with this kind of student, it is likely that the efforts to keep him or her in the system are not as pronounced as they are with other students (Zabalza, 1999).

Likewise, the association between school absenteeism and low self-esteem is also well documented in literature. In this respect, it has been pointed out that self-esteem plays a fundamental role in the school context, since the manner in which these boys and girls evaluate their own capacities relates to the manner in which they cope their school tasks and, in short, also their level of participation and decision to remain within the educational system (Boyd & Tashakkori, 1994).

In our case, it is family self-esteem that correlates to absenteeism situations, which is consistent with studies that have pointed out that this aspect of self-evaluation is important for school adjustment (Bourcet, 1998; Ramírez, Herrera, & Herrera, 2005). Although we do not used longitudinal data, the fact that the emotional and social self-esteem of these absent adolescents is not particularly affected leads us to believe that it is probably a low self-esteem —in this case, family self-esteem— that favours situations of absenteeism, and not the opposite. If negative school experiences affect how adolescents value themselves, it would be expected that these boys and girls evaluate themselves more negatively in the different spheres of self-esteem (James & Javaloyes, 2001; Miranda et al., 2005), and that they have a higher rate of internalisation problems, questions that have not been showed in this dissertation. Independently of the direction of these relationships, it is notable that the emotional experience with respect to the adolescent's family is dependent on absenteeism situations.

The absence of specific social self-esteem problems among the boys and girls who are absent from school is consistent with the arguments offering when we examined the overall-adjustment profiles, when we referred to the lack of a relationship between externalisation problems and problematic adaptation to peers. These results demonstrate that boys and girls who are absent from school, like adolescents with behavioural problems, do not always tell about greater difficulties with friends or feeling rejected in their social interactions at school (Egger et al., 2003; Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997).

Nevertheless, these studies have shown that the social networks of the boys and girls who are absent from school are characterised by a higher level of being prone to conflict and, particularly, by being surrounded by peers who have also faced academic failure and who have dropped out of the school system or who have started working. In short, it seems that having a network of friends who do not value school can accelerate or consolidate the process of disconnecting from the school context. Likewise, having a network of working friends can cause boys and girls to be enticed to seek to gain independence and economic stability over waiting for an academic degree, in addition to providing them with more contacts to find work (Egger et al., 2003; Ellenbogen & Chamberland, 1997; Véronneau et al., 2008).

In short, it is important to point out that there is a considerable group of adolescent boys and girls, particularly older ones, who grow up in families characterised by psychosocial risk and who experience school absenteeism, more externalisation problems and lower family self-esteem than other adolescents. Likewise, the profile that characterises these adolescents, particularly their externalisation problems, plays a very important role in terms of the shaping of these situations, beyond even the family variables measured in this study.

In addition to acknowledging the problem of absenteeism in families at psychosocial risk, this dissertation has attempted to offer a positive view of school adjustment for boys and girls who grow up in these family contexts and who regularly participate in the school context. As a result of earlier research in this matter (Jiménez, 2007), we expected that there would be a certain degree of positive adaptation to the school context among adolescents who regularly participate in school, and that this positive adaptation would correlate to better adjustment indicators. Our results from this study have confirmed both predictions.

Thus, more than half of the boys and girls in this study (56%) demonstrate average school adaptation compared to their school year (form) mates, and 16% of the sample showed particularly positive adaptation. All told, some 28% of these boys and girls do not adapt or are poorly adapted to the school context with respect to the comparison group. Moreover, our results also show that situations of positive adaptation are produced independently of the adolescent's gender and age; we did not find a particular profile according to these variables among adolescents who were positively adapted to school. Nevertheless, being younger implied a higher probability to positive adaptation when taken in consideration with other family and socio-demographic variables.

An analysis of these results invites us to examine the possible variables of the family context that serve to promote the school adjustment in families at psychosocial risk in this group of adolescents who are particularly well adapted to the school context. We will focus on this question in the following sub-section.

Nevertheless, a second reading of these findings indicates that, for every two or three boys and girls from families at psychosocial risk who regularly participate in school, this context can serve as a positive source of support. We have already pointed out in the theoretical introduction that school adaptation refers to an interactive notion in which positive results in this sphere do not correspond exclusively to the minor's behaviour being appropriate for his/her developmental stage, rather that positive results in this sphere are highly related to the structure and patterns of social interaction in the educational institution (Eccles & Roeser, 2003).

From this point of view and, in light of our results, it seems that on certain occasions, the educational context is capable of acting as a promoter for adolescents from families in situations of psychosocial risk, at least with respect to school adaptation (Eccles, 2004; Eccles & Roeser, 1999; Eccles & Roeser, 2003; Flammer & Alsaker, 2006; Kearney, 2008; Perry & Weinstein, 1998; Wentzel & Looney, 2007). Given the fact that we have not examined the characteristics of the schools that the adolescents in this study attend, we cannot provide information regarding factors that may be favourable for these boys and girls. Nevertheless, different authors have pointed out that there are many paths whereby the school can serve as a protective element in situations of psychosocial risk: educating in a culture that is relevant to them; maintaining high expectations of itself and of the students as individuals capable of producing results; meeting their emotional and social needs beyond academic aspects; providing significance to their school experiences within their personal world; offering them the same opportunities afforded the other children and adolescents in terms of learning; or giving them the same attention and reinforcement for academic success (Dowrick & Crespo, 2005; Harter, 1990; McLoyd, 1998; Pérez & Castejón, 2000; Sánchez, 2001; Zabalza, 1999). It is possible that one or many of these factors play an important role in shaping the positive adaptation of the adolescents in this research.

Nevertheless, it is notable that the boys and girls with adaptation problems in the educational context are not characterised by receiving more intervention in terms of educational resources. As we pointed out when we described the overall-adjustment profiles, it is possible that the absence of these differences indicates that those adolescents with good adaptation levels have received sufficient doses of support to register positive results. However, and in any case, once again these results show that, for the group of adolescents who are not well-adapted, the extra-educational resources actually offered are insufficient to guarantee positive results.

Finally, we should point out that those boys and girls who are positively adapted to the school context are characterised by better adjustment results in other areas. Thus, although we have made it clear that not all adolescents who are well adjusted to the school context are also positively adapted overall, this is indeed the situation for the overwhelming majority. Moreover, those adolescents with good levels of adaptation in the educational context, in comparison to the boys and girls who have a low degree of school adaptation, are characterised by a lower level of externalisation problems, a higher presence of cooperative skills, and a higher degree of self-control and academic

competence. Once again, these results show the importance of considering developmental processes from a probabilistic and organisational perspective; more importantly, these results show the relevance not only of access to the school context, but of participate at school with positive experiences in order to face other aspects of development.

In summary, as we pointed out at the beginning of this section, the results of our study that adolescents' experience in their school context is a critical element for boys and girls who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes. The following is an examination of the role that the family sphere plays in terms of the positive adjustment of these adolescent boys and girls, paying special attention to the promotion of a positive school experience.

1.2.3. The role of the family for an adolescent positive development in situations of psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation. A school perspective

Once examined adjustment variability and school experience of adolescents growing up in at-risk families we will discuss how these questions relate to family dynamics dimensions reported in this study. We predicted that the family context variables, particularly those related to family functioning as a developmental context, would contribute to predicting adolescent adjustment, particularly in those cases with more positive school adaptation. These predictions have been confirmed, since **the dynamics in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes affect both their adolescent children's overall adjustment profile and their positive school experience.**

Specifically, we would like to discuss three reflections. In the first place, although some characteristics of the family's socio-demographic profile affect the variability in the adolescent's adjustment, family dynamic dimensions play a more important role in said adjustment. In the second place, family cohesion and parental satisfaction are important factors to ensure a profile of overall adjustment as well as a positive experience in school. In the third place, both family adaptability and perceived parental competence play a specific role with respect to a more positive school experience.

With respect to the first of these reflections, some characteristics of the family socio-demographic profile relate to the variability in the adjustment of adolescents that grow up in situations of psychosocial risk. Thus, greater family intervention is associated with an adjustment profile characterised by personal and school problems and is a factor that serves to distinguish between adolescents with high absenteeism rates from those who regularly attend to school; however this profile does not significantly predict either of these situations. All told, the results indicate that the intensity of family intervention is a question that, as we have already pointed out, indicates a greater need for family support, in this case favouring the positive adaptation of adolescent sons and daughters.

The role of the variables that compose family dynamics is, however, more relevant in its association with and/or prediction of both a profile of overall adjustment as well as a more positive school experience. Thus, different aspects of the family dynamic not only contribute to distinguishing adolescents in terms of their adjustment profile, school absenteeism and positive/negative adaptation, but the majority of these aspects predict these situations.

As we would expect, these family variables define severe maladaptation situations. Thus, for example, family dimensions assume a particularly important role in classifying adolescents who have a more negative adjustment profile (adolescents with personal and school problems). Moreover, the results obtained also point to the fact that family dynamics are important to construct positive adaptation since, together with other characteristics of adolescents, they allow us to correctly classify nearly all boys and girls who attend school with regularity and they play an important role in predicting school adaptation among adolescents positively adapted to their school environment.

In the second place, family cohesion followed by parental satisfaction are important variables in defining a profile of overall adjustment and for ensuring a more positive school experience. These results are consistent with those discussed in the previous section regarding the different developmental-educational stages, where we showed that both family-dynamic variables play a comprehensive role in defining positive developmental processes.

Specifically, *family cohesion* plays an important role in the different approaches to the adjustment analysed in terms of the second specific objective of this research, particularly in shaping positive results. Thus, this variable makes a specific contribution in differentiating well-adjusted adolescents, just as in the configuration of positive school adaptation. Its role in situations of absenteeism, although significant, is clinically less relevant.

