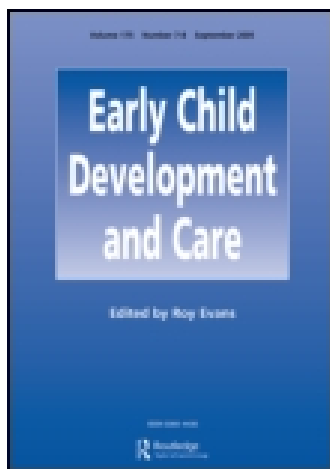


This article was downloaded by: [Enrique Arranz]

On: 20 June 2014, At: 11:49

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## Early Child Development and Care

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gecd20>

### Etxadi-Gangoiti scale: a proposal to evaluate the family contexts of two-year-old children<sup>†</sup>

Enrique B. Arranz Freijo<sup>a</sup>, Fernando Olabarrieta Artetxe<sup>a</sup>, Ainhoa Manzano Fernández<sup>b</sup>, Juan Luis Martín Ayala<sup>b</sup> & Nuria Galende Pérez<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Basic Psychological Processes and their Development, University of the Basque Country, Avenida de Tolosa 70, Donostia 20018, Spain

<sup>b</sup> Etxadi University Family Psychology Centre, Máximo Aguirre 18, planta 5 Dto 10, Bilbao 48011, Spain

<sup>c</sup> Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Basque Country University, Barrio Sarriena s/n, Leioa, Bizkaia 48940, Spain

Published online: 02 Sep 2013.

To cite this article: Enrique B. Arranz Freijo, Fernando Olabarrieta Artetxe, Ainhoa Manzano Fernández, Juan Luis Martín Ayala & Nuria Galende Pérez (2014) Etxadi-Gangoiti scale: a proposal to evaluate the family contexts of two-year-old children<sup>†</sup>, *Early Child Development and Care*, 184:6, 933-948, DOI: [10.1080/03004430.2013.829823](https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.829823)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.829823>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

## **Etxadi–Gangoiti scale: a proposal to evaluate the family contexts of two-year-old children<sup>†</sup>**

Enrique B. Arranz Freijo<sup>a\*</sup>, Fernando Olabarrieta Artetxe<sup>a</sup>, Ainhoa Manzano Fernández<sup>b</sup>, Juan luís Martín Ayala<sup>b</sup> and Nuria Galende Pérez<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Basic Psychological Processes and their Development, University of the Basque Country, Avenida de Tolosa 70, Donostia 20018, Spain; <sup>b</sup>Etxadi University Family Psychology Centre, Máximo Aguirre 18, planta 5 Dto 10, Bilbao 48011, Spain; <sup>c</sup>Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology, Basque Country University, Barrio Sarriena s/n, Leioa, Bizkaia 48940, Spain

(Received 15 July 2013; final version received 25 July 2013)

This paper makes a proposal for the comprehensive assessment of the family context of children aged two years. It offers an updated resource based on recent research into the assessment of family contexts and their influence on children's psychological development. The proposal explores the following areas: Presence of learning materials; Potential for play; Stimulation of cognitive development; Stimulation of language development; Emotional expressiveness; Setting of limits and optimal frustration; Enhancement of self-esteem and autonomy; Observation of mother–child interactions; Father's involvement; Quality of non-parental care; Relations with the extended family and social support network; Stability of the child's social relationships; Relations with the school; Diversity of experiences; Absence of exposure to conflict; Absence of parental stress; and Quality of the physical context. The areas explored are grouped into three blocks: Stimulation of cognitive and linguistic development; Stimulation of socio-emotional development; and Organisation of the social context and physical environment.

**Keywords:** family assessment; psychological development

### **Introduction**

Over recent years, researchers have found evidence of how the quality of family context influences children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. As a result, it is necessary to have effective tools for carrying out comprehensive assessments of the family contexts in which development takes place. Adequate assessment of contexts will enable researchers to make headway in identifying new forms of influence or interaction between family context and psychological development; it may also constitute the basis for obtaining data which support the design of family intervention policies aimed at optimising contexts in order to foster healthy psychological development.

Amongst the scientific community, the commonly accepted proposal for formalising development contexts from a theoretical and empirical perspective is that

---

\*Corresponding author. Email: [e.arranzfreijo@ehu.es](mailto:e.arranzfreijo@ehu.es)

<sup>†</sup>This paper was originally published in Spanish: Arranz, E., Olabarrieta, F., Manzano, A., Martín, J. L., & Galende, N. (2012). Escala Etxadi–Gangoiti: una propuesta para evaluar los contextos familiares de niños de 2 años de edad. *Revista de Educación*, 358, 218–237.

formulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005). According to this proposal, family context variables can be located at diverse systemic levels pertaining to the macro, exo, meso and microsystems. Also well-accepted is the categorisation used by Arranz (2005), which labels all variables which may affect family interaction but which are not themselves direct interactions within the family system *ecological variables*, with the term *interactive variables* being used to describe those contextual variables which constitute direct interactions between the different members of the family system. An example of the former would be parents' educational level, and an example of the latter would be parenting style.

