TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CLASSMATES DURING ADOLESCENCE

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This study investigated social support networks (father, mother, classmates, and teachers) in a sample of 447 adolescents aged between 12 and 18 years. Using a cross-sectional design, the main aim was to analyze differences in the sources of family and school support during adolescence based on a multidimensional perspective, focusing on the frequency of and satisfaction with emotional, instrumental, and informational support provided by the sources. The results suggest that the mother is the main provider of support. Parents mainly provide emotional and instrumental support, classmates provide informational and emotional support, and teachers provide informational support. Informational support was provided significantly more frequently than any other type and satisfaction with informational support was greater. There was a trend for parental support to decrease as support from classmates increased. We also found gender differences; compared with boys, girls received less support from the father and more support from classmates. © 2012 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Adolescence is a time of key changes in family and social relationships. The latter include marked changes in the relationships that the adolescent considers his or her main source of support. The support network is without doubt one of the adolescent's

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main resources for coping with changes and new situations. Most studies on the adolescent's social networks have focused on the family (mainly the parents) and relationships with friends. It is generally accepted that these relationships have a major affect on the development of adolescents (Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). Adolescents who receive more support from parents also use more effective coping strategies (Barrera & Li, 1996). In contrast, real or perceived lack of parental support is an important risk factor in the development of behavioural issues (Kashani, Canfield, Borduin, Soltys, & Reid, 1994). In addition, studies that have examined parental support and differentiated between the mother and father have concluded that these sources of support independently contribute to children's adjustment (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001; Veneziano, 2000).

Ecological theories also emphasize the importance of school as a relevant social context. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (2005), family and school are within the microsystem and both are equally relevant contexts (Siegler, DeLoache, & Eisenberg, 2006). Adolescents spend much of their time at school in the company of teachers and classmates, and both influence their development (Eccles & Roeser, 2003). A number of studies have shown the distinct and unique affect of parents, friends, teachers, and classmates on behavioural and emotional issues, school adjustment, and the development of positive behaviour (Cook, Herman, Phillips, & Settersten, 2002; Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996), demonstrating the importance of analyzing different sources of support in school. Experiences at school profoundly affect the maturing process in adolescents, as well as their views, attitudes, and social relationships. Research has shown that during the transition from primary to secondary school, there is a decrease in the perception of teacher support (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), whereas peer support appears to undergo fewer changes (Harter, 1985). An overview of recent studies on social relationships between adolescent classmates have shown that acceptance by classmates was positively associated with good school adjustment, less risk of academic failure, and a greater likelihood of developing successful social relationships (Farrington, 1993). There is sufficient information to suggest that relationships with classmates and the perception of support facilitates psychological adjustment in adolescents. Good relationships with classmates are associated with high self-esteem (Robinson, 1995) and less risk of emotional and behavioural issues (Coie & Dodge, 1998).

However, what the literature leaves unclear is the issue of the effect of the amount and type of perceived support during adolescence. Some studies have indicated that parental support remains stable during adolescence (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005), whereas other studies suggest that parental support decreases (Helsen, Vollebergh, & Meeus, 2000). There have been few studies on support from teachers, but the information available suggests that support from teachers decreases as the age of the adolescents increases (Malecki & Demaray, 2002). Other studies appear to show that it stays at the same level as other closer sources of support (Harter, 1985). Support from classmates has little temporal variation, whereas support from friends increases from middle childhood to adolescence (Helsen et al., 2000). In general, there is a tendency for parental support to decrease during adolescence as support from friends increases (Cheng & Chan, 2004). Support from the father undergoes a particularly marked decrease (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003).

Empirical research has consistently shown that social support is an important predictor of psychological well-being in children and young people (Ryan, Kalil, & Leininger

2009). There are many definitions of social support and different perspectives have been used to develop the concept (Cohen & Syme, 1985; Gottlieb, 1981; Lin, 1986). One of the most comprehensive definitions is that of Lin, Dean, and Ensell (1986), which includes the provision of real and perceived support, both instrumental and expressive, from the community, social networks, and close friends. These authors suggest that actual social support must be distinguished from perceived social support in relation to how people assess their social network, the resources it provides, and the degree of satisfaction with the availability of support. A multidimensional concept of social support is usually adopted (e.g., see Cohen & Wills, 1985). According to Laireiter and Baumann (1992), social support is a multidimensional concept with five components: support networks, supportive environment, actual support, perceived support, and the context where it occurs. Tardy (1985) also identifies five possible dimensions: direction (given or received), disposition (available or enacted), description/assessment (social support or simply assessed or described in some way), content (emotional, instrumental, informational, or appraisal support), and network (family, friends, etc.).

Although social support is a multidimensional construct, researchers generally use measures that do not distinguish between the dimensions of support and the sources that provide it. Many of these studies have mainly focused on analysing emotional support, regardless of other functions such as instrumental and informational support, and most have focused on the support provided by parents and friends. The frequency of received support and satisfaction with it has rarely been analyzed. However, some studies have found differences between the different subtypes of support (Cheng, 1998; Malecki & Demaray, 2003; Tardy, 1985), the various support providers (Clark-Lempers, Lempers, & Ho, 1991; Procidiano & Heller, 1983), and the amount of support and satisfaction obtained from it (Cohen & Syme, 1985; Gottlieb, 1981)

This is particularly important because the distinction between different types of support, the sources providing it in a given context, and the distinction between the frequency of and satisfaction with support should lead to better understanding of how the experience of support among adolescents develops.

The present study is based on an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1995, 2005), which stresses the importance of developing young people's social relationships through key microsystems such as home and school. The aim of the present study was to study whether the main sources of social support vary during adolescence and to analyze social support from a multidimensional perspective focusing on the frequency of and satisfaction with the three types of support (emotional, instrumental, and informational) in relation to the family and school contexts.