Once again, these results point to the importance of the configuration of some healthy emotional bonds among family members for the adolescents' comprehensive adjustment (Olson et al., 1983; Shipley, 2000). Moreover, they once again demonstrate that family support continues to be an important variable throughout adolescence to meet the adolescents' developmental-educational needs (Noller & Callan, 1991). Finally, these results demonstrate the specific role of family cohesion with respect to these adolescents' school adjustment (Estévez et al., 2003; Farrell & Barnes, 1993; Felner et al., 1995; Fortin, Marcotte, Potvin, Royer, & Joly, 2006; Gutiez, 1989; Lagana, 2004; Moreno et al., 2000; Shek, 2002).

In addition, *parental satisfaction* turns out to be an important variable not only in distinguishing among different overall-adjustment profiles, but also in predicting more positive adjustment profiles. Moreover, it contributes to differentiating adolescents with a high degree of absenteeism from those who attend school regularly. In short, although it does so to a lesser extent than family cohesion, parental satisfaction plays a positive

role in the configuration of overall adolescent adjustment and particularly with respect to school adjustment. As we pointed out earlier, we are dealing with important findings that generally have not been examined in this developmental-educational stage, in terms of the specific variables of school adjustment and, even less commonly, in situations of psychosocial risk. Therefore, once again our results indicate that parental satisfaction is an important variable that should be taken into consideration in situations of families at psychosocial risk in order to promote the positive adjustment of the boys and girls who grow up in these environments.

In the third place, compared to the more comprehensive role of family cohesion and parental satisfaction, both family adaptability as well as perceived parental competence play specific roles with respect to a more positive school experience. These results partially support documented findings when we examine the different developmental-educational stages, since these variables are important for specific aspects of child and adolescent adjustment, although in this case their relevance is showed with respect to school adjustment during adolescence.

Given the foregoing, *family adaptability* is the variable that most significantly contributes to predicting positive school adaptation with respect to adolescents' peers. As we have pointed out, the specific role of this variable is consistent with studies that have shown that this family adaptability relates less frequently to several adjustment indicators than does family cohesion, which explains why family adaptability is not an important variable in the configuration of overall adjustment profiles in this study (Farrell & Barnes, 1993).

All told, our results are consistent with other studies that, both in the general population (Pichardo, 2003) and in the at-risk community (Engels et al., 2002), have demonstrated the importance of this variable in favouring positive school-adaptation processes, whether in terms of academics or in terms of relationships. We have already shown that healthy family adaptability favours understanding hierarchical structures, the formation and flexibility of rules of interaction and, therefore, adaptation to the environment, social integration and, in short, effective participation in other contexts.

Complementarily, it is also possible that family adaptability affects particularly positive school adaptation because, in said situations, this factor of family dynamic plays out more adequately and, therefore, significantly contributes to children's and adolescents' adjustment. As we have pointed out, it has been argued that family adaptability tends to play an important role in adolescence among the general population (Olson et al., 1983) because the changes associated with this developmental stage are more important than in other moments when the family engages a different set of behaviours and communication skills that enable it to adapt to situational stress and developmental changes in an organised and consistent manner (Gorall & Olson, 1995; Vielva et al., 2001). This role may become confusing because families at psychosocial risk may not know how to adequately shape adaptability during adolescence. However, in situations of positive school adaptation, it is possible that these families show their

capacity for exert and adequate family adaptability and, therefore, this variable play an important role in terms of affecting school adaptation (Olson et al., 1983).

Finally, *perceived parental competence* appears to be an important variable that distinguishes families with sons and daughters who drop out school from those with adolescents who attend school regularly. This variable has not proved relevant in our predictions, probably because of the important weight that other adolescent characteristics, particularly externalisation problems, clearly play in situations of school absenteeism. Nevertheless, the results obtained indicate that mothers of adolescents who attend school regularly report more positive capacity as parents than do mothers of children who frequently miss school (Sabatelli & Waldron, 1995).

We have already pointed out that parents' perception of their role as parents, in this case of perceived competence, has been infrequently examined during adolescence, at least in situations of psychosocial risk, although it directly relates to school adjustment, both in the general population (Jones & Prinz, 2005) and in the at-risk community (Jiménez, 2007; Jiménez et al., 2009). The results of this research reaffirm the relevance of perceived parental competence with respect to adolescent boys' and girls' school adjustment, specifically in terms of regular school attendance; this clearly underscores the importance of mothers' evaluation of their roles as parents in families at psychosocial risk in terms of family preservation.

We must end with a reminder that the use of regression models as a methodological strategy does not guaranty a causal relationship and that, in any case, it is necessary to understand developmental processes from a probabilistic perspective that accounts for multiplicity, circularity and the dynamic nature of the relationships that compose said processes, as well as the active role played by those members undergoing development. Moreover, other personal, family and outside influences are possible. Nevertheless, the variables in the family context that we have studied make it clear how important parents' perception of their role as parents and healthy family functioning are in ensuring favourable adjustment profiles in adolescents who grow up in situations of psychosocial risk in general, and in ensuring a positive school experience in particular.

2. Limitations and future research areas

In our opinion, an overall view of this doctoral dissertation leads to some very interesting conclusions with very practical implications for family intervention for preservation purposes. Nevertheless, this view also evidences certain limitations that are not an impediment to the objectives of this dissertation but shine a light on future areas of research that will improve our understanding of the questions we have sought to answer.

This dissertation contains some **methodological limitations**, most prominently the reduced sample size, the measurement instrument used to evaluate school adaptation and the exclusive use of interviews to examine family dynamics.

Reduced sample size has limited the posibility to carrying out certain specific analyses in this dissertation. The study of families at psychosocial risk makes it difficult to access a large number of subjects. Evidence of this limitation is nowhere more clear than in the fact that, after three years developing this study, we have gathered information from 267 families. The efforts required to reach this sample and the sample size reported in other similar studies indicate that this study's sample size is still rather impressive. However, the examination of the specific questions in which we must group and differentiate these families is just as limited. Two examples of limitations caused by sample size are the impossibility of analysing a larger number of family variables in the prediction models or of carrying out more complex analyses to describe adolescent absenteeism. Currently, we continue collecting information from families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes that will allows us to conduct more specific analyses in the future.

Another methodological limitation of this dissertation concerns the school adaptation measure selected in this study. Elsewhere we pointed out that we lack comprehensive measurements to conduct a rigorous evaluation of school adaptation throughout different developmental stages. We have selected developmentally sensitive measures, but this has leaded us to sacrifice making comparisons inter-developmental stages. We believe it would be interesting to develop developmentally sensitive measures that account for school adaptation throughout development since school adaptation has shown to play out differently in families at psychosocial risk.

With respect to methodological questions, it is worth pointing out that our research is characterised by the use of interviews to evaluate family dynamics. This methodological strategy has its notable advantages in situations of psychosocial risk given that it allows us direct contact with the families and the use of measures that are relatively inexpensive. Nevertheless, we do not have observation measures that undoubtedly would have provided important information regarding these family contexts.

Moreover, this study contains other **theoretical limitations**, which noticeably include the number of family variables evaluated and the lack of data from the school as a developmental context.

Although the family variables collected for this research have provided interesting data with undoubtedly practical implications, we have not accounted for other factors of family dynamics that could have turned out to be important. The reduced number of families to whom we had access to carry out the statistical analyses has lead to a decision to select some important measures related to family dynamics. Nevertheless, it is clear that an evaluation of family education practices has not been included. Likewise, a detailed analysis of parents' perception of psychosocial risk has shown that it would have been interesting to include an evaluation of other parents' characteristics, such as parental locus of control, their perception of the difficulties in educational tasks or their knowledge about them.

Educational practices were not part of this study's objective given that another doctoral thesis currently being prepared by a fellow team member includes an exhaustive examination of this important aspect of family dynamics. Her dissertation contemplates structural educational models that offer clues regarding the complex relations of parents' perception of their role as parents and other aspects of family dynamics, in light of the results obtained in this study. Likewise, an analysis of parents knowlegde about childrearing is the focus of yet another doctoral dissertation by another team member; his dissertation is an observational analysis more qualitative than that which is presented in this dissertation and serves as a very enriching complementary view of the topic.

Finally, it should be noted that special effort has been made for considering the the experience within the school context for the children and adolescents who grow up in families at psychosocial risk. However, this dissertation has not examined the role of the school as a developmental context. The characteristics of this research have considerably limited the evaluation of the school context, which encompasses more than 100 schools in the city of Seville and in which the teachers have made notable efforts to contribute to the evaluation process. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a more comprehensive understanding of the children's and adolescents' experience in school is influenced by contexts beyond the bounds of the family and, among these influencing factors, we believe the school should be taken into consideration in future studies.

3. Final conclusions and implications for intervention

The psychosocial profile of families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes in this study and, more concretely, the adjustment profile of children and adolescents who grow up in these contests corroborates the usefulness of psychosocial-risk evaluations conducted by professional who work with these families. This profile justifies **family intervention for preservation purposes** from a process perspective that responds to more complete factors than mere socio-demographic variables and from a preventive point of view that detects the formal support requirements to meet individual members' needs and to promote family competence before abuse occurs. This intervention, moreover, should allocate support resources pursuant to the family's concrete situation.

The variables directly evaluated in this study clearly demonstrate the need to promote parents' satisfaction in their role as parents within the framework of the specific family dynamics, enhancing positive attitudes toward parenthood in general and towards the family's sons and daughters in particular. Likewise, it appears necessary to help these families by promoting more adaptive functioning as a family unit, learning to appropriately balance stability and flexibility within the family and its relationship structures, particularly when coping family stress and developmental changes. Finally, it is particularly relevant to provide support to these household heads so that they encourage positive school experiences for their sons and daughters.