In research, family contexts are assessed using diverse instruments, such as questionnaires and interviews; special mention should be made here of scales such as the Musitu and García scale (2001), and questionnaires on parenting styles such as those used by Oliva, Parra, and Arranz (2008).

The most commonly used observational instrument in the field of family context assessment is the HOME scale (Caldwell & Bradley, 1984), the Spanish preschool and school versions of which were adapted by Moreno, Palacios and Gonzalez from the University of Seville in 1989. During the course of an interview held in the family home in the presence of both mother and child, this scale records a series of quality of family context indicators. Some of the indicators refer to ecological aspects, such as the square metres of space available or the cleanliness and safety of the home, while others refer directly to interactive aspects, such as the Observation of mother-child interactions during the interview or the reporting of the child's diversity of experiences. This scale is a synchronic portrait of the family context. Consequently, it works well in conjunction with another instrument which provides a diachronic assessment of the quality of family context, namely the Developmental History by Pettit, Bates, and Dodge (1997). This instrument gathers data relating to the quality of family context indicators from the child's birth up to the moment at which the interview is conducted. The scale analyses qualitatively different elements from contextual assessments, including an evaluation of the Quality of non-parental care, the level of family conflict and the fostering of the child's social relations by parents.

For years now, professionals and researchers working with families in diverse fields have called attention to the need to update some of the items of the HOME scale, on which it is becoming increasingly easy to obtain good scores, a circumstance which diminishes its discriminatory potential. It is also necessary to update some of the items which have become obsolete. This has resulted in a growing awareness of the need to develop a new context assessment tool that encompasses all the significant contributions made both in the field of family evaluation and in relation to the influence of family context on psychological development. The tool that is presented here is based both on new data in this research field and on the aforementioned context assessment scales. Some recent studies by this research team attest to the influence of both the HOME scale and the Developmental History, along with other contextual variables, on the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children (Arranz et al., 2008).

### ***Significant family context variables in relation to psychological development***

The variables assessed by the scale proposed in this paper are grouped into three large blocks: Stimulation of cognitive and linguistic development, Stimulation of socio-emotional development and Organisation of the context. The first of these encompasses

*Presence of learning materials*, which is a series of items which update the subscale of the same name in the HOME scale. These items assess the type of materials and toys possessed by the child, how well they are preserved and looked after and their availability throughout the course of the day. This variable is classed as ecological and is, to use Bronfenbrenner's terminology (2005), located within the ecosystem. The next variable assessed is termed *Potential for play*. It is a scientifically proven fact that play influences the development process. The recent report published by Ginsburg (2007) for the American Academy of Pediatrics clearly attests to the influence of play on stimulating healthy development and strengthening family bonds. The items of this variable measure how often the child plays with their parents, siblings and other children, the presence and practice of play-based scaffolding and decontextualisation strategies and the presence and joint practice of symbolic play, all of which influence cognitive development (Arranz, 2004; González, 1996; Palacios & González, 1998). This variable is clearly located within the family microsystem.

The next variable assessed is *Stimulation of cognitive development*. The items of this variable aim to identify whether or not parents adopt an active attitude to stimulating development, thus fostering the acquisition of age-appropriate competences such as colour learning, spatial relations, musical rhythms and imitation. The next variable, termed *Stimulation of language development*, assesses the frequency and quality of the language stimulation received by the child during everyday child-parent interactions. The effects of the quality of linguistic interaction in the development of reading and writing skills are evident (Saracho & Spodeck, 2001). A study by Muñoz and Jiménez (2005) provides a detailed description of the parent-child interaction mechanisms which foster cognitive and language development. A number of the items used in these two variables have been taken directly from the HOME scale. These two variables are clearly located in the family interaction microsystem.

The second block of variables refers to Stimulation of socio-emotional development. Good parental response to the child's emotional needs is a protective factor for development in diverse areas (Belsky, 2008). The first variable included in this block is *Emotional expressiveness*, which analyses the quality of the emotional world established between parents and their child and the parental activities which facilitate emotional control. Diverse studies corroborate the importance of emotional expressiveness and its proper emotional control for the development of attachment bonds and emotional development in general (Pauli-Pott & Mertesacker, 2009). The second variable in this block is called *Setting of limits and optimal frustration*. The aim here is to measure the use of a democratic parenting style based on induction rather than punishment. The aim is also to assess the presence of a stable set of rules and routines for family life and to ascertain whether or not parents demand a certain level of compliance with these rules from their child. Research data indicate that the use of a democratic or authoritative parenting style is a protective factor for socio-emotional development up until adolescence and adulthood (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001).