Based on this theoretical perspective, we predict that over time support from parents and teachers will decrease as support from classmates increases. Within the family context, the mother will provide more support than the father, while in the school context, classmates will provide more support than teachers. Differences between the types of support are expected, depending on the source, given that the provision of support must be linked to the needs of individuals. Therefore, parental support will be mainly emotional and instrumental, classmates will provide emotional and informational support, and teachers will mainly provide informational support.

METHOD

Participants

The sample comprised 447 adolescents from two state schools in Velez-Málaga (population: 70,000) in Málaga Province, Spain. The sample followed a normal distribution and the adolescents were mainly drawn from the middle-class. A similar number of students from each school participated (School 1= 49%; School 2= 51%). There were 226 boys (50.6%) and 221 girls (49.4%) aged between 12 years and 18 years (mean *[M] =14.16*, standard deviation *[SD] =1.30)*. The sample was distributed by age as follows: 12 years (N = 49), 13 years (N = 94), 14 years (N = 129), 15 years (N = 102), and 16-18 years (N = 73).

Measures

A questionnaire was designed to assess the frequency of support and the level of satisfaction with it (Table 1). It analyzes the sources of support (father, mother, classmates, and teachers) and the kind of support (emotional, instrumental, and informational). This questionnaire also assesses the frequency of support received from the social network and the degree of satisfaction with it. The questionnaire scores responses on a Likert-type scale ranging between 1 to 5 points for the frequency of support received and the degree of satisfaction with it. For each participant, we evaluated which networks provided support, the kind of support they gave, the frequency with which each type of support was received, and the degree of satisfaction with it.

Procedure

We contacted the headmaster and the student counselling department of the schools where the study was to be conducted. Once the headmaster had accepted the proposal, we informed the teachers and the school management board that the students would fill out the questionnaires during tutoring hours. The counselling department drew up a timetable of the tutoring hours for each class where questionnaires would be completed. The researcher agreed to provide the counselling department with the results of the study in recognition of their participation and collaboration. A collaborator was present during the entire process of completing the questionnaire, giving instructions and assuring participants that the information provided was anonymous and confidential. A total of 457 questionnaires were distributed; all were returned and 10 questionnaires were rejected for being incomplete.

RESULTS

The emotional, instrumental, and informational dimensions of social support were analyzed in terms of frequency of and satisfaction with support. We performed a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with two between-subjects variables (gender and age) and two within-subjects variables (person providing support and types of support). For frequency of support, we used Box's M test for the homogeneity of covariance; the null hypothesis of the data was rejected (*Box M 1174.402, F1.463, p < .001*). This test was applied to satisfaction with perceived support (*Box M 1389,680, F1.731, p < .001*). We

Table 1. Questionnaire on the Frequency of and Satisfaction With Social Support

Tell us how often support is provided by your father, mother, classmates, and teachers how satisfied you are with it	How often do you obtain support?					How are you satisfied with the support received?				
	1. Rarely 2. Sometimes 3. Quite often 4. Almost always 5. Always					1. Dissatisfied 2. Barely satisfied 3. Fairly satisfied 4. Quite satisfied 5. Very satisfied				
FATHER										
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: He gives you affection and listens when you want to talk and express your feelings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT: He's willing to do specific things for you, like helping with homework or any other activity	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT: He gives you useful tips and information to deal with questions, problems or everyday tasks	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
MOTHER										
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: She gives you affection and listens when you want to talk and express your feelings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT: She's willing to do specific things for you, like helping with homework or any other activity	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT: She gives you useful tips and information to deal with questions, problems or everyday tasks	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
CLASSMATES										
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: They give you affection and listen when you want to talk and express your feelings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT: They are willing to do specific things for you, like helping with homework or any other activity	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT: They give you useful tips and information to deal with questions, problems or everyday tasks	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
TEACHERS										
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT: They give you affection and listen when you want to talk and express your feelings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT: They are willing to do specific things for you, like helping with homework or any other activity	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT: They give you useful tips and information to deal with questions, problems or everyday tasks	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

followed Tabachnick and Fidell's (1996) suggestions to use Pillai's Trace instead of Wilks's lambda for assessing multivariate significance.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the frequency of social support (emotional, instrumental and informational) in adolescents (male and female) received from the different sources (father, mother, classmates and teachers). The results for frequency of social support were significant for the main effects of each factor. There were significant differences in sources of support, *Pillai Trace = .593, F (3.00, 435.00) = 210.83, p < .001, η2 = .59*. Based on this, we performed a post hoc analysis using the Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons using a p-value of <.05 as a cutoff for statistical significance.

The results indicate that there were differences between all the sources analyzed; the mother provided the most support (*M = 4.36*), followed by father (*M = 3.91*), classmates (*M = 3.78*), and teachers (*M = 2.98*). In addition, there were significant differences between the types of support, *Pillai Trace = .360, F (2.00, 436.00) = 122.37, p < .001, η2 = .36*, as indicated by the Bonferroni test. The most important was informational support (*M = 3.97*), followed by emotional support (*M = 3.85*) and instrumental support (*M = 3.45*). The fact that informational support was the most important is striking because most studies suggest that emotional support is the most important, particularly among adolescents, although it should also be noted that most of these studies did not include informational support in their analyses. Significant differences were also found for the interaction provider x sex, *Pillai Trace = .105, F (3.00, 435.00) = 17.034, p < .001, η2 = .10*. Figure 1 depicts these differences. The Bonferroni test indicated that there were significant differences between all the sources. For boys, the most frequent provider of support was the mother (*M = 4.42*), followed by the father (*M = 4.06*), classmates (*M = 3.52*), and teachers (*M = 2.93*). For girls, the mother was also the most frequent provider of support (*M = 4.40*). However, in contrast to boys, the frequency of support from classmates (*M = 4.17*) was greater than that provided by the father (*M = 3.86*). Teachers remained the least frequent source of support (*M = 3.06*).