Moreover, there are factors other than those directly evaluated in this study that appear to be particularly important. Indeed, it is necessary to consider other psychological factors that affect responsible parenting in these families, favouring sense of control in educational tasks as well as constituting a reflexive and flexible role as parent.

The psychosocial profile expressed in these pages also justifies the **adoption of a mature philosophy concerning family preservation**. Families receiving social- and community-services intervention demonstrate important family strengths for their children's wellbeing, such that social workers have the tools to adopt a positive focus with the families, and their intervention objectives should be centred on encouraging these strong points. The results of our research show that parents heading these households feel moderately competent in their role as parents, and that this is an important factor in development that should be encouraged within the framework of a feeling of control over educational tasks and a reflexive role as parents. Likewise, these families have demonstrated their capacity to be independent and, at the same time, to remain united as a family; this is a fundamental factor in child development throughout all stages and in terms of several adjustment factors, such that the reinforcement of the bonds of affection and family support among family members are fundamental aspects of intervention.

In this sense, it is important to underscore that parents' perception of what occurs within the family is relevant for their children's development. Therefore, it is necessary to work with families receiving intervention for family preservation, taking into consideration that the parents' perception is complex and cannot be understood with simplistic or uniform models for all families.

Thus, our results indicate that **it is important to work with these families beginning when their children are young**. The results of this study do not justify concentrating family-preservation resources on families with adolescent children, although intervention in these families continues to be fundamental.

In short, the results of this research confirm that **families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes are important contexts to encourage their children's development**. Therefore, it is crucial that social services continue to provide family intervention that trusts and invests in the family as the main context to promote children's and adolescents' development and in order to ensure that the family assumes the responsibilities of caring for its sons and daughters.

With respect to the development of children and adolescents who grow up in families receiving intervention for family-preservation purposes, our study has shown that there is no justification to concentrate all resources allocated to children entirely during adolescence. We must **develop specific interventions to promote positive development in boys and girls of all ages and pay particular attention to school-aged children**.

Indeed, the results showed in this dissertation indicate the **need to consider the development of these children and adolescents in a comprehensive manner**, paying attention to various factors of personal adjustment, such as adjustment problems and social skills, and most important academic adjustment.

Specifically, intervention directed at these children must pay closer attention to given facets of development in terms of age. Thus, during the preschool period, it is necessary to specifically encourage social skills. School-aged children and adolescents need encouragement in the areas of positive school adaptation and preventing adjustment problems.

Likewise, this study has shown that these interventions must be developed jointly for boys and girls who grow up in these contexts, but that certain particularities cannot be overlooked concerning gender. During the school-age period, special attention must be given to encouraging girls' positive adaptation, since they are particularly vulnerable during this period. In adolescence, boys require more attention since they experience more problems in a variety of developmental areas.

In specific terms of the developmental stage of adolescence, the results of this research indicate that developmental processes in this period can take on various forms,

such that **it is necessary to diversify intervention resources to meet the specific needs of these boys and girls**.

Specifically, **school environment plays a critical role for the development of boys and girls who grow up in these family contexts**; it is therefore necessary **to encourage interventions that allow the schools to act as support environments** so that children and adolescents in difficult situations take advantage in this context. Work in conjunction with the families of these boys and girls may be a particularly valuable intervention.

The level of school adaptation reported for the majority of the adolescents indicates that the school context acts positively for many of the adolescent boys and girls of all ages who grow up in families receiving social- and community-services intervention for family-preservation purposes. However, the school must increase its efforts to guarantee the positive adaptation of some of these adolescents, particularly those who experience greater academic failure, thereby guaranteeing successful experiences that allow for a positive connection with the school community.

It seems particularly important that schools develop comprehensive interventions with these boys and girls to meet their emotional and social needs beyond academic factors. Specifically, schools must make special efforts to encourage the positive development of boys and girls who show good academic adjustment but who have other emotional and social needs. Thus, schools should pay special attention to adolescents, particularly to adolescent boys, who are well adapted in terms of their peer group but who require intervention to encourage academic success and to develop adequate social skills. In this intervention framework, teachers take on a very important role as support figures, in addition to the students' peers.

Finally, **school environment plays an important role in detecting and intervening in school absenteeism situations**, which is a reality for many of the children in families receiving intervention in terms of family preservation. Althouhgt any adolescent can be detected, particular attention must be paid to older adolescents who have higher rates of academic failure and who demonstrate more class disruptive behaviour. Intervention to prevent these situations must include incentives to stay in the school system and relevant educational experiences, in addition to incorporating peer-group interventions. Likewise, interventions should examine other personal problems and work in conjunction with the families in which situations of absenteeism occur for no apparent reason.

In short, this dissertation provides further evidence to corroborate the need to conduct studies and develop interventions aimed at encouraging family strengths and meeting developmental-educational needs of all the children who grow up in families receiving intervention for family preservation reasons. Our findings provide arguments to reaffirm the need to develop a positive perspective with these families, underscoring that family members' perspectives play a fundamental role in this intervention.

References

Achenbach, T. M., & Rescorla, L. A. (2001). *Manual for the ASEBA school-age forms & profiles.* Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Research Center for Children, Youth, & Families.

Achenbach, T. M., Bird, H. R., Canino, G., Phares, V., Gould, M., & Rubio-Stipex, M. (1990). Epidemiological comparisons of Puerto Rican and U.S. Mainland children: Parent, teacher, and self-reports. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 29*(1), 84-93.

Achenbach, T. M., Dumenci, L. , & Rescorla, L. A. (2002). Ten-year comparisons of problems and competencies for national samples of youth: Self, parent and teacher reports. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 10*(4), 194-203.

Amerikaner, M., Monks, G., Wolfe, P., & Thomas, S. (1994). Family interaction and individual psychological health. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 72*(6), 614-620.

Annunziata, D., Hogue, A., Faw, L., & Liddle, H. A. (2006). Family functioning and school success in at-risk, inner-city adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 35*(1), 105-113.

Anthony, E. K. (2008). Cluster profiles of youths living in urban poverty: Factors affecting risk and resilience. *Social Work Research, 32*(1), 6-17.

Arenas, A. (2008). *La familia en su entorno social. Un estudio sobre familias en situación de riesgo y sus vecindarios.* Unpublished Research Work, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española y Real Academia Española. (2005). *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas.* Madrid: Santillana.

Attala, J. M., & Summers, S. M. (1999). A comparative study of health, developmental and behavioral factors in preschool children of battered and nonbattered women. *Children's Health Care, 28*(2), 189-200.

Atzaba-Poria, N., Pike, A., & Deater-Deckard, K. (2004). Do risk factors for problem behaviour act in a cumulative manner? An examination of ethnic minority and majority children through an ecological perspective. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 45*(4), 707-718.

Ayoub, C. C., & Jacewitz, M. M. (1982). Families at risk of poor parenting: A descriptive study of sixty at risk families in a model prevention program. *Child abuse & Neglect, 6*, 413-422.

Ayuntamiento de Sevilla (n.d.). *Recursos del Área de Bienestar Social* [Informative slides]. Retrieved from the Web Site of Área de Bienestar, Ayuntamiento de Sevilla: http://www.sevilla.org/impe/sevilla/contenido?pag=/contenidos/bienestarSocialSolidaridad/RecursosdelArea&idActivo=C33765&idSeccion=C642&vE=D4268.

Barber, B. K., & Buehler, C. (1996). Family cohesion and enmeshment: Different constructs, different effects. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58*(2), 433-441.

Basow, S. A., & Rubin, L. R. (1999). Gender influences on adolescent development. In N. G. Johnson, M. C. Roberts & J. Worell (Eds.), *Beyond appearance: A new look at adolescent girls* (pp. 25-52). District of Columbia: American Psychological Association.

Beitchman, J. H., Zucker, K. J., Hood, J. E., DaCosta, G. A., & Akman, D. (1991). A review of the short-term effects of child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 15*(4), 537-556.

Belsky, J. (1980). Child maltreatment: An ecological integration. *American Psychologist, 35*(4), 320-335.

Ben-David, A., & Jurich, J. (1993). A test of adaptability: Examining the curvilinear assumption. *Journal of Family Psychology, 7*(3), 370-375.

Berry, M. (1991). The assessment of imminence of risk of placement: Lessons from a family preservation program. *Children and Youth Services Review, 13*(4), 239-256.

Bloom, E. L., Karagiannakis, A., Toste, J. R., Heath, N. L., & Konstantinopoulos, E. (2007). Severity of academic achievement and social skills deficits. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30*(3), 911-930.

Bor, W., & Sanders, M., R. (2004). Correlates of self-reported coercive parenting of preschool-aged children at high risk for the development of conduct problems. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 38*, 738-745.

Bornstein, M. H. (Ed.). (2002). *Handbook of parenting* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bourcet, C. (1998). Self-evaluation and school adaptation in adolescence. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 13*(4), 515-527.

Boyd, R. R., & Tashakkori, A. (1994, November). *A comparison of the Hispanic dropout and non-dropout between the 8th and 10th grades*. Document presented at the annual meeting of Midsouth Educational Research Association, Nashville, TN, USA.

Bradley, R. H. (2002). Environment and parenting. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol 2. Biology and ecology of parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 281-314). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2002). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*, 371-399.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Brooks, V., & Coll, K. (1994, April). *Troubled youth: Identification and intervention strategies.* Document presented at the annual meeting of National Convention of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Denver, CO, USA.