Closely connected to this last variable is the one termed *Enhancement of self-esteem and autonomy*. This variable assesses the degree to which parents foster habits of autonomy in their child, by delegating small responsibilities and tasks and providing praise and recognition when they perform these tasks properly. The variable also evaluates parents' receptiveness to the child's various emotional expressions. The assessment of the previous variables is complemented by the variable *Observation of mother-child interactions during the interview*, which is the last variable in the block focusing on the Stimulation of socio-emotional development. The majority of the items used to

measure this variable were taken from the HOME scale and aim to assess the quality of the mother–child relationship; the interviewer observes whether or not the mother responds to the child, how she does so and whether she demonstrates affection or rejection, etc. All the variables in the second block are located within the family microsystem.

The third block of variables assessed by the scale focuses on the Organisation of the social context and physical environment. The first variable is termed *Father's involvement* and assesses the active engagement of the father in the childrearing process, the quality of father–child interactions and the Father's involvement in domestic chores. The basic reference which supports the importance of this variable is the work of Lamb (2004) and Lamb and Kelly (2009). A positive father–child relationship is a key factor in the psychological development of children facing a situation of parental breakup. This variable is located within the framework of the family microsystem. The next variable is called *Quality of non-parental care* and has been adapted from the Developmental History developed by Pettit et al. (1997). It evaluates the quality of childcare provided following birth and establishes whether or not the child has been looked after by someone other than their parents, and if so, the quality and stability of the care provided. The work carried out by Belsky (2006) has highlighted the positive impact of high-quality non-parental care on development, and its interaction with other factors such as maternal sensitivity. This variable is located within the mesosystem, because it implies the introduction of a new interaction which takes place outside the family system made up by parents and children.

The next variable in the third block is termed *Relations with the extended family and social support network*. This variable measures the frequency and quality of the relationships between the nuclear family group and its extended family and network of friends and childrearing services such as the local paediatrician. The social support provided by the extended family is particularly important in moments of transition or family reconstruction, and always constitutes a protective factor for the family system (Bridges, Roe, Dunn, & O'Connor, 2007). This variable is located within the framework of the mesosystem, since it deals with interactions between different microsystems. The next variable is called *Stability of and parents' interest in the child's social relationships* and is an adaptation of the variable included by Pettit et al. (1997) in their Developmental History. It measures whether or not the child has a stable network of friends and whether the parents take steps to support the consolidation of their child's friendships. This variable is an indicator of the quality of family context because, according to the data, high-quality family relations are associated with good social relations (Arranz, 2005). This variable is also located in the mesosystem, since, once again, it refers to relationships between different microsystems.

Another significant variable in this evaluative block on the Organisation of the social context which is also located in the mesosystem is *Relations with the school*. This variable measures the frequency and the level of engagement demonstrated by parents in their relations with their child's school. During this developmental stage, these relations should be particularly intense and coordinated, since children are immersed in the process of establishing basic habits of locomotor, eating, linguistic and cognitive autonomy. The study by Paniagua and Palacios (2005) provides a good analysis of the importance of family–school relations during this phase. *Diversity of experiences*, located in the exosystem, is a variable which measures the frequency and quality of new and diverse experiences to which parents expose their child during their everyday life. This variable has been taken from the HOME scale and

has, in a Spanish sample, been found to be significantly associated with cognitive development in children aged five and eight years (Arranz et al., 2005).

Another key variable located at the heart of the microsystem is *Absence of exposure to conflict*. This variable measures the frequency of conflict between the adults in the family and the child's exposure to it. Research data clearly confirm the negative effects of exposure to conflict on children's psychological adjustment, academic achievement and diverse development areas (Cantón, Cortés, & Justicia, 2007; Grych & Fincham, 2001; Schaffer, 1993). Another variable located between the micro and mesosystems is *Absence of parental stress*. This assesses whether parents view their past and present experience of the childrearing process as being full of tension and worry, or have coped calmly with it and have managed to enjoy it. The relationship between stressful situations and quality of childrearing has been extensively described in the scientific literature (Guajardo, Snyder, & Petersen, 2009; Rodgers, 1998). Finally, special mention should be made of the most strictly ecological variable, which was taken from the HOME scale and is termed *Quality of the physical context*. This variable is located in the exosystem, since it assesses the quality of the scenarios in which the child's everyday life unfolds. It also evaluates the cleanliness and safety of the home and local neighbourhood, the metres squared per person available and other indicators such as the existence of an outside play area.

## Method

### *Procedure followed for designing the scale and assessment instructions*

The basic aim of this proposal is to provide an instrument which conducts a comprehensive assessment of the family contexts of two-year-old children. The need to administer diverse questionnaires to families in order to explore all the relevant areas and aspects means taking up a great deal of their time and poses the risk of parents becoming tired after a while and losing interest in answering the questions fully and accurately. We therefore decided on a formula that would not only require a relatively short space of time for data gathering, but which would also be reliable, obtaining information from different sources. Consequently, we designed an interview that includes both a questionnaire and the collection of data through direct observation, and which takes no longer than an hour and a half to conduct.