There were also significant differences for the interaction provider x types of support, *Pillai Trace = .546, F (6.00, 432.00) = 86.68, p < .001, η2 = .54*; Figure 2 shows that the most frequent source of emotional, instrumental, and informational support was the mother. The Bonferroni test also indicated significant differences between the different types of support provided by each source. The mother mainly provided emotional support (*M = 4.52*) followed by instrumental (*M = 4.42*) and informational support (*M = 4.28*). There were no significant differences between the emotional (*M = 3.94*), instrumental (*M = 4.37*), and informational (*M = 3.90*) support provided by the father. Classmates mainly provided similar degrees of emotional (*M = 4.04*) and informational (*M = 3.96*) support; instrumental support was significantly lower (*M = 3.53*). In contrast, teachers were an important source of informational support (*M = 3.85*) which was significantly higher than emotional support (*M = 3.09*) and instrumental support (*M = 2.04*).

These results show that the mother is an important provider of support and the most frequent provider of emotional, instrumental, and informational support. In general, emotional support was offered more frequently by the mother, father, and classmates. The frequency of instrumental support related to practical issues (e.g., going with the adolescent to specific places, helping with homework, etc.) largely depended on the mother and father. Instrumental support from classmates and teachers remained at very low levels. However, informational support was mainly obtained from classmates and teachers. Note that the frequency of informational support provided by teachers was high

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of the Frequency of Emotional, Instrumental, and Informational Support Received From Providers

|	Sex																			
	Boys										Girls									
	Age										Age									
	12		13		14		15		16-18		12		13		14		15		16-18	
Provider and type of support	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Father																				
Emotional	4.50	.91	4.24	1.27	4.05	1.27	4.05	1.36	3.48	1.50	3.96	1.46	4.06	1.43	3.85	1.55	3.51	1.65	3.76	1.56
Instrumental	4.31	1.05	4.10	1.16	3.98	1.22	4.14	1.26	3.78	1.58	3.96	1.43	4.12	1.26	4.16	1.30	3.78	1.58	4.06	1.43
Informational	4.58	.81	4.14	1.14	4.03	1.29	3.93	1.43	3.63	1.55	3.87	1.39	3.75	1.55	3.91	1.46	3.42	1.57	3.76	1.58
Mother																				
Emotional	4.96	.20	4.69	.72	4.51	.81	4.42	1.00	4.03	1.23	4.70	.88	4.54	1.11	4.69	.76	4.44	.76	4.27	1.18
Instrumental	4.50	1.03	4.57	.67	4.48	.81	4.25	1.04	4.25	1.17	4.61	.89	4.37	.99	4.62	.81	4.44	.87	4.18	1.07
Informational	4.69	.68	4.48	.77	4.25	1.11	4.25	1.06	4.03	1.31	4.30	1.22	4.10	1.33	4.38	1.07	4.33	.93	4.09	1.35
Classmate																				
Emotional	3.69	1.09	3.55	1.23	3.74	1.14	3.74	1.09	3.65	1.37	4.35	.71	4.35	.99	4.49	.94	4.62	.68	4.30	1.19
Instrumental	3.27	1.46	3.24	1.32	3.30	1.37	3.26	1.22	3.13	1.36	4.13	1.01	3.46	1.39	3.72	1.26	3.89	1.09	3.91	1.33
Informational	3.73	1.40	3.48	1.17	3.87	1.09	3.61	1.24	3.60	1.28	4.30	.70	4.19	1.05	4.21	1.06	4.51	.69	4.18	1.04
Teacher																				
Emotional	3.62	1.24	3.24	1.39	2.80	1.17	2.51	1.28	2.70	1.49	3.74	.96	3.13	1.39	3.34	1.39	2.93	1.25	2.97	1.38
Instrumental	2.35	1.29	2.17	1.40	2.18	1.32	2.05	1.29	1.93	1.33	2.52	1.44	1.79	1.21	1.78	1.35	1.80	1.22	1.85	1.25
Informational	4.00	1.44	3.76	1.54	3.79	1.32	3.56	1.49	3.40	1.63	4.17	1.11	3.96	1.17	4.09	1.19	4.09	.87	3.73	1.38

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviations.
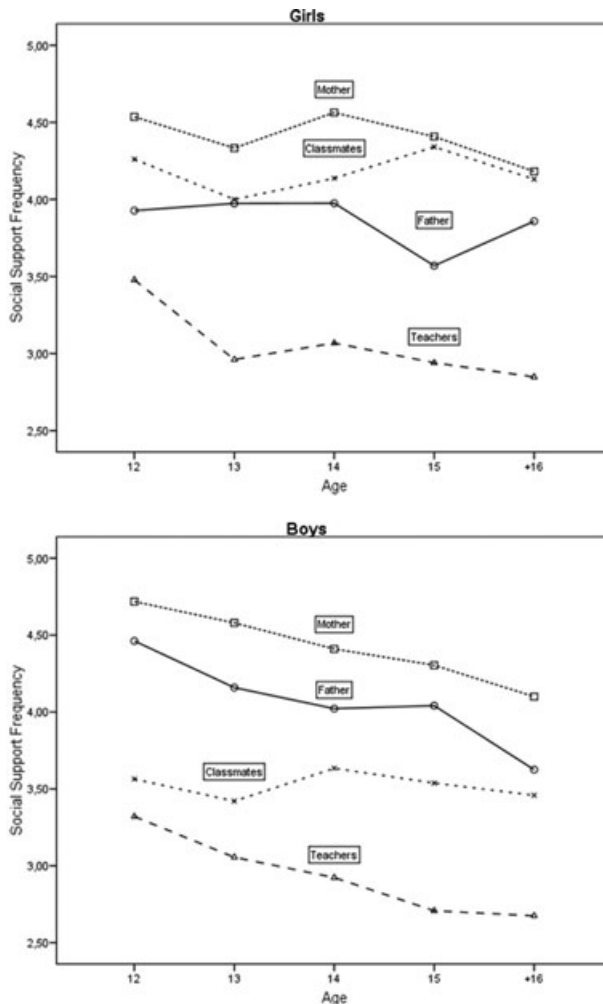
Figure 1. Social support frequency received for each provider in different age and sex groups.

and closely matched that provided by the father; as shown in Figure 2, it tended to peak around 15 years of age.