Bruyn, E. H., Dekovic, M., & Meijnen, G. W. (2003). Parenting, goal orientations, classroom behavior, and school success in early adolescence. *Applied Developmental Psychology, 24*(4), 393-412.

Buelow, G. (1995). Comparing students from substance abusing and dysfunctional families: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 73*(3), 327-330.

Burchinal, M., Roberts, J. E., Zeisel, S. A., Hennon, E. A., & Hooper, S. (2006). Social risk and protective child, parenting, and child care factors in early elementary school years. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 6*(1), 79-113.

Calvete, E., & Cardeñoso, O. (2005). Gender differences in cognitive vulnerability to depression and behavior problems in adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 33*(2), 179-192.

Campbell, F. A., Pungello, E. P., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). The development of perceived scholastic competence and global self-worth in African American adolescents from low-income families: The roles of family factors, early educational intervention, and academic experience. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 17*(3), 277-302.

Carbonell, D. M., Reinherz, H. Z., & Giaconia, R. M. (1998). Risk and resilience in late adolescence. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 15*(4), 251-272.

Carlson, E. A., Sroufe, L. A., Collins, W. A., Jimerson, S., Weinfield, N., Henninghausen, K., et al. (1999). Early environmental support and elementary school adjustment as predictors of school adjustment in middle adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 14*(1), 72-94.

Carpenter, E. M., & Nangle, D. W. (2006). Caught between stages: Relational aggression emerging as a developmental advance in at-risk preschoolers. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 21*(2), 177-188.

Carpenter, E. M., Shepherd, E. J., & Nangle, D. W. (2008). Validation of the SSRS-T, preschool level as a measure of positive social behavior and conduct problems. *Education and Treatment of Children, 31*(2), 183-202.

Carroll, A., Durkin, K., Hattie, J., & Houghton, S. (1997). Goal setting among adolescents: A comparison of delinquent, at-risk and not-at-risk youth. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 89*(3), 441-450.

Chacón, S., Shadish, W. R., & Cook, T. D. (2008). Diseños evaluativos de intervención media. In M. T. Anguera, S. Chacón & Á. Blanco (Coords.). *Evaluación de programas sociales y sanitarios. Un abordaje metodológico* (pp. 185-218). Madrid: Síntesis.

Cheney, D., Flower, A., & Templeton, T. (2008). Applying response to intervention metrics in the social domain for students at risk of developing emotional or behavioral disorders. *The Journal of Special Education, 42*(2), 108-126.

Clark, P. (1995). Risk and resiliency in adolescence: The current status of research on gender differences. *Equity Issues, 1*(1), 1-13.

Clemente, A. (1983). *Aproximación cognitiva a la caracterización de los problemas escolares en el ciclo superior de EGB y su relación con el rendimiento académico.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Valencia, Valencia.

Clemente, A., Albiñana, P., & Doménech, F. (1998). Análisis de las diferencias entre sexos, en socialización y adaptación, en alumnos de los dos primeros cursos de Secundaria. *Psicología Educativa, 4*(2), 157-166.

Clemente, A., Doménech, F., & Albiñana, P. (2000). Adaptación académica en los adolescentes de Secundaria: un análisis diferencial según el género. *Revista de Ciencias de la Educación, 181,* 33-38.

Coleman, P. K., & Karraker, K. H. (1997). Self-efficacy and parenting quality: Findings and future applications. *Developmental Review, 18*(1), 47-85.

Coleman, P. K., & Karraker, K. H. (2003). Maternal self-efficacy beliefs, competence in parenting, and toddlers' behavior and development status. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 24*(2), 126-148.

Collins, W. A., Madsen, S. D., & Susman-Stillman, A. (2002). Parenting during middle childhood. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 1. Children and parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 73-101). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Combs-Orme, T., & Thomas, K. H. (1997). Assessment of troubled families. *Social Work Research, 21*(4), 261-269.

Conger, K. J., Rueter, M., & Conger, R. D. (2000). The role of economic pressure in the lives of parents and their adolescents: The Family Stress Model. In L. J. Crockett & R. K. Silbereisen (Eds.), *Negotiating adolescence in times of social change* (pp. 201-223). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cook-Darzens, S., Doyen, C., Falissard, B., & Mouren, M.-C. (2005). Self-perceived family functioning in 40 French families of anorexic adolescents: Implications for therapy. *European Eating Disorders Review, 13*(4), 223-236.

Corapci, F., & Wachs, T. D. (2002). Does parental mood or efficacy mediate the influence of environmental chaos upon parenting behavior?. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 48*(2), 182-201.

Cowan, P. A., Cowan, C. P., & Schulz, M. S. (1996). Thinking about risk and resilience in families. In E. M. Hetherington y E. A. Blechman (Eds.), *Stress, coping, and resiliency in children and families* (pp. 1-38). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cox, M. J., & Paley, B. (1997). Families as systems. *Annual Review of Psychology, 48*, 243-267.

Crosby, E. G., & French, J. L. (2002). Psychometric data for teacher judgments regarding the learning behaviors of primary grade children. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*(3), 235-244.

Cunningham, C. E., & Boyle, M. H. (2002). Preschoolers at risk for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and oppositional defiant disorder: Family, parenting, and behavioral correlates. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 30*(6), 555-569.

Daignault, I. V., & Hebert, M. (2009). Profiles of school adaptation: Social, behavioral and academic functioning in sexually abused girls. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 33*(2), 102-115.

Davies, D. (1999). *Child development. A practitioner's guide.* New York: Guilford Press.

Davis, C., Tang, C., & Ko, J. (2002). Assessing the impact of social factors on the mental health of Chinese at risk adolescents in Hong Kong. *British Journal of Social Work, 32*(5), 609-619.

Dekovic, M. (1999). Risk and protective factors in the development of problem behavior during adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 28*(6), 667-685.

Dekovic, M., Janssens, J., & Van As, N. (2003). Family predictors of antisocial behavior in adolescence. *Family Process, 42*(2), 223-235.

Denham, S. A., & Burton, R. (1996). A social-emotional intervention for at-risk 4-year-olds. *Journal of School Psychology, 34*(3), 225-245.

Dennis, T. A., Brotman, L. M., Huang, K.-Y., & Gouley, K. K. (2007). Effortful control, social competence, and adjustment problems in children at risk for psychopathology. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 36*(3), 442-454.

Díaz-Aguado, M. J., & Baraja, A. (1993). *Interacción educativa y desventaja sociocultural: un modelo de intervención para favorecer la adaptación escolar en contextos inter-étnicos*. Madrid: Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa.

Dixon-Floyd, I., & Johnson, S. W. (1997). Variables associated with assigning students to behavioral classrooms. *Journal of Educational Research, 91*(2), 123-126.

Domínguez, A. (2005). Absentismo escolar y atención a la diversidad. *Indivisa: Boletín de estudios e investigación, 6*, 259-267.

Donenberg, G., & Baker, L. B. (1993). The impact of young children with externalizing behaviors on their families. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 21*(2), 179-198.

Dowrick, P. W., & Crespo, N. (2005). School failure. In T. P. Gullota y G. R. Adams (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent behavioral problems. Evidence-based approaches to prevention and treatment* (pp. 589-610). New York: Springer Science & Business Media.

Duarte, R., & Escario, J. J. (2006). Alcohol abuse and truancy among Spanish adolescents: A count-data approach. *Economics of Education Review, 25*(2), 179-187.

Eccles, J. S. (2004). Schools, academic motivation, and stage-environment fit. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 125-153). New Jersey: John Wiley.

Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (1999). School and community influences on human development. In M. H. Bornstein & M. E. Lamb (Eds.), *Developmental psychology: An advanced textbook* (4th ed., pp. 503-554). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Eccles, J. S., & Roeser, R. W. (2003). Schools as developmental contexts. In G. R. Adams & M. D. Berzonsky (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (pp. 129-148). Padstow, Cornwall: Blackwell.

Egeland, B. (2007). Understanding developmental processes of resilience and psychopathology: Implications for policy and practice. In A. S. Masten (Ed.), *Multilevel dynamics in developmental psychopathology. Pathways to the future* (pp. 83-117). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Egeland, B., Carlson, E., & Sroufe, L. A. (1993). Resilience as process. *Development and Psychopathology, 5*(4), 517-528.

Egger, H. L., Costello, E. J., & Angold, A. (2003). School refusal and psychiatric disorders: A community study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 42*(7), 797-807.

Eisenberg, N., & Fabes, R. A. (1998). Prosocial development. In W. Damon (series Ed.) & N. Eisenberg (volume Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3. Social, emotional, and personality development* (5th ed., pp. 701-778). New York: John Wiley.

Elder, G. H. (1995). Life trajectories in changing societies. In A. Bandura (Ed.), *Self-efficacy in changing societies* (pp. 46–68). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Elder, G. H., Eccles, J. S., Ardelt, M., & Lord, S. (1995). Inner-city parents under economic pressure: Perspectives on the strategies of parenting. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*(3), 771-784.

Ellenbogen, S., & Chamberland, C. (1997). The peer relations of dropouts: A comparative study of at-risk and not at-risk youths. *Journal of Adolescence, 20*(4), 355-367.

Engels, R., Dekovic, M., & Meeus, W. (2002). Parenting practices, social skills and peer relationships in adolescence. *Social Behavior and Personality, 30*(1), 3-17.

Epstein, J. L., & Sanders, M. G. (2002). Family, school, and community partnerships. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 5. Practical issues in parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 407-437). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Estévez, E., Martínez, B., & Jiménez, T. I. (2003). Características del sistema familiar de adolescentes rechazados y populares en la escuela. *Encuentros en Psicología Social, 1*(1), 68-71.