Based on the two scales mentioned above, and having reviewed and analysed the relevant works published over recent years in relation to the influence of family context on psychological development, the research team designed an initial proposal of areas to be evaluated in the new family context assessment protocol. The new proposal includes areas that were not contemplated in the two scales mentioned earlier. These areas are: Potential for play; Stimulation of cognitive development; Emotional expressiveness; Setting of limits and optimal frustration; Enhancing self-esteem and autonomy; Father's involvement; and Relations with the school. The protocol focuses on two-year-old children because this age is a key moment in children's development, and the period in which they first start attending nursery school or kindergarten.

The information obtained through this scale is collected from three different sources. The first is the direct assessment of different indicators by the interviewer who visits the family; the second is the direct observation of the interactions between the child and their mother, father or both parents during the interview itself;



and the third is the questionnaire completed by the mother or both parents during the interview. The interview has a script containing 95 items. Thirty-three of these collect data that are assessed by the interviewer in accordance with a set of pre-established criteria, while the remaining 63 are questions to which the mother or both parents respond on a six-point Likert-type scale. Only when the reply is a 6 is this item considered positive and included as such on the registration sheet. For research purposes, this criterion may vary once researchers have analysed the distribution of the families assessed for each of the questions. When the items are assessed inversely (conflict and stress scales), the item is considered positive when the response given is either 1 or 2. The rest of the items in the scale, up to 125, correspond to the interviewer's direct observations during their visit to the home and to the questions they ask the mother during that time.

Table 1 includes a code beside each item to indicate the source of the information gathered. The items coded with the initials 'DO' correspond to direct observation. These include the interviewer's observation of the cleanliness of the house, the child-mother relationship and the Presence of learning materials, etc. The items coded with the initials 'DR', direct record, contain information about some aspect of family life (such as whether or not the father has stable relationship routines with the child) gathered directly during the interview. The items coded with the letter 'Q' refer to information provided in the questionnaire administered to parents during the interview.

Once we had designed the script for the interview, which identifies the items to be observed, the assessment criteria for information relative to certain items and the Likert-type scale questionnaire, the interview was given to a group of 50 families with two-year-old children and low ( $n = 17$ ), medium ( $n = 17$ ) and high ( $n = 16$ ) cultural levels, who were then asked to identify all those items on the questionnaire that were not easily understandable. Their comments and suggestions were taken into account during the drafting of the definitive versions of the questionnaire in Spanish and Basque. The instrument is currently undergoing statistical validation, since it has been selected as the assessment instrument for family ecology within the framework of the 'Infancia y Medio Ambiente' [Childhood & Environment] Project, Guipúzcoa Cohort (2008).

At the end of the process, the assessor obtains a positive or negative evaluation of each of the items assessed, similar to the register traditionally used in the HOME scale. In addition to the total score, partial scores can also be provided for each area explored and weighted scores can be obtained in percentage terms in order to compare areas, since not all areas have the same number of items.

The family interview begins with the following instructions, which are communicated to the family members verbally:

During the course of this interview I would like you to tell me things about your child, to describe a normal day in their life, what they do, what they like, their games, etc. I will also be asking about many aspects of the everyday life of your family. It is very important that **you be totally honest in your answers, since there are no correct or incorrect responses**. You may speak freely since the information you provide will never be processed individually and will, in any case, be kept in the **strictest confidence**. It is also important for **your child to be present during the interview. Thank you very much for your collaboration.**

The research team has drafted the complete text of the interview and the questionnaire administered to the families, as well as the script the interviewer should follow



Table 1. Description of the items corresponding to each of the areas assessed.

Stimulation of cognitive and linguistic development	
<i>Presence of learning materials</i>	
1. The child has toys to help them learn colours, sizes and shapes	DO
2. The child has three or more jigsaw puzzles	DO
3. The child has some kind of musical toy	DO
4. The child has toys which encourage free expression (plasticine, wax crayons)	DO
5. The child has toys to foster fine motor skills	DO
6. The toys are within the child's reach and available at any time	DO
7. The child has at least 10 storybooks	DO
8. At least three CDs of children's music or DVDs of children's programmes can be seen	DO
9. The toys are in good condition	DO
10. The family buys and reads a newspaper every day	DR
11. The family has a subscription to or buys at least one magazine	DR
<i>Potential for play</i>	
12. The child habitually plays with their parents	Q
13. They play imitation games, imitating something that is not physically there (e.g. a car)	Q
14. While playing, they mention things or events that are not physically present	Q
15. They simulate things and situations when playing with their dolls or soft toys	Q
16. They often play with their siblings, cousins or other children	Q
17. They do simple jigsaw puzzles with their parents, siblings or other children	Q
18. They do simple jigsaw puzzles (or games where you have to put the pieces together) alone	Q
<i>Stimulation of cognitive development</i>	
19. The parents let their child do things for themselves, providing only minimum help	Q
20. The child imitates their siblings or other children	Q
21. The child is encouraged to learn the different colours	Q
22. The child is encouraged to memorise songs and rhymes	Q
23. The child is encouraged to learn simple spatial relations (in front of, behind, above, below)	Q
<i>Stimulation of language development</i>	
24. The child has toys to help them learn the names of animals	DO
25. The child is encouraged to learn new words	Q
26. The parents help their child learn new words by pronouncing them slowly and clearly	Q
27. The parents teach their child to ask for things verbally, rather than by just pointing to them	Q
28. The parents teach their child verbal politeness ('please', 'thank you')	Q
29. The mother uses correct grammar and pronunciation	DO
30. The parents encourage their child to count things and take the time to listen	Q
31. The parents correct their child when they mispronounce a word, and show them the correct way of saying it	Q
32. The parents read or tell their child a bedtime story	Q
33. The television is switched off during mealtimes	Q