There were significant differences for the interaction provider x types of support x gender, *Pillai Trace = .043, F (6.00, 432.00) = 3263, p < .001, η2 = .04.* The Bonferroni correction results indicate that for boys, there was no difference between the types of support provided by the father; the frequency of emotional support (*M = 4.06*), instrumental support (*M = 4.06*), and informational support (*M = 4.06*) have identical means. The mother mainly provided emotional (*M = 4.52*) and instrumental support (*M = 4.40*), whereas informational support (*M = 4.33*) was significantly lower. Classmates provided significantly more emotional support (*M = 3.67*) and informational support (*M = 3.65*) than instrumental support (*M = 3.23*). Teachers provided significantly greater informational support (*M = 3.70*) than emotional support (*M = 2.97*) and instrumental support (*M = 2.13*). For adolescent girls, the father provided significantly more instrumental support (*M = 4.01*) than informational support (*M = 3.74*) and emotional support
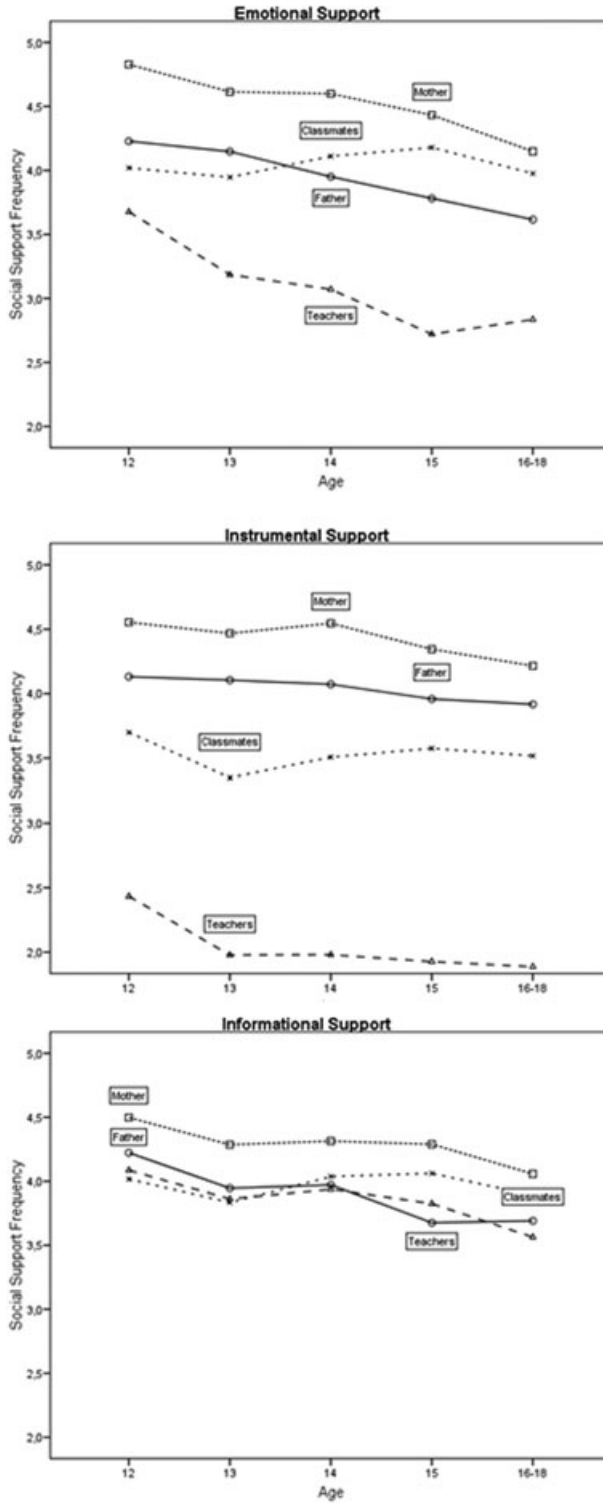
Figure 2. Emotional, instrumental and informational support frequency received for each provider in different age groups.

($M = 3.80$), whereas the mother provided significantly more emotional support ($M = 4.52$) and instrumental support ($M = 4.44$) than informational support ($M = 4.24$). Classmates provided more emotional support ($M = 4.42$) and informational support ($M = 4.27$) than instrumental support ($M = 3.82$). Teachers provided significantly more informational support ($M = 4.00$) than emotional support ($M = 3.22$) and instrumental support ($M = 1.94$).

These results are of interest because they show how adolescents receive different types of support from different sources. Figure 2 shows that adolescents of both sexes mainly received informational support from teachers, emotional and instrumental support from their mothers, and emotional and informational support from classmates. There were differences in the type of support provided by the father according to sex; adolescent girls received more instrumental support than any other type, whereas for boys the father was an important source of emotional support and instrumental support. However, girls mainly received emotional support from mothers and classmates.