Fantuzzo, J., Bulotsky, R., McDermott, P., Mosca, S., & Lutz, M. N. (2003). A multivariate analysis of emotional and behavioral adjustment and preschool educational outcomes. *School Psychology Review, 32*(2), 185-203.

Farrell, M. P., & Barnes, G. M. (1993). Family systems and social support: A test of the effects of cohesion and adaptability on the functionting of parents and adolescents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55*(1), 119-132.

Felner, R. D., Brand, E., DuBois, D. L., Adan, A. M., Mulhall, P. F., & Evans, E. G. (1995). Socioeconomic disadvantage, proximal environmental experiences, and socioemotional and academic adjustment in early adolescence: Investigation of a mediated effects model. *Child Development, 66,* 774-792.

Fergusson, D. M., & Woodward, L. J. (2000). Educational, psychosocial, and sexual outcomes of girls with conduct problems in early adolescence. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 41*(6), 779-792.

Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research, 59*(2), 117-142.

Fishbein, D. H., Herman-Stahl, M., Eldreth, D., Paschall, M. J., Hyde, C., Hubal, R., et al. (2006). Mediators of the stress--substance-use relationship in urban male adolescents. *Prevention Science, 7*(2), 113-126.

Flammer, A., & Alsaker, F. D. (2006). Adolescents in school. In S. Jackson & L. Goossens (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent development* (pp. 223-245). Padstow, Cornwall: Psychology Press.

Flanagan, K. S., Bierman, K. L., Kam, C. -M., Coie, J. D., Dodge, K. A., Foster, E., et al. (2003). Identifying at-risk children at school entry: The usefulness of multibehavioral problem profiles. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 32*(3), 396-407.

Flisher, A. J., & Chalton, D. O. (1995). High-school dropouts in a working-class South African community: Selected characteristics and risk-taking behaviour. *Journal of Adolescence, 18*(1), 105-121.

Forjaz, M. J., Martínez, P., & Cervera-Enguix, S. (2002). Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability, and validity of a Spanish version of FACES III. *The American Journal of Family Therapy, 30,* 439-449.

Fortin, L., Marcotte, D., Potvin, P., Royer, E., & Joly, J. (2006). Typology of students at risk of dropping out of school: Description by personal, family and school factors. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 21*(4), 363-383.

García, E. M., & Magaz, Á. (1998). *EMA: Escalas Magallanes de Adaptación. Manual de referencia*. Baracaldo: COHS.

García, F., & Musitu, G. (2001). *Autoconcepto forma 5. Manual*. Madrid: TEA.

García, M., & Peralbo, M. (2000). Cultura, aculturación y percepción de las relaciones familiares. *Infancia y Aprendizaje, 89,* 81-101.

Gilmore, L., & Cuskelly, M. (2009). Factor structure of the Parenting Sense of Competence scale using a normative sample. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 35*(1), 48-55.

Ginsburg, G. S., & Bronstein, P. (1993). Family factors related to children's intrinsic/extrinsic motivational orientation and academic performance. *Child Development, 64*(5), 1461-1474.

Goossens, L. (2006). Emotion, affect, and loneliness in adolescence. In S. Jackson y L. Goossens (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent development* (pp. 51-70). Padstow, Cornwall: Psychology Press.

Gorall, D. M., & Olson, D. H. (1995). Circumplex Model of family systems: Integrating ethnic diversity and other social systems. In R. H. Mikesell, D. Lusterman & S. H. McDaniel (Eds.), *Integrating family therapy: Handbook of family psychology and systems theory* (pp. 217-233). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Gorman, A. H., Kim, J., & Schimmelbusch, A. (2002). The attributes adolescents associate with peer popularity and teacher preference. *Journal of School Psychology, 40*(2), 143-165.

Gottfried, A. W., Gottfried, A. E., Bathurst, K., Guerin, D. W., & Parramore, M. M. (2003). Socioeconomic status in children's development and family environment: Infancy through adolescence. In M. H. Bornstein & R. H. Bradley (Eds.), *Socioeconomic status, parenting, and child development* (pp. 189-208). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Graber, J. A. (2004). Internalizing problems during adolescence. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 587-626). New Jersey: John Wiley.

Gresham, F. M., & Elliot, S. N. (1990). *Social Skills Rating System. Manual*. Circle Pines: American Guidance Service.

Grimaldi, V. M. (2007). *Evaluación de riesgo psicosocial en familias usuarias del sistema público de Servicios Sociales de Sevilla*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Guillamón, N. (2003). *Variables socioeconómicas y problemas interiorizados y exteriorizados en niños y adolescentes* (Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2003). Retrieved from http://www.tesisenxarxa.net/ TESIS_UAB/AVAILABLE/TDX-0611104-151251//ngc1de1.pdf.

Gutiez, P. (1989). La influencia de la familia en la integración escolar. *Bordón, 41*(4), 719-733.

Gutman, L. M., Sameroff, A. J., & Eccles, J. S. (2002). The academic achievement of African American students during early adolescence: An examination of multiple risk, promotive, and protective factors. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*(3), 367-499.

Gwynne, K., Blick, B. A., & Duffy, G. M. (2009). Pilot evaluation of an early intervention programme for children at risk. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, 45*(3), 118-124.

Harter, S. (1990). Self and identity development. In S. S. Feldman y G. R. Elliott (Eds.), *At the threshold: The developing adolescent* (pp. 388-413). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hay, D. F., & Pawlby, S. (2003). Prosocial development in relation to children's and mothers' psychological problems. *Child Development, 74*(5), 1314-1327.

Hemstreet, B. E., & Flicek, M. (1994, March). *Comparing social skills of adolescents in substance abuse treatment and normal adolescents.* Document presented at the annual meeting of National of School Psychologists, Seattle, WA, USA.

Henning-Stout, M. (1998). Assessing the behavior of girls: What we see and what we miss. *Journal of School Psychology, 36*(4), 433-455.

Henry, C. S., & Peterson, G. W. (1995). Adolescent social competence, parental qualities, and parental satisfaction. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 65*(2), 249-262.

Hidalgo, M. V., & Jiménez, L. (2005). *Traducción y adaptación al español del cuestionario Social Skills Rating System. Versión de profesores. Formas preescolar y escolar.* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Hidalgo, M. V., Menéndez, S., López, I., Sánchez, J., & Lorence, B. (2005). *Ficha de Inscripción en el programa FAF.* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Hidalgo, M. V., Menéndez, S., López, I., Sánchez, J., Lorence, B., & Jiménez, L. (2007). *Convenio de colaboración entre el Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Sevilla y la Universidad de Sevilla en el ámbito de la intervención social con familias en situación de riesgo psicosocial. Memoria anual 2006.* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Hidalgo, M. V., Menéndez, S., Sánchez, J., & López, I. (2005). *Inventario de Situaciones Estresantes y de Riesgo (ISER).* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Hidalgo, M. V., Menéndez, S., Sánchez, J., Lorence, B., & Jiménez, L. (2009). *Perfil psicosocial de familias usuarias de los Servicios Sociales Comunitarios por razones de preservación familiar.* Manuscript in preparation.

Hill, N. E., & Bush, K. R. (2001). Relationships between parenting environment and children's mental health among African American and European American mothers and children. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63*(4), 954-966.

Instituto de Evaluación (2007a). *PISA 2006. Programa para la evaluación internacional de alumnos de la OCDE. Informe español.* Madrid: Secretaría General Técnica, Subdirección General de Información y Publicaciones.

Instituto de Evaluación (2007b). *Sistema estatal de indicadores de la educación 2006. Indicadores prioritarios.* Madrid: Secretaría General Técnica, Subdirección General de Información y Publicaciones.

Instituto de la Juventud (2008). *Informe 2008. Juventud en España: Vol. 5. Desigualdades de género. Jóvenes inmigrantes*. Madrid: Instituto de la Juventud.

Izard, C., Fine, S., Schultz, D., Mostow, A., Ackerman, B., & Youngstrom, E. (2001). Emotion knowledge as a predictor of social behavior and academic competence in children at risk. *Psychological Science, 12*(1), 18-23.

James, A., & Javaloyes, A. (2001). Trastornos psicosociales y psicopatología en la adolescencia. In C. Saldaña (Dir. & Coord.), *Detección y prevención en el aula de los problemas del adolescente* (pp. 161-178). Madrid: Pirámide.

Jiménez, L. (2007). *Estrés psicosocial y adaptación positiva durante la adolescencia. Un estudio con familias en situación de riesgo psicosocial.* Unpublished Research Work, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Jiménez, L., & Hidalgo, M. V. (2005). *Ficha de datos sociodemográficos del menor y su familia en el centro educativo*. Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Jiménez, L., Dekovic, M., & Hidalgo, M. V. (2009). Adjustment of school-aged children and adolescents growing up in at-risk families: Relationships between family variables and individual, relational and school adjustment. *Children and Youth Services Review, 31*(6), 654-661.

Jiménez, M. A. (1988). El nivel de adaptación como variable significativa en el rendimiento escolar de una muestra de niños institucionalizados. *Psicologemas, 2*(3), 139-152.

Johnston, C. (1996). Parent characteristics and parent-child interactions in families of nonproblem children and ADHD children with higher and lower levels of oppositional-defiant behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 24*(1), 85-104.

Johnston, C., & Mash, E. J. (1989). A measure of parenting satisfaction and efficacy. *Journal of Clinical and Child Psychology, 18*(2), 167-175.

Johnston, C., & Patenaude, R. (1994). Parent attributions for inattentive-overactive and oppositional-defiant child behaviors. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 18*(3), 261-275.

Jones, T., & Prinz, R. J. (2005). Potential roles of parental self-efficacy in parent and child adjustment: A review. *Clinical Psychology Review, 25*(3), 341-363.