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Stimulation of cognitive and linguistic development	
Stimulation of socio-emotional development	
<i>Emotional expressiveness</i>	
34. Emotions are expressed naturally in the family	Q
35. When the child cries or is scared, the parents ask them what is wrong and help them calm down	Q
36. The child can express negative feelings without being punished	Q
37. The parents cuddle their child for between 10 and 15 minutes every day	DR
38. The child has toys (soft toys, dolls, etc.) which they cuddle and look after, thus helping foster affective development	DO
<i>Setting of limits and optimal frustration</i>	
39. The parents let their child know what they are and are not allowed to do consistently and firmly	Q
40. When the child misbehaves, the parents tell them so immediately	Q
41. When the child is forbidden from doing something, they are told why briefly and in a way they can understand	Q
42. The parents do not give in when the child insists on having or doing something	Q
43. The parents make their child see and understand the consequences of negative behaviour	Q
44. The parents abide by a regular timetable in relation to the child's everyday routine (mealtimes, bath time, bedtime)	DR
45. The parents continue with a rule despite the fact that the child habitually breaks it	Q
46. The parents encourage the child not to give up on a task even though they may not succeed at first	Q
47. The parents do not use physical punishment	Q
48. The parents tell their child how they feel about their good or bad behaviour	Q
<i>Enhancement of self-esteem and autonomy</i>	
49. The child has some small task assigned to them as part of everyday family life	DR
50. The child is praised when they do things well	Q
51. The child is allowed to dress themselves (partially at least)	Q
52. The child is encouraged to use cutlery, wash their hands and brush their teeth	Q
53. The parents teach their child to tidy up their toys by themselves	Q
54. The child's artwork is displayed somewhere in the house	DO
55. The parents respect their child's opinions and encourage them to express them freely	Q
56. The parents are patient enough to resist doing things themselves in order to get a move on, instead of letting the child do them	Q
<i>Observation of mother-child interactions during the interview</i>	
57. The mother talks to the child at least twice during the visit	DO
58. The mother responds verbally to the child's questions or requests during the interview	DO
59. The mother usually responds verbally to the child's verbal communications	DO
60. The mother does not tell the child off more than once during the interview	DO
61. The mother does not use physical repression during the interview	DO
62. The child has not been physically punished more than once over the past week	DO
63. The parents introduce the interviewer to the child	DO
64. The parents express their affection by cuddling and kissing their child	DO

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Stimulation of cognitive and linguistic development	
<i>Organisation of the social context and physical environment</i>	
<i>Father's involvement</i>	
65. The father attended check-ups with the mother during pregnancy, was involved in the adoption and has a good relationship with the mother	DR
66. The father was present at the birth	DR
67. The father took paternity leave	DR
68. The father regularly plays with his child	DR
69. The father takes the child to or collects them from school fairly regularly	DR
70. The father baths or washes his child fairly frequently	DR
71. The father is involved in feeding the child	DR
72. The father deals with the child when they misbehave	Q
73. The father provides his partner with practical and emotional support in childrearing tasks	Q
74. The father clearly participates in domestic chores	Q
75. The father attends meetings with his child's teachers	DR
<i>Quality of non-parental care</i>	
76. The mother looked after the child for the duration of her maternity leave	DR
77. The mother looked after the child during the first year of their life	DR
78. The mother looked after the child during the first two years of their life	DR
79. The non-parental care provided has been stable (i.e. consistent over time)	DR
80. The child has a good relationship with the person who looks after them	Q
81. The parents see or talk to the person who looks after their child almost every day	DR
82. Non-parental care began after the child was four months old	DR
<i>Relations with the extended family and social support network</i>	
83. The child sees their grandparents regularly	DR
84. The parents receive help from their extended family when they need it	Q
85. The family had (and still has) help and support from friends during pregnancy, birth and childrearing	Q
86. The parents view their paediatrician as a trustworthy figure who provides adequate medical care	Q
87. The parents have someone they trust to whom they can go when they have doubts about how to best bring up their children	DR
<i>Stability of and parents' interest in the child's social relationships</i>	
88. The parents take their child to play in the park	DR
89. The child has a fair number of friends they see regularly	DR
90. The parents sometimes invite their child's friends round to their house	DR
91. The parents actively help plan and prepare birthday parties	DR
92. The child has not had to change friends frequently over the last 18 months	DR
<i>Relations with the school</i>	
93. The parents take their child to school or nursery every day	DR
94. The parents pick their child up from school or nursery every day	DR
95. The parents regularly go to general school meetings	DR
96. The parents have a detailed knowledge of what their child does at school	Q
97. The parents talk almost every day with their child's teacher	DR