The differences were less marked for the interaction provider x age, *Pillai Trace =* *.040, F (12.00, 1311.00) = 1.47, p = .10,* $\eta^2 = .013$. From a cross-sectional perspective, Figure 1 shows that the frequency of the support provided by different sources was very similar in the five age groups, but tended to decrease among the older adolescents. The Bonferroni test confirms that the support provided remained stable, and also shows significant differences between sources that are maintained throughout the age groups. At 12 years of age, fathers provided less support ($M = 4.19$) than mothers ($M = 4.62$), but significantly more than teachers ($M = 3.39$). Classmates provided significantly less support ($M = 3.91$) than mothers but more than teachers. The mothers provided significantly more support than any of the other sources. No differences were found in the frequency of support provided by the father and classmates. Teachers were the least frequently used as a source of support. It is noteworthy that this pattern was maintained in the different age groups over time; at 13 years of age, the mother remained the main source of support ($M = 4.45$), and there were no differences between support from the father ($M = 4.06$) and classmates ($M = 3.71$). Teachers provide support less often ($M = 3.00$). At 14 years of age, the same pattern of support was maintained: mother ($M = 4.48$), father ($M = 3.99$), classmates ($M = 3.88$), and teachers ($M = 2.99$). At 15 years of age, teachers continued to be the least frequently used source of support ($M = 2.76$) and mothers remained the primary source ($M = 4.14$). No significant differences were found between classmates ($M = 3.93$) and the father ($M = 3.93$), but at 15 years of age, the mean frequency of classmate support was greater than that of the father and this was maintained up to 18 years of age. Between 16 and 18 years of age, the pattern of differences in support remained the same for all the sources: mother ($M = 4.14$), classmates ($M = 3.79$), father ($M = 3.74$), and teachers ($M = 2.76$), although the mean frequency was lower among the older age groups.

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of the adolescents' (male and female) satisfaction with social support (emotional, instrumental and informational) from the different sources (father, mother classmates and teachers). The results for satisfaction with social support were significant for the main effects of each factor.

Significant differences were found between the providers, *Pillai Trace = .424, F (3.00, 435.00) = 106.95, p < .001,* $\eta2 = .42$. The Bonferroni correction shows that the most satisfying source of source of support was primarily the mother ($M = 4.48$), followed by the father ($M = 4.14$), classmates ($M = 4.09$), and then teachers ($M = 3.38$). Significant differences were also found between the three types of support, *Pillai Trace = .221, F (2.00, 436.00) = 61.88, p < .001,* $\eta2 = .22$, as shown by the Bonferroni correction. The most

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of the Satisfaction With Emotional, Instrumental, and Informational Support Received From Providers

	Sex																			
	Boys										Girls									
	Age										Age									
	12		13		14		15		16-18		12		13		14		15		16-18	
Provider and type of support	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Father																				
Emotional	4.65	.69	4.40	1.13	4.13	1.24	4.16	1.24	3.85	1.46	4.17	1.34	4.13	1.27	3.91	1.50	3.71	1.36	3.82	1.55
Instrumental	4.62	.64	4.43	.99	4.05	1.32	4.28	1.08	4.00	1.48	4.17	1.37	4.13	1.27	4.26	1.28	3.93	1.40	4.15	1.28
Informational	4.73	.45	4.31	1.20	4.21	1.23	4.11	1.32	4.00	1.45	4.35	1.11	3.98	1.45	4.15	1.35	3.67	1.48	3.82	1.45
Mother																				
Emotional	4.88	.33	4.83	.44	4.51	.89	4.47	.89	4.28	1.11	4.74	.86	4.56	1.00	4.69	.76	4.31	.87	4.30	1.07
Instrumental	4.77	.59	4.64	.73	4.48	.96	4.28	1.03	4.28	1.28	4.70	.70	4.42	.94	4.66	.77	4.40	.91	4.30	1.05
Informational	4.81	.40	4.64	.66	4.31	1.06	4.28	1.10	3.98	1.40	4.52	.95	4.17	1.22	4.46	1.07	4.42	.89	4.30	1.24
Classmate																				
Emotional	4.04	1.15	3.81	1.29	3.97	1.11	3.86	1.22	3.95	1.30	4.57	.59	4.44	.89	4.54	.94	4.62	.81	4.33	1.14
Instrumental	3.85	1.22	3.57	1.43	3.70	1.37	3.65	1.34	3.65	1.41	4.39	.89	3.83	1.32	4.00	1.13	4.20	1.16	4.30	1.19
Informational	3.85	1.38	3.71	1.20	4.07	1.12	3.79	1.24	4.00	1.20	4.52	.67	4.33	.94	4.28	1.06	4.49	.92	4.45	.97
Teacher																				
Emotional	3.88	1.31	3.55	1.43	3.15	1.39	3.02	1.51	3.08	1.61	4.09	1.08	3.40	1.49	3.56	1.41	3.38	1.45	3.55	1.28
Instrumental	2.88	1.56	2.76	1.65	2.74	1.64	2.47	1.54	2.63	1.67	3.30	1.58	2.35	1.57	2.54	1.73	2.53	1.62	2.82	1.69
Informational	3.92	1.52	4.00	1.43	4.00	1.26	3.82	1.43	3.50	1.62	4.26	1.05	4.08	1.12	4.10	1.25	3.98	1.10	4.12	1.11