Jurado, M., Cumba, A., Collazo, L. C., & Matos, M. (2006). Reliability and validity of a Spanish version of the Social Skills Rating System-teacher form. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 24*(3), 195-209.

Kaiser, A. P., Hancock, T. B., Cai, X., Foster, E., & Hester, P. P. (2000). Parent-reported behavioral problems and language delays in boys and girls enrolled in Head Start classrooms. *Behavioral Disorders, 26*(1), 26-41.

Kearney, C. A. (2007). Forms and functions of school refusal behavior in youth: An empirical analysis of absenteeism severity. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 48*(1), 53-61.

Kearney, C. A. (2008). School absenteeism and school refusal behavior in youth: A contemporary review. *Clinical Psychology Review, 28*(3), 451-471.

Kemp, D. E., & Center, D. B. (2001, November). *Temperament based personality, socialization, and behavior in students with emotional/behavioral disorders and general education students.* Document presented at the annual meeting Severe Behavior Disorders in Children and Youth, Tempe, AZ, USA.

Kernic, M., Holt, V., Wolf, M., McKnight, B., Huebner, C., & Rivara, F. (2002). Academic and school health issues among children exposed to maternal intimate partner abuse. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 156*(6), 549-555.

Kernic, M., Wolf, M. E., Holt, V. L., McKnight, B., Huebner, C. E., & Rivara, F. P. (2003). Behavioral problems among children whose mothers are abused by an intimate partner. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 27*(11), 1231-1246.

Kinard, E. M. (1999). Perceived social skills and social competence in maltreated children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 69*(4), 465-481.

Knight, L. A. (2006). The effects of attributions on mothers' behavioral and affective responses to children's behavior. (Doctoral Dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 66*(12), B.

Koopmans, M. (1993, April). *Socio-emotional adjustment in adolescence and the perception of family relations.* Document presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA, USA.

Kuperminc, G. P., & Allen, J. P. (2001). Social orientation: Problem behavior and motivations toward interpersonal problem solving among high risk adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 30*(5), 597-622.

Lagana, M. T. (2004). Protective factors for inner-city adolescents at risk of school dropout: Family factors and social support. *Children and Schools, 26*(4), 211-220.

Laucht, M., Esser, G., & Schmidt, M. (2001). Differential development of children at risk for psychopathology: The moderating role of early maternal responsivity. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology, 43*(5), 292-300.

Lemos, S., Fidalgo, A. M., Calvo, P y Menéndez, P. (1992a). Estructura factorial de la prueba YSR y su utilización en psicopatología infanto-juvenil. *Análisis y Modificación de Conducta, 18*(62), 883-905.

Lemos, S., Fidalgo, A. M., Calvo, P., & Menéndez, P. (1992b). Salud mental de los adolescentes asturianos. *Psicothema, 4*(1), 21-48.

Lemos, S., Vallejo, G., & Sandoval, M. (2002). Estructura factorial del Youth Self-Report (YSR). *Psicothema, 14*(4), 816-822.

Lerner, R. M. (1986). *Concepts and theories of human development.* New York: Random House.

Lipschitz-Elhawi, R., & Itzhaky, H. (2008). The contribution of internal and external resources to emotional adjustment: A comparison of at-risk and normative adolescents. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 25*(5), 385-396.

López, I. (2001). *Una aproximación al estudio del desarrollo en los contextos familiar y escolar.* Unpublished Research Work, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

López, I. (2005). *La familia y sus necesidades de apoyo. Un estudio longitudinal y transversal de las redes sociales familiares.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

López, I., Hidalgo, M. V., Sánchez, J., Jiménez, L., & Menéndez, S. (2006). Un análisis de la eficacia del apoyo social en familias en situación de riesgo psicosocial. In J. D. Uriarte y P. Martín (Eds.), *Necesidades educativas especiales, contextos desfavorecidos y apoyo social* (pp. 151-161). Bilbao: Psicoex.

Lorence, B. (2008, February). *Procesos de socialización parental con adolescentes de familias en situación de riesgo psicosocial* (Work document nº 04/08). Retrieved from the Web Site of Fundación Acción Familiar: http://www.accionfamiliar.org/media/docs/DOC.04_08.Premio_Joven.Barbara%20_lorence.pdf.

Lorence, B., Hidalgo, M. V., & Jiménez, L. (2005). *Ficha de datos sociodemográficos del menor en la UTS.* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Lovejoy, M. C., Verda, M. R., & Hays, C. E. (1997). Convergent and discriminant validity of measures of parenting efficacy and control. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 26*(4), 366-376.

Lozano, L., & García, E. (2000). El rendimiento escolar y los trastornos emocionales y comportamentales. *Psicothema, 12*(2), 340-343.

Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and social policy. *Development and Psychopathology, 12*, 857-885.

Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development, 71*(3), 543-562.

Maani, S. A., & Kalb, G. (2007). Academic performance, childhood economic resources, and the choice to leave school at age 16. *Economics of Education Review, 26*(3), 361-374.

Magnusson, D., & Stattin, H. (2006). The person in context: A holistic-interactionistic approach. In R. M. Lerner (series Ed.), W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (volume Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 400-464). New Jersey: John Wiley.

Máiquez, M. L., Rodrigo, M. J., Capote, C., & Vermaes, I. (2000). *Aprender en la vida cotidiana. Un programa experiencial para padres*. Madrid: Aprendizaje Visor.

Mammen, O., Kolko, D., & Pilkonis, P. (2003). Parental cognitions and satisfaction: Relationship to aggressive parental behavior in child physical abuse. *Child Maltreatment, 8*(4), 288-301.

Mancini, J. A., & Huebner, A. J. (2004). Adolescent risk behavior patterns: Effects of structured time-use, interpersonal connections, self-system characteristics, and socio-demographic influences. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 21*(6), 647-668.

Martín, J. C. (2005). *Evaluación del programa de apoyo personal y familiar para familias en situación de riesgo psicosocial*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de La Laguna, La Laguna, Tenerife.

Masten, A. S., & Wright, M. O. (1998). Cumulative risk and protection models of child maltreatment. In B. B. R. Rossman & M. S. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Multiple victimization of children. Conceptual, developmental, research and treatment issues* (pp. 7-30). Binghamton, New York: Haworth.

Maughan, A., & Cicchetti, D. (2002). Impact of child maltreatment and interadult violence on children's emotion regulation abilities and socioemotional adjustment. *Child Development, 73*(5), 1525–1542.

McBride, B. A. (1989). Stress and fathers' parental competence: Implications for family life and parent educators. *Family Relations, 38*(4), 385-389.

McClelland, M. M., Morrison, F. J., & Homes, D. L. (2000). Children at risk for early academic problems: The role of learning-related social skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 15*(3), 307-329.

McDonald, L., Moberg, D. P., Brown, R., Rodriguez-Espiricueta, I., Flores, N. I., Burke, M. P., et al. (2006). After-school multifamily groups: A randomized controlled trial involving low-income, urban, latino children. *Children and Schools, 28*(1), 25-34.

McLoyd, V. C. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist, 53*(2), 185-204.

Medora, N. P., Wilson, S., & Larson, J. H. (2001). Attitudes toward parenting strategies, potential for child abuse, and parental satisfaction of ethnically diverse low-income U.S. Mothers. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 141*(3), 335-348.

Menéndez, S., Hidalgo, M. V., Sánchez, J., Lorence, B., & Jiménez, L. (2005). *Traducción y adaptación al castellano de la escala PSOC (Parental Sense of Competence).* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Menéndez, S., Jiménez, L., & Lorence, B. (2008). Familia y adaptación escolar durante la infancia. *XXI. Revista de Educación, 10*, 97-110.

Meyerson, L. A., Long, P. J., Miranda, R., Jr., & Marx, B. P. (2002). The influence of childhood sexual abuse, physical abuse, family environment, and gender on the psychological adjustment of adolescents. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*(4), 387-405.

Miller, A. L., Gouley, K. K., Shields, A., Dickstein, S., Seifer, R., Magee, K. D., et al. (2003). Brief functional screening for transition difficulties prior to enrolment predicts socio-emotional competence and school adjustment in Head Start preschoolers. *Early Child Development and Care, 173*(6), 681-698.

Miranda, A., Jarque, S., & Tárraga, R. (2005). Escuela. In L. Ezpeleta (Ed.), *Factores de riesgo en psicopatología del desarrollo* (pp. 203-223). Barcelona: Masson.

Mondragón, J., & Trigueros, I. (2004). *Trabajadores sociales de la Junta de Andalucía.* Sevilla: Mad.

Montague, M., Enders, C., Dietz, S., Dixon, J., & Cavendish, W. M. (2008). A longitudinal study of depressive symptomology and self-concept in adolescents. *Journal of Special Education, 42*(2), 67-78.

Moren-Cross, J. L., Wright, D. R., LaGory, M., & Lanzi, R. G. (2006). Perceived neighborhood characteristics and problem behavior among disadvantaged children. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development, 36*(3), 273-294.

Moreno, M. C. (n.d.-a). *Traducción al español del cuestionario Classroom Behavior Inventory.* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Moreno, M. C. (n.d.-b). *Traducción al español del cuestionario Social Skills Rating System. Versión de profesores. Forma adolescente.* Unpublished manuscript, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Moreno, M. C., Muñoz, M. V., Pérez, P. J., & Sánchez-Queija, I. (2005). *Los adolescentes y su salud.* Madrid: Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo.

Moreno, M., Vacas, C., & Roa, J. M. (2000). Relaciones entre situación familiar, clima social y adaptación en adolescentes. *Boletín de Psicología, 68*, 75-88.