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Stimulation of cognitive and linguistic development	
<i>Diversity of experiences</i>	
98. The parents take their child to children's performances: plays, clown shows, the circus, etc.	DR
99. The child has travelled more than 80 km from home over the course of the past year	DR
100. The child has visited a new playground over the course of the past year	DR
101. The parents use sentences with complex structure and vocabulary	DO
102. The child eats at least one meal a day with their mother or father	DR
103. The parents often watch children's programmes on television with their child	DR
<i>Absence of exposure to family conflict</i>	
104. The parents do not often argue	Q
105. When the parents argue, they do not end up shouting at each other	Q
106. When the parents argue, they do not end up insulting and threatening each other	Q
107. Arguments between the parents do not end in physical aggression	Q
108. The parents do not often argue in front of their child	Q
109. The child has not witnessed an argument between their parents which has ended in insults	Q
110. The child has not witnessed an argument between their parents which has ended in threats	Q
111. The child has not witnessed an argument between their parents which has ended in physical assault	Q
<i>Absence of parental stress</i>	
112. The parents do not believe that looking after their child requires more time and energy than they have	Q
113. The parents enjoy spending time with their child	Q
114. The parents view their child's future with confidence	Q
115. The parents do not believe that having a child is a burden	Q
116. The parents do not think that their child's behaviour is often annoying or stressful	Q
117. The family has not experienced any stressful events over the last two years	Q
<i>Quality of the physical context</i>	
118. The home seems safe and hazard-free	DO
119. There is a safe place for children to play outside	DO
120. The inside of the home is neither dark nor perceptively monotonous	DO
121. The neighbourhood is aesthetically pleasing	DO
122. The home has at least 10 m <sup>2</sup> of inhabitable space per person	DO
123. The rooms are not overcrowded with furniture	DO
124. The home is reasonably clean and not too untidy	DO
125. There is no annoying noise in the home, nor any unpleasant odours	DO

when assessing each of the scale's 125 items. These appendixes may be requested from the authors by e-mail.

## Conclusions

The assessment scale for family contexts presented here aims to encompass all those relevant aspects highlighted by research over recent years. Consequently, both strictly

contextual and intrafamily interactive evaluations have been included, as explained in the introduction.

Providing a family context assessment tool targeted at two-year-old children enables preventive evaluations to be conducted with families; these evaluations will in turn enable the development of preventive policies designed to convey important messages regarding the raising of children in the family environment. Furthermore, they will provide individualised information regarding the profile of each family context, to enable attention to be focused on improving those areas in which most shortcomings were detected. And finally, the substitution of certain items which are very specific to two-year-old children may enable the scale to be adapted to ages three, four and five.

It is also important to highlight the fact that this instrument does not constitute an assessment of the child's psychological development, but rather an evaluation of the quality of family context as an element which fosters psychological development. This is why variables associated with development in the family context, such as the baby's attachment to the mother, among others, are not taken into account. The aim of the instrument proposed here is to enable researchers to assess whether or not the family context provided fosters development, and to establish intervention guidelines if the results indicate that such a step is required.

Finally, it should be stressed that although the new assessment proposal aims to be comprehensive from a theoretical point of view, it still has the shortfall of lacking, as yet, psychometric validation. We hope to overcome this limitation in future research studies.

### *Useful guidelines for professionals and families*

When the *Etxadi-Gangoiti* scale is used for diagnosis purposes or as part of a preventive programme, a profile will be obtained for each family which identifies the areas in which training should be provided in order to improve the family context. The following is a set of basic recommendations for each of the areas assessed.

#### *Presence of learning materials:*

- Try to ensure that there are books, toys or educational material available in the home for the child to use whenever they like.
- Foster the use of new technologies (computers, etc.).
- Encourage your child to do jigsaws or other kinds of puzzles with interlocking pieces.
- Make sure that your child has access to crayons, plasticine and musical toys.

#### *Potential for play:*

- Try to allude to facts, objects or circumstances that are not physically present during shared play.
- Comment on what can be directly observed and ask your child to relate what they can see to something else which is not physically present.
- Try to encourage your child to imitate objects and people (both present and not).
- Do not forget to play regularly with your child.

#### *Stimulation of cognitive development:*

- Let your child do things for themselves and provide a helping hand when they encounter difficulties.

- Encourage your child to learn colours, songs and numbers, and foster their spatial awareness (above, below, in front of, behind, etc.).

*Stimulation of language development:*

- Encourage your child to learn to speak properly by correcting them and showing them how to say and pronounce things correctly.
- Call things by their name so that your child learns by imitation.
- Teach your child new words as part of your everyday family life.
- Read or tell them stories that they enjoy.