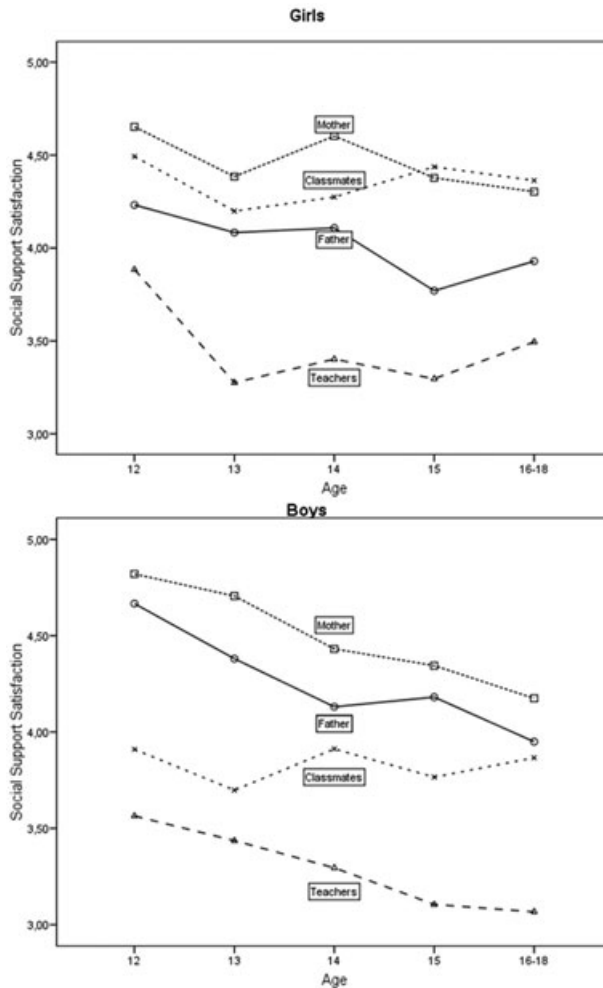*Note.* M = mean; SD = standard deviations.

Figure 3. Social support satisfaction for each provider in different age and sex groups.

important was informational support ($M = 4.16$), followed by emotional support ($M = 4.08$), and then instrumental support ($M = 3.82$). We believe that this result is due the fact that informational support was included in this study, as well as teachers as a source of this type of support; thus, teachers were revealed as an important source of informational support.

Significant differences were also found for the interaction provider x sex, *Pillai Trace* = *.079, F (3.00, 435.00) = 12.45, p < .001*, η2 = .07. Figure 3 shows these differences. According-ing to the Bonferroni correction, male adolescents were most satisfied with the support provided by the mother ($M = 4.49$), followed by the father ($M = 4.26$), classmates ($M = 3.83$), and teachers ($M = 3.29$). The father's support was significantly greater than the support from classmates and teachers. Satisfaction with the support provided by class-mates was less than satisfaction with that provided by the father and mother. Adolescents seem to be less satisfied with teachers as a source of support. Girls' satisfaction with the support provided differs: their satisfaction with the support provided by the mother was

greater (*M = 4.46*) than satisfaction with that provided by their father (*M = 4.02*) and teachers (*M = 3.29*), but no significant differences were found regarding satisfaction with the support provided by classmates (*M = 4.35*). Satisfaction with support from the father was only greater than satisfaction with teacher support, as girls reported significantly less satisfaction with the father's support than from the mother and classmates. For male adolescents, satisfaction with support was mainly obtained by the father and mother, whereas for female adolescents satisfaction with support was mainly obtained from classmates and mothers. For all adolescents, teachers were the least satisfactory source of support. The results also show that boys were more satisfied with support from the father than girls. Satisfaction with support from the mother was similar for both sexes, and was also similar regarding teachers. There were significant differences between sexes, as girls were much more satisfied with support from their classmates than their male counterparts.

There were also significant differences for the interaction provider x types of support, *Pillai Trace = .038, F (6.00, 432.00) = 44.17, p < .001, η2 = .38*, as depicted in Figure 4. The Bonferroni correction shows significant differences between the types of support from all sources tested except for that of the father, where the means of emotional support (*M = 4.09*), instrumental (*M = 4.20*), and informational (*M = 4.13*) are very similar. Satisfaction with the emotional support (*M = 4.55*) provided by the mother was significantly greater than satisfaction with informational support (*M = 4.38*). Satisfaction with the instrumental support of classmates was significantly lower (*M = 3.91*) than satisfaction with informational (*M = 4.14*) and emotional (*M = 4.21*) support. Similarly, satisfaction with informational support (*M = 3.97*) from teachers was more important than instrumental support (*M = 2.70*) and emotional support (*M = 3.46*). The data also indicate that of the four sources of support assessed, the mother was the source teenagers were most satisfied with for all three types of support: There were significant differences between emotional support from the mother (*M = 4.55*) compared with that provided by the father (*M = 4.09*), classmates (*M = 4.21*), and teachers (*M = 3.46*); instrumental support from the mother (*M = 4.49*) compared with that from father (*M = 4.20*), classmates (*M = 3.91*), and teachers (*M = 2.70*); and informational support from the mother (*M = 4.38*) compared with that from parents (*M = 4.13*), classmates (*M = 4.14*), and teachers (*M = 3.97*). Adolescents were satisfied with the instrumental support provided by fathers, which was more satisfactory than the instrumental support from classmates and teachers. Satisfaction with the emotional and instrumental support obtained from classmates was only significantly greater than that received from teachers. However, as shown in Figure 4, from 14 onwards, the level of satisfaction with emotional support obtained from classmates increased and was greater than satisfaction with support from the father. The data also indicate (see Figure 4) that there was a similar level of satisfaction with informational support provided by the father, classmates, and teachers, although this was not statistically significant.