Mullis, A. K., & Mullis, R. L. (1982, October). *Satisfactions of parenting.* Document presented at the annual meeting of National Council on Family Relations, Washington, D.C., USA.

Muni, A. K., Rath, A., & Choudhury, A. (1997). Family resources and development of social competence in disadvantaged children in India. *Early Child Development and Care, 132*(1), 105-114.

National Center for Education Statistics (1996, August). *Assessment of social competence, adaptive behaviors, and approaches to learning with young children* (Work document nº 96-18). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

National Center for Education Statistics (2006). *The condition of Education 2006* (Report nº NCES 2006-71). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Government Printing Office.

Naya, L. M. (1993). La adaptación escolar y la enseñanza bilingüe: resultados de una investigación. *Bordón, 45*(4), 455-464.

Noller, P., & Callan, V. (1991). *The adolescent in the family.* Londres: Routledge.

Noller, P., & Shum, D. (1990). The couple version of FACES III: Validity and reliability. *Journal of Family Psychology, 3*(4), 440-451.

Nurmi, J. E. (2004). Socialization and self-development. Channeling, selection, adjustment and reflection. In R. M. Lerner y L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 85-123). New Jersey: John Wiley.

Obradovic, J., Van Dulmen, M. H. M., Yates, T. M., Carlson, E. A., & Egeland, B. (2006). Developmental assessment of competence from early childhood to middle adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence 29*(6), 857-889.

Ogden, T. (2003). The validity of teacher ratings of adolescents' social skills. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 47*(1), 63-76.

Ohan, J. L., Leung, D. W., & Johnston, C. (2000). The Parenting Sense of Competence scale: Evidence of a stable factor structure and validity. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 32*(4), 251-261.

Oliva, A., & Parra, Á. (2004). Contexto familiar y desarrollo psicológico durante la adolescencia. In E. Arranz (Ed.), *Familia y desarrollo psicológico* (pp. 96-123). Madrid: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Oliva, A., Jiménez-Morago, J., & Parra, Á. (2009). Protective effect of supportive family relationships and the influence of stressful life events on adolescent adjustment. *Anxiety, Stress & Coping, 22*(2), 137-152.

Oliva, A., Parra, Á., & Sánchez-Queija, I. (2002). Relaciones con padres e iguales como predictoras del ajuste emocional y conductual durante la adolescencia. *Apuntes de Psicología, 21*, 225-242.

Olson, D. H. (1991). Three-dimensional (3D) Circumplex Model and revised scoring of FACES III. *Family Process, 30*(1), 70-74.

Olson, D. H., McCubbin, H. I., Barnes, H. L., Larsen, A. S., Muxen, M. J., & Wilson, M. A. (1983). *Families. What makes them work.* Beverly Hills, California: SAGE.

Olson, D. H., Portner, J., & Lavee, Y. (1985). *FACES III.* St Paul, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

Palacios, J., & Rodrigo, M. J. (1998). La familia como contexto de desarrollo humano. In M. J. Rodrigo y J. Palacios (Coords.), *Familia y desarrollo humano* (pp. 25-44). Madrid: Alianza Editorial.

Parr, P. E. (2000). The family FIRO model: Exploring relationship needs of "at-risk" families. *American Journal of Family Therapy, 28*(3), 255-164.

Parra, Á. (2005). *Familia y desarrollo adolescente: Un estudio longitudinal sobre trayectorias evolutivas.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Pérez, A. M., & Castejón, J. L. (2000). *Inadaptación escolar. Intervención psicoeducativa primaria.* Alicante: Club Universitario.

Pérez, G. (1981). *Origen social y rendimiento escolar.* Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.

Pérez, S. (2003). *El papel de los padres en el éxito escolar de los hijos.* Madrid: Aguilar.

Pérez-Díaz, V., Rodríguez, J. C., & Sánchez, L. (2001). *La familia española ante la educación de sus hijos.* Barcelona: Fundación La Caixa.

Perry, K. E., & Weinstein, R. S. (1998). The social context of early schooling and children's school adjustment. *Educational Psychologist, 33*(4), 177-194.

Petersen, A. C., & Leffert, N. (1995). Developmental issues influencing guidelines for adolescent health research: A review. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *17*(5), 298-305.

Pichardo, C. (2003). Familia y escuela. In J. L. Gallego & E. Fernández (Dirs.), *Enciclopedia de educación Infantil: Vol. 1* (pp. 147-162). Málaga: Aljibe.

Pichardo, M. C., Fernández, E., & Amezcua, J. A. (2002). Importancia del clima social familiar en la adaptación personal y social de los adolescentes. *Revista de Psicología General y Aplicada, 55*(4), 575-589.

Pope, A. W., & Bierman, K. L. (1999). Predicting adolescent peer problems and antisocial activities: The relative roles of aggression and dysregulation. *Developmental Psychology, 35*(2), 335-346.

Prevatt, F. F. (2003). The contribution of parenting practices in a risk and resiliency model of children's adjustment. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 21*(4), 469-480.

Qi, C. H., & Kaiser, A. P. (2003). Behavior problems in preschool children from low-income families: Review of the literature. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 23*(4), 188-216.

Ramey, C. T., & Ramey, S. L. (1998). Prevention of intellectual disabilities: Early interventions to improve cognitive development. *Preventive Medicine, 27*(2), 224-232.

Ramírez, I., Herrera, F., & Herrera, I. (2005). ¿Qué ocurre con la adaptación y el rendimiento académico de los alumnos, en un contexto educativo pluricultural? [Electronic version], *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*. Retrieved from http://www.rieoei.org/deloslectores/511Ramirez.PDF.

Redden, S. C., Forness, S. R., Ramey, S. L., Ramey, C. T., Brezausek, C. M., & Kavale, K. A. (2001). Children at-risk: Effects of a four-year Head Start transition program on special education identification. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 10*(2), 255-270.

Repetti, R. L., Taylor, S. E., & Seeman, T. E. (2002). Risky families: Family social environments and the mental and physical health of offspring. *Psychological Bulletin, 128(*2), 330-366.

Rescorla, L., Achenbach, T. M., Ivanova, M., Y., Dumenci, L., Almqvist, F., Bilenberg, N., et al. (2007). Epidemiological comparisons of problems and positive qualities reported by adolescents in 24 countries. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 75*(2), 351-358.

Resnick, M. D., Bearman, P. S., Blum, R. W., Bauman, K. E., Harris, K. M., Jones, J., et al. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. *JAMA: Journal of the American Medical Association, 278*(10), 823-832.

Rinaldi, C. M., Kates, A. D., & Welton, C. (2008). Understanding students' interactions: Why varied social tasks matter. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 13*(2), 127-140.

Ripple, C. H., & Luthar, S. S. (2000). Academic risk among inner-city adolescents: The role of personal attributes. *Journal of School Psychology, 38*(3), 277-298.

Robertson, L. M., Harding, M. S., & Morrison, G. M. (1998). A comparison of risk and resilience indicators among latino/a students: Differences between students identified as at-risk, learning disabled, speech impaired and not at-risk. *Education & Treatment of Children, 21*(3), 333-353.

Rodrigo, M. J. (2002). Pautas familiares de riesgo y su influencia sobre el desarrollo infantil. *Boletín de la Sociedad Canaria de Pediatría, 26*(1), 59-62.

Rodrigo, M. J., & Acuña, M. (1998). El escenario y el currículum educativo familiar. In M. J. Rodrigo & J. Palacios (Coords.), *Familia y desarrollo humano* (pp. 261-275). Madrid: Alianza.

Rodrigo, M. J., & Palacios, J. (Coords.). (1998). *Familia y desarrollo humano*. Madrid: Alianza.

Rodrigo, M. J., Correa, A., Máiquez, M. L., Martín, J. C., & Rodríguez, G. (2006). Family preservation services in Canary Islands: Predictors of the efficacy of a parenting program for families at-risk of social exclusion. *European Psychologist, 11*(1), 57-70.

Rodrigo, M. J., Máiquez, M. L., Batista-Foguet, J., García, M., Rodríguez, G., Martín, J. C., et al. (2006). Estilos de vida en la adolescencia y su relación con los contextos de desarrollo. *Cultura y educación, 18*(3-4), 381-395.

Rodrigo, M. J., Máiquez, M. L., Martín, J. C., & Byrne, S. (2008). *Preservación familiar. Un enfoque positivo para la intervención con familias.* Madrid: Pirámide.

Rodrigo, M. J., Máiquez, M. L., Mendoza, R., Rubio, A., Martínez, A., & Martín, J. C. (2004). Relaciones padres-hijos y estilos de vida en la adolescencia. *Psicothema, 16*(2), 203-210.

Rodrigo, M. J., Martín, J. C., Máiquez, M. L., & Rodríguez, G. (2005). Redes formales e informales de apoyo para las familias en riesgo psicosocial: el lugar de la escuela. In R. A. Martínez, H. Pérez & B. Rodríguez (Eds.), *Family-school-community partnerships merging into social development* (pp. 121-141). Madrid: SM.

Rodrigo, M. J., Martín, J. C., Máiquez, M. L., & Rodríguez, G. (2007). Informal and formal supports and maternal child-rearing practices in at-risk and non at-risk psychosocial contexts. *Children and Youth Services Review, 29*(3), 329-347.

Rodrigue, J. R., Morgan, S. B., & Geffken, G. R. (1992). Psychosocial adaptation of fathers of children with autism, down syndrome, and normal development. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 22*(2), 249-263.

Rodríguez, G., Camacho, J., Rodrigo, M. J., Martín, J. C., & Máiquez, M. L. (2006). La evaluación del riesgo psicosocial en las familias canarias usuarias de los Servicios Sociales Municipales. *Psicothema, 18*(2), 200-206.