*Emotional expressiveness:*

- Engage in physical displays of affection with your child and try to ensure that they can express both positive and negative feelings naturally, without fear of punishment.
- Talk about the reason for negative emotions and explain to your child why you are angry or happy.
- When your child cries or is scared, try to calm them down and help them understand why they feel this way.

*Setting of limits and optimal frustration:*

- Be clear and firm regarding what your child is and is not allowed to do.
- Ensure a regular routine of mealtimes, bedtimes and nursery school timetables, etc.
- Never give in to tantrums.
- If your child misbehaves, tell them so immediately.
- When you forbid something, always explain why in terms that your child can understand.

*Enhancement of self-esteem and autonomy:*

- Assign your child small tasks and responsibilities, such as laying the table or tidying up their toys.
- Foster independent behaviour such as getting dressed, washing their hands and brushing their teeth, etc.
- Avoid doing things for your child in the interests of speed.
- Praise your child when they do things well, do not just point out what they do wrong.
- Listen to their opinions with interest and praise their artwork, displaying it in their bedroom, for example.

*Parent–child interactions:*

- Verbally answer your child when they request your attention.
- Introduce everyone with whom you converse to your child.
- Never use physical punishment.



*Father's involvement:*

- Try to encourage the father to participate in everyday activities with his child, such as taking them to school, bathing them, feeding them and, in general, becoming actively involved in their upbringing.
- Try to encourage the father to help with domestic chores.

*Quality of non-parental care:*

- Try to maintain regular communications with the person who looks after your child.
- Try to avoid frequent changes of caregiver.
- Try to ensure that your child has a good relationship with their caregiver.

*Relations with the extended family and social support network:*

- Ask your extended family and close friends for help with childrearing when you need it.
- Try to visit your child's grandparents and the rest of your extended family regularly.
- Find out about available networks and institutional support initiatives, such as family guidance services, etc.

*Stability of and parents' interest in the child's social relationships:*

- Try to keep abreast of your child's friendships.
- Try to spend time regularly in playgrounds and parks to enable your child to interact with other children.
- Invite your child's friends over to your house every once in a while.
- Encourage your child to participate in extracurricular activities.

*Relations with the school:*

- Try to find out about the activities that your child engages in at school.
- Make an effort to take part in extracurricular activities.
- Try to maintain frequent contact with your child's teacher.

*Diversity of experiences:*

- Make an effort to take your child on trips and outings (to the theatre, circus, etc.).
- Try to engage in activities that involve spending time together doing something different and fun.

*Absence of exposure to conflict:*

- Try to avoid allowing your child to witness arguments between you and your partner.
- Seek professional advice in the event of separation or divorce.

- Avoid exposing your child to excessive conflict in the home, even if this is just verbal arguments between you and your partner.
- When your child is exposed to conflict, either directly or indirectly, teach them how to analyse the situation and solve the problem in a positive and constructive way (in accordance with their age and capacity).

*Absence of parental stress:*

- Try to make routine, everyday activities fun.
- Seek help, if possible, from family and friends with whom you can share experiences relating to childrearing.
- Take time to relax and analyse the problems that crop up in everyday life.

*Quality of the physical context:*

- It is important for your child to have their own play area.
- It is important for this area to be safe, clean and well lit.
- It is important for your child to be able to play outside in a safe area, under parental supervision.

### **Acknowledgements**

This paper was originally published in Spanish:

Arranz, E., Olabarrieta, F., Manzano, A., Martín, J.L., & Galende, N. (2012) Escala Etxadi-Gangoiti: una propuesta para evaluar los contextos familiares de niños de 2 años de edad. *Revista de Educación*, 358, 218–237.

The manuscript was translated into English by Diana Drapper.

This study was carried out with the help of the Jesús de Gangoiti Barrera Foundation (2008).

### **Notes on contributors**

Enrique B. Arranz Freijo, PhD in psychology, is a professor of family and child development at the University of the Basque Country. His research interests include the field of family context and child development.

Fernando Olabarrieta Artetxe, PhD in psychology, is a teacher of developmental and educational psychology at the Basque Country University. His research interests include the field of family context and child development and the field of cultural differences in developmental processes.

Ainhoa Manzano Fernández, PhD in psychology, is a practitioner working at the Etxadi University Psychology Centre. Her research interests include the field of family context and child development and the field of family influences on gifted children.

Juan luís Martín Ayala, PhD in psychology, is a practitioner working at the Etxadi University Psychology Centre. His research interests include the field of family context and child development and the field of family influences on mental health.

Nuria Galende Pérez, PhD in psychology, is a teacher of developmental and educational psychology at the Basque Country University. Her research interests include the field of family context and child development and the field of family context and theory of mind development.