The differences were less important for the interaction provider x age, *Pillai Trace = .032, F (12.00, 1311.00) = 1.19, p = .10, η2 = .011*. However, the Bonferroni correction shows significant differences. As shown in Figure 3, satisfaction with the support provided by the sources decreased in the older age group. At 12 years of age, satisfaction with support from the mother (*M = 4.73*) was significantly greater than for any other source. Satisfaction with support provided by the father (*M = 4.44*) and classmates (*M = 4.20*) was only greater than satisfaction with support from teachers (*M = 3.72*). There is a similar pattern at 13 years of age, as the adolescents were more satisfied with the mother as the source of support (*M = 4.54*). No differences were found between the father (*M = 4.23*) and classmates (*M = 3.94*); teachers were the source of support they were least satisfied
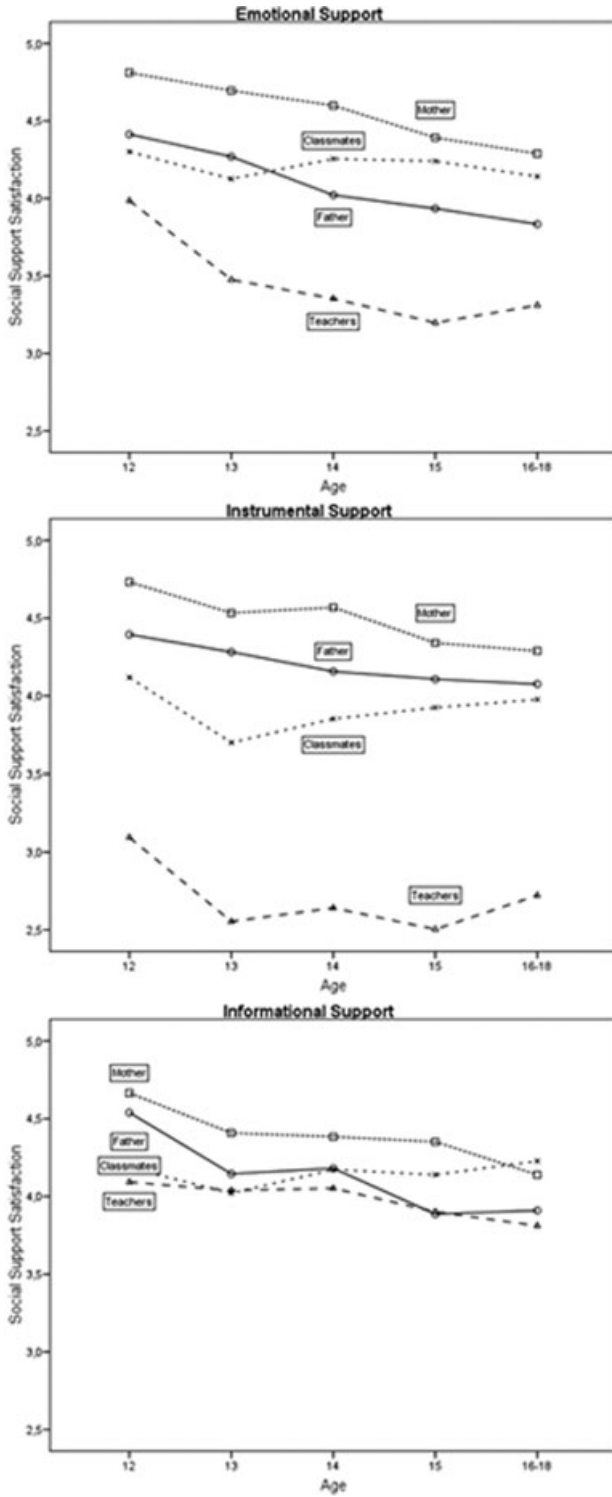
Figure 4. Emotional, instrumental and informational support satisfaction for each provider in different age groups.

with (*M = 3.56*). At 14 years of age, adolescents were still more satisfied with support from the mother (*M = 4.51*), than from the father (*M = 4.11*), classmates (*M = 4.09*), and teachers (*M = 3.34*). At 15 years of age, satisfaction with support from the mother (*M = 4.36*) underwent a significant change; it remained greater than satisfaction with support provided by the father (*M = 3.97*) and teachers (*M = 3.20*), but satisfaction with support from classmates increased (*M = 4.10*). This difference among age groups continued up to 18 years of age, when satisfaction with support from all sources declined. However, the difference was significant only for the mother's support for children at 12 years of age (*M = 4.14*) and from 16 to 18 years of age (*M = 4.14*); during this period, satisfaction with the support provided by the mother becomes lower than that provided by classmates.

In general, both the frequency of and satisfaction with the support received by adolescents tended to decrease in the older age groups, although the mother continued to be the greatest source of support. On the other hand, from 15 years of age onwards, satisfaction with the support given by the mother was similar to satisfaction with support from classmates.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The multidimensional approach used in this study has allowed us to analyse in greater depth the complex social support relationships formed during adolescence. It also provides information on how teenagers establish bonds with their main sources of support within the family and the school (i.e., father, mother, classmates, and teachers).

In the family context, our study shows that the mother provides significantly more support than the father and that their children are more satisfied with it. In the school, classmates provide significantly more support than teachers. The analysis of these four sources of support confirms that the mother is the main source of support followed by the father, classmates, and teachers in relation to the three types of support defined in the study (emotional, instrumental, and informational). This pattern is maintained in the 12- to 14-year-old age groups, but from 15 years of age onwards, support from classmates becomes similar to or greater than that provided by the father and mother. These findings are consistent with the tendency of family support to decrease as support from friends increases during adolescence (Cheng & Chan, 2004, Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Garnefski & Diekstra, 1996). However, some gender differences were found. Girls reported higher levels of support from classmates compared with boys, as described in Bokhorst, Sumter, and Westenberg's study (2010). Other studies have also reported gender differences regarding support from close friends (Harter, 1985; Helsen et al., 2000).

Another novel contribution of this work was to individually analyze the support provided by the father and mother. Each source plays a different role in the provision of support. The data reveal the key role of the mother as a main provider of support for both genders. Of the three types of support provided by her, emotional support is the most important, followed by instrumental and informational support. These results are consistent with other studies that found that women are more often chosen as a source of support (Burda, Vaux, and Shill, 1984). Mothers are considered the most important source of support among young adolescents, whereas fathers tend to play a smaller role (Colarossi & Eccles, 2003; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Our data show that there were significant differences in the social support provided by the father depending on gender.