Rogers, H., & Matthews, J. (2004). The Parenting Sense of Competence scale: Investigation of the factor structure, reliability, and validity for an Australian sample. *Australian Psychologist, 39*(1), 88-96.

Rose-Krasnor, L. (2006). The nature of social competence: A theoretical review. *Social Development, 6*(1), 111-135.

Rosenblum, G. D., & Lewis, M. (2003). Emotional development in adolescence. In G. R. Adams y M. D. Berzonsky (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (pp. 269-289). Padstow, Cornwall: Blackwell.

Russell, T. T., & Russell, D. K. (1996). *The relationships between childhood depression, perceptions of family functioning and perceptions of classroom social climate: Implications for school counsellors* (Report nº 143). Laredo, Texas: Texas A & M International University. (Nº of ERIC service reproduction ED 396 197).

Sabatelli, R. M., & Waldron, R. J. (1995). Measurement issues in the assessment of the experiences of parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 57*(4), 969-980.

Sameroff, A. J., & Mackenzie, M. J. (2003). Research strategies for capturing transactional models of development: The limits of the possible. *Development and Psychopathology, 15*(3), 613-640.

Sánchez, S. (2001). Niños y jóvenes en desventaja ante la educación: causas y consecuencias del absentismo y del fracaso escolar. *Estudios de Juventud, 52*(1), 23-26.

Sánchez-Queija, I. (2007). *Análisis longitudinal de las relaciones con los iguales durante la adolescencia*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Sevilla, Sevilla.

Sanders, M. R., & Woolley, M. L. (2005). The relationship between maternal self-efficacy and parenting practices: Implications for parent training. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 31*(1), 65-73.

Sandoval, M., Lemos, S., & Vallejo, G. (2006). Self-reported competences and problems in Spanish adolescents: A normative study of the YSR. *Psicothema, 18*(4), 804-809.

Saulnier, K. M., & Rowland, C. (1985). Missing links: An empirical investigation of network variables in high-risk families. *Family Relations, 34*(4), 557-560.

Savage, R., & Carless, S. (2004). Predicting curriculum and test performance at age 7 years from pupil background, baseline skills and phonological awareness at age 5. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*(2), 155-171.

Savage, R., Carless, S., & Ferraro, V. (2007). Predicting curriculum and test performance at age 11 years from pupil background, baseline skills and phonological awareness at age 5 years. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 48*(7), 732-739.

Schaefer, E. S., & Edgerton, M. D. (1978). *Classroom Behavior Inventory (CBI).* Universidad de North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Schatz, J. N., Smith, L. E., Borkowski, J. G., Whitman, T. L., & Keogh, D. A. (2008). Maltreatment risk, self-regulation, and maladjustment in at-risk children. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 32*(10), 972-982.

Scholte, R. H. J., & Van Aken, M. A. G. (2006). Peer relations in adolescence. In S. Jackson & L. Goossens (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent development* (pp. 175-199). New York: Psychology Press.

Schoon, I. (2006). *Risk and resilience. Adaptations in changing times.* Cambrigde: Cambrigde University Press.

Serna, L., Nielsen, E., Lambros, K., & Forness, S. (2000). Primary prevention with children at risk for emotional or behavioral disorders: Data on a universal intervention for Head Start classrooms. *Behavioral Disorders, 26*(1), 70-84.

Shadish, W., Cook, T., & Campbell, D. (2002). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Shek, D. T. (2002). Family functioning and psychological well-being, school adjustment, and problem behavior in Chinese adolescents with and without economic disadvantage. *Journal of Genetic Psychology, 163*(4), 497-502.

Shields, A., Dickstein, S., Seifer, R., Giusti, L., Magee, K. D., & Spritz, B. (2001). Emotional competence and early school adjustment: A study of preschoolers at risk. *Early Education and Development, 12*(1), 73-96.

Shipley, K. M. (2000). The effects of family dysfunction and childhood maltreatment on the development of adolescent symptomatology. (Doctoral Dissertation, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 60*(12), 6383B.

Shonk, S. M., & Cicchetti, D. (2001). Maltreatment, competency deficits, and risk for academic and behavioral maladjustment. *Developmental Psychology, 37*(1), 3-17.

Smith, S. G. (1996). *Clinical utility of the family adaptation and cohesion evaluation scales III (FACES III).* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Texas Tech University, Texas.

Smokowski, P. R., Mann, E. A., Reynolds, A. J., & Fraser, M. W. (2004). Childhood risk and protective factors and late adolescent adjustment in inner city minority youth. *Children and Youth Services Review, 26*(1), 63-91.

Staudt, M. M. (2001). Use of services prior to and following intensive family preservation services. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 10*(1), 101-114.

Stedman, J. M., & Adams, R. L. (1972). Achievement as a function of language competence, behavior adjustment, and sex in young, disadvantaged Mexican-American children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 63*(5), 411-417.

Steinberg, L., & Silk, J. S. (2002). Parenting adolescents. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Vol. 1. Children and parenting* (2nd ed., pp. 103-134). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Steinhausen, H.-C., & Metzke, C. W. (2001). Risk, compensatory, vulnerability, and protective factors influencing mental health in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 30*(3), 259-280.

Stipek, D. (1997). Success in school - for a Head Start in life. In S. S. Luthar, J. A. Burack, D. Cicchetti & J. R. Weisz (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology. Perspectives on adjustment, risk, and disorder* (pp. 75-92). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stipek, D. J., & Ryan, R. H. (1997). Economically disadvantaged preschoolers: Ready to learn but further to go. *Developmental Psychology, 33*(4), 711-723.

Stuart, D. L., Gresham, F. M., & Elliott, S. N. (1991). Teacher ratings of social skills in popular and rejected males and females. *School Psychology Quarterly, 6*(1), 16-26.

Svedin, C. G., Wadsby, M., & Sydsjö, G. (2005). Mental health, behaviour problems and incidence of child abuse at the age of 16 years: A prospective longitudinal study of children born at psychosocial risk. *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 14*(7), 386-396.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Takeuchi, D. T., Williams, D. R., & Russell, K. A. (1991). Economic stress in the family and children's emotional and behavioral problems. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 53*(4), 1031-1041.

Thieman, A. A., & Dall, P. W. (1992). Family preservation services: Problems of measurement and assessment of risk. *Family Relations, 41*(2), 186-191.

Tolan, P. H., Gorman-Smith, D., Huesmann, L. R., & Zelli, A. (1997). Assessment of family relationship characteristics: A measure to explain risk for antisocial behavior and depression among urban youth. *Psychological Assessment September, 9*(3), 212-223.

Trigo, J. (1997). Indicadores de riesgo en familias atendidas por los servicios sociales. *Apuntes de Psicología, 49-50*, 153-170.

Vandeleur, C. L., Preisig, M., Fenton, B. T., & Ferrero, F. (1999). Construct validity and internal reliability of a French version of FACES III in adolescents and adults. *Swiss Journal of Psychology, 58*(3), 161-169.

Veerman, J. W., De Kemp, R. A. T., Brink, L. T., Slot, N. W., & Scholte, E. M. (2003). The implementation of families first in the Netherlands: A one year follow-up. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development, 33*(3), 227-244.

Véronneau, M. H., Vitaro, F., Pedersen, S., & Tremblay, R. E. (2008). Do peers contribute to the likelihood of secondary school graduation among disadvantaged boys?. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(2), 429-442.

Vielva, I., Pantoja, L., & Abeijón, A. (2001). *Las familias y sus adolescentes ante las drogas.* Bilbao: Instituto Deusto de Drogodependencias, Universidad de Deusto.

Wadsby, M., Svedin, C. G., & Sydsjö, G. (2007). Children of mothers at psychosocial risk growing up: A follow up at the age of 16. *Journal of Adolescence, 30*(1), 147-164.

Walden, T. A., & Ramey, C. T. (1983). Locus of control and academic achievement: Results from a preschool intervention program. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 75*(3), 347-358.

Walker, B., Cheney, D., Stage, S., & Blum, C. (2005). Schoolwide screening and positive behavior supports: Identifying and supporting students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 7*(4), 194-204.

Walthall, J. C., Konold, T. R., & Pianta, R. C. (2005). Factor structure of the Social Skills Rating System across child gender and ethnicity. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 23*(3), 201-215.

Wenar, C., & Kerig, P. (2000). *Developmental psychopathology. From infancy through adolescence* (4th ed.). Singapur: McGraw-Hill International.

Wentzel, K. R. (1993). Does being good make the grade? Social behavior and academic competence in middle school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 85*(2), 357-364.

Wentzel, K. R., & Looney, L. (2007). Socialization in school settings. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.), *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research* (pp. 382-403). New York: Guilford Press.

Werrbach, G. B. (1992). A study of home-based services for families of adolescents. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal, 9*(6), 505-523.

West, J., Denton, K., & Germino-Hausken, E. (2000, February). *America's kindergartners. Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten*

Class of 1998–99, Fall 1998 (Report nº NCES 2000-070). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

White, K. (1982). The relation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*(3), 461-481.

Wolfe, D. A., & Mosk, M. D. (1983). Behavioral comparisons of children from abusive and distressed families. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51*(5), 702-708.

Zabalza, M. (1999). El papel de la escuela frente a los problemas de inadaptación. *Proyecto Hombre, 29*, 19-24.

Zubeidat, I., Fernández-Parra, A., Ortega, J., Vallejo, M. A., & Sierra, J. C. (2009). Características psicosociales y psicopatológicas en una muestra de adolescentes españoles a partir del Youth Self Report/11-18. *Anales de Psicología, 25*(1), 60-69.