## References

- Arranz, E. (2004). *Familia y desarrollo psicológico*. Madrid: Pearson.
- Arranz, E. (2005). Family context and psychological development in early childhood: Educational implications. In O. N. Saracho & B. Spodek (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on families: Communities, and schools for young children* (pp. 59–82). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Arranz, E., Martín, J., Manzano, A., Olabarrieta, F., Bellido, A., & Richards, M. (2005). *Quality of family context and child development in 5 & 8 years old children of the Basque country (Spain): A longitudinal approach*. Simposio contexto familiar y desarrollo cognitivo. XII European conference on developmental psychology, Tenerife, Spain. Published in the conference minutes.
- Arranz, E., Oliva, A., Olabarrieta, F., Martín, J., Manzano, A., & Richards, M. (2008). Quality of family context or sibling status? Influences on cognitive development. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178, 153–164.
- Belsky, J. (2006). Early child care and early child development. Major findings of the NICHD study of early child care. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 3, 95–110.
- Belsky, J. (2008). Family influences on psychological development. *Psychiatry*, 7, 282–285.
- Bridges, L. J., Roe, A., Dunn, J., & O'Connor, T. (2007). Children's perspectives on their relationships with grandparents following parental separation: A longitudinal study. *Social Development*, 16, 539–554.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (Ed.). (2005). *Making humans being human. Bioecological perspectives on human development*. London: Sage.
- Caldwell, B., & Bradley, R. (1984). *HOME observation for measurement of the environment*. Little Rock, AR: Center of Child Development and Education, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.
- Cantón, J., Cortés, M., & Justicia, D. (2007). *Conflictos entre los padres, divorcio y desarrollo de los hijos*. Madrid: Pirámide.
- Ginsburg, R. K. (2007). The importance of play in promoting healthy child development and maintaining strong parent–child bonds. *Pediatrics*, 119, 182–191.
- Gonzalez, M. M. (1996). Task and activities. A parent–child interaction analysis. *Learning and Instruction*, 6, 287–306.
- Grych, J., & Fincham, F. (2001). *Interparental conflict and child development*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Guajardo, N. R., Snyder, G., & Petersen, R. (2009). Relationships among parenting practices, parental stress, child behaviour, and children's social-cognitive development. *Infant and Child Development*, 18, 37–60.
- INMA Project. (2008). Evaluación de la ecología familiar en el marco del seguimiento de la cohorte INMA Guipuzcoa a los 2 años de edad. Caracterización del desarrollo físico y neuro conductual y su relación con las exposiciones ambientales [Assessment of family ecology as part of the monitoring of the INMA Guipúzcoa cohort at age 2. Characterization of physical and neuro-behavioral development and its relationship with environmental exposure]. Project submitted to external assessment and funded by the Diputación Foral de Guipuzcoa.
- Lamb, M. E. (Ed.). (2004). *The role of the father in child development* (4th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lamb, M. E., & Kelly, J. B. (2009). Improving the quality of parent–child contact in separating families with infants and young children: Empirical research foundations. In R. M. Galatzer-Levy & L. Kraus (Eds.), *The scientific basis of child custody decisions* (2nd ed., pp. 187–214). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Moreno, M. C., Palacios, J., & Gonzalez. (1989). *Cuestionario de la vida cotidiana*. Universidad de Sevilla. Unpublished instrument.
- Muñoz, A., & Jiménez, J. (2005). Interacciones educativas en la familia. La estimulación del desarrollo cognitivo y lingüístico en los hijos. *Apuntes de psicología*, 26, 51–65.
- Musitu, G., & García, F. (2001). *Escala de socialización parental en la adolescencia*. Madrid: TEA.

- Oliva, A., Parra, A., & Arranz, E. (2008). Estilos relacionales parentales y ajuste adolescente. *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, 31, 93–106.
- Palacios, J., & González, M. (1998). La estimulación cognitiva en las interacciones padres – hijos. In M. J. Rodrigo & J. Palacios (Coord.), *Familia y desarrollo humano* (pp. 277–295). Madrid: Alianza Psicología.
- Paniagua, G., & Palacios, J. (2005). *Educación infantil. Respuesta educativa a la diversidad*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Pauli-Pott, B., & Mertesacker, B. (2009). Affect expression in mother–infant interaction and subsequent attachment development. *Infant Behaviour and Development*, 32, 208–215.
- Pettit, G., Bates, J., & Dodge, K. A. (1997). Supportive parenting, ecological context, and children’s adjustment: A seven-year longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 68, 908–923.
- Pettit, G., Laird, R., Dodge, K., Bates, J., & Criss, M. (2001). Antecedents and behaviour–problem outcomes of parental monitoring and psychological control in early adolescence. *Child Development*, 72, 583–598.
- Rodgers, A. (1998). Multiple sources of stress and parenting behaviour. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 20, 525–546.
- Saracho, O., & Spodeck, B. (Eds.). (2001). *Contemporary perspectives on literacy in early childhood education*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age.
- Schaffer, R. (1993). *El contexto socio familiar en la educación de la infancia*. Barcelona: MEC, A.M. Rosa Sensat.