

**A Spotlight on The Research of CGE, Dr. Itziar Luzarraga Monasterio!**  
By Emily Nackley, BBH Program Coordinator

One of the really neat aspects of seeing individuals become Certified Gottman Educators is hearing about why they have chosen to do so. Our CGEs have reported a variety of very purposeful reasons for becoming CGEs that pertain to both their personal and professional lives. We'd like to share with you the story of how one of our CGEs decided to join the BBH family and how she's contributed to our knowledge regarding the transition to parenthood through the research she has done at the Relationship Research Institute.

The Bringing Baby Home program would like to highlight CGE Dr. Itziar Luzarraga Monasterio. Itziar came all the way from Bilbao, Spain in 2005 to become a Certified Gottman Educator. Itziar came to the U.S. as a visiting scholar from the University of Deusto in Spain's Basque Country. While Itziar was here, she completed her dissertation at the Relationship Research Institute under the direction of Dr. John Gottman. The results of Itziar's dissertation are directly relevant to CGEs who work with families undergoing the transition to parenthood, so we want to take some time to share them with you.

**(continued from Newsletter...)** Itziar's project focused on assessing violence between intimate partners in a sample of 232 women living in the Greater Bilbao Area of Spain; 155 of these women were pregnant with their first child, and 75 were not. Itziar was interested in learning about characteristics of the women themselves, those of their partners, and those of the overall relationship to see which characteristics might put a woman at risk of experiencing violence in their relationships. Since the transition to parenthood is a stressful time (as we all know!), Itziar wanted to see how pregnancy would impact the likelihood of experiencing violence and whether any of these other characteristics played a role in the likelihood that women would experience violence.

In the end, for the pregnant women, the characteristics that put them at risk of experiencing more violence were those related to the relationship and women's partners and not the women themselves! Factors such as low levels of commitment in the relationship and reduced satisfaction with the relationship put pregnant women at risk of experiencing violence.

Interestingly and to Itziar's surprise, the exact opposite was found for women who were not pregnant—individual characteristics of the women themselves were more likely to put non-pregnant women at risk of increased violence rather than those related to the relationship or partner.

These findings suggest that focusing on the quality of the relationship during the transition to parenthood when women are pregnant is of utmost importance since the biggest predictors of violence in this study were related to the quality and level of commitment in the relationship. This highlights the importance for couples who are expecting their first child to focus on their relationship during this challenging time. Luckily for us, the Bringing Baby Home Program offers just that--support for couples' relationships during the transition to parenthood! We hope that work from Itziar's dissertation can be applied to families in Spain and worldwide so that we can do more to provide support to expectant families.

Just this fall, Itziar presented the findings from her study to her dissertation committee at the University of Deusto, along with a crowd of her family and friends from Spain. RRI's current and previous Research Directors, Renay Bradley and Dan Yoshimoto, were also in attendance to provide support and encouragement to Itziar as she completed this final step of her doctoral work. We are very happy to report that Itziar passed and received her doctorate degree (Ph.D.) "cum laude"! Her goal now is to further develop effective prevention/intervention efforts for Intimate Partner Violence and related negative outcomes for families that are experiencing the oftentimes difficult transition to parenthood.

Congratulations Dr. Luzarraga Monasterio and all the best to you in your future endeavors!