For boys, no differences were found between the three types of support provided by the father. However, for girls, the father mainly provides instrumental support followed by informational and emotional. Overall, his support is less frequent than that provided by the mother and classmates; the father's support is only greater than that provided by teachers. This is noteworthy because it highlights the role played by the father in support-ive relationships with his children, especially daughters. Another finding worth noting is the differential role played by fathers in supporting their sons. Again, this highlights the need to individually analyze fathers and mothers as a source of support rather than together, as some studies have done.

Regarding classmates, our findings are consistent with studies showing an increase in support from friends and classmates during adolescence as compared to support pro-vided by parents (Scholte & Van Aken, 2006). Classmates are also an important source of emotional and informational support, particularly for girls, although most studies only provide data for emotional support (Bokhorst et al., 2010). The way support from class-mates evolves, as shown in our study, is consistent with the findings of studies that have analyzed support from close friends (Helsen et al., 2000). This may be accounted for by the fact that the teenagers' networks of close friends are more likely to be formed by classmates, as they spend a great deal of their time at school, which is one of the main contexts in which friendships with peers develop. Regarding instrumental support, class-mates always provide lower levels of support than parents; this is consistent with other studies (Del Valle, Bravo, & Lopez, 2010) and confirms the role of classmates as friends and confidantes. However, it is difficult to compare the findings of these studies, because most of them have analyzed support from close friends and the instruments used have typically focused on the assessment of emotional support.

As predicted, teachers provide less support than classmates and overall provide the lowest level of support. In relation to the type of support, our findings confirm that the most important support provided by teachers, both in frequency and satisfaction, is informational followed by emotional and instrumental support. This is relevant be-cause most studies have exclusively focused on the analysis of emotional support from teachers (e.g., Azmitia, Cooper, & Brown, 2009; Bokhorst et al., 2010). However, our data reveal that, at 15 years of age, informational support provided by teachers is more frequent than that provided by the father. In general, students perceive that teachers offer tips and useful information to deal with questions, problems, or everyday tasks and that they are satisfied with it (Dubow & Ulman, 1989; Malecki, & Demaray, 2003). In the school context, informational support from teachers is of great value to students, particularly as the ability of parents to support them decreases, and therefore the school has the opportunity to play an important role as a source for social support (Portes, 1997).

Another limitation of research on adolescents' social networks is that most of the studies have been focused in the analysis of emotional support or in one only global measure as indicator of social support and very few studies include other types of support (e.g., Malecki & Demaray, 2003). In this sense, our study is of interest since the results show that informational support, both in frequency and satisfaction, is of the greatest importance to teenagers, followed by emotional support, and then instrumental. If we had not included informational support, emotional support would have been the most important, as reported in most studies. There is some consensus that for many problems emotional support is the most important (Cutrona, 1986), but each type of support fulfils a specific function. Information is very important during adolescence and informational support from teachers and classmates fulfils this need. It has to be born in mind that

satisfaction with support is determined largely by the needs of individuals (Lin, 1986). This aspect is reflected in the specificity hypothesis of Cohen and McKay (1984), which suggests that social support is more effective if it targets the problem that must be solved. Regarding the types of support provided by each source, no significant variations were observed regardless of age. As expected, parents mainly provide emotional and instrumental support, classmates provide emotional and informational support, and teachers provide informational support. However, there are differences in the frequency of the type of support provided by parents when gender is taken into account: Mothers mainly provide emotional and instrumental support, whereas daughters are mainly provided with instrumental and informational by their fathers.

Some points of interest are raised by the results on the frequency of and satisfaction with support. In terms of age, adolescents between 12 and 18 years of age report that the most frequent source of support is the mother, but from 15 years of age, their satisfaction with her support significantly decreases and becomes less than their satisfaction with support from classmates. The frequency of support from the father significantly decreases after 15 years of age, but satisfaction with his support is similar to that reported for classmates from 12 years of age onwards. Taking gender into account, girls report that the most frequent source of support is their mother, even more than that received from classmates, but satisfaction with both sources is similar. This confirms that the frequency of support does not always match satisfaction with the support received. Adolescents have very specific needs at this stage of their lives and their satisfaction with support is largely influenced by their needs for a specific type of support being matched by the kind offered by their networks (Pearlin, 1985).

These results are also consistent with studies that suggest a match between the support received and the assessment people make of their social network and their satisfaction with the resources that the network provides (Cohen & Syme, 1985). In terms of age, the results of this study confirm a decrease in parental support as children become older. Such results are similar to those reported by Furman and Buhrmester (1992), who found that at 15 years of age, adolescents perceived less support from their parents that at 12 years of age. Furthermore, as parental social support decreases, the importance of the relationships with classmates increases. Some studies show (Del Valle et al., 2010) that as parental support decreases, according to adolescents, their relationship and support networks increase.

Adolescence is a period with different stages, and our results show that the social network of the teenager undergoes marked changes over time. In this sense, Kahn and Antonucci (1980) proposed the Convoy Model to describe how the social network of people evolves at different developmental stages. At each developmental stage or stage of life, the people around us change as well as the importance we attach to them as a source of support.

The results of our study show that the relationship of adolescents to their environment is complex and this confirms the need to analyze social support from the perspective of different sources and contexts, as suggested by systemic and ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Levitt, 2005).

The present study has some limitations and further research is needed to confirm, refine, and extend these findings. One of the limitations of the present work concerns the capacity for generalization for the measurement of social support. It should also be noted that although the present study used a cross-sectional design, future studies should include a longitudinal analysis to obtain more accurate data on the evolution of social support during the different stages of adolescence.

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