

University of Luxembourg

ECP – Brighton, UK 03. -06.07.2023

## Can openness to diversity be taught in the family?

Elke Murdock & Elvira Hanus

04.07.2023

## ■ Globalisation

- Increased movement of people
- Multifaceted drivers for movement
  - Forced and voluntary migration
  - Ease of travel (physical)
  - Ease of access (virtual)
- Culture Contact opportunities – increasingly possible
- Xenophobia – right-wing extreme parties on the rise in many countries.

# Openness to the world

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

- Numerous studies on the benefits of exchange study programs (for example, Thomas, 2012; Thomas et al. 2007; Thomas & Perl, 2010; Kuhl, 2015)
- Change of perspective, learning of languages acquisition of intercultural competences - considered a positive (Genkova & Kruse, 2021)



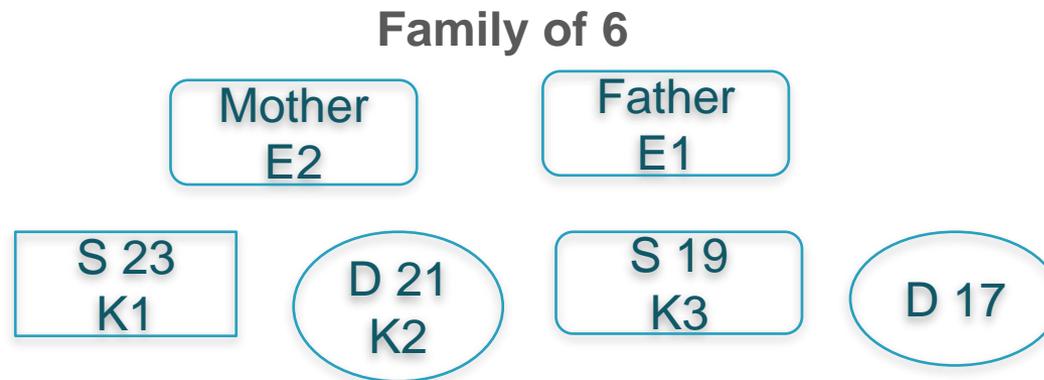
# Research Question

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION



- Can openness to the world be taught *within* the family?

- Single Case study – extreme case (Valsiner, 2017)



Children were sent on school exchanges twice – openness/ learning about the world is important to the parents -

- 1) Aged between **8-10** (to France) – 6 months
- 2) Aged between **13-16** (anglophone country of choice) – 1 year

Note – due to Covid19 – the youngest child only participated in the first exchange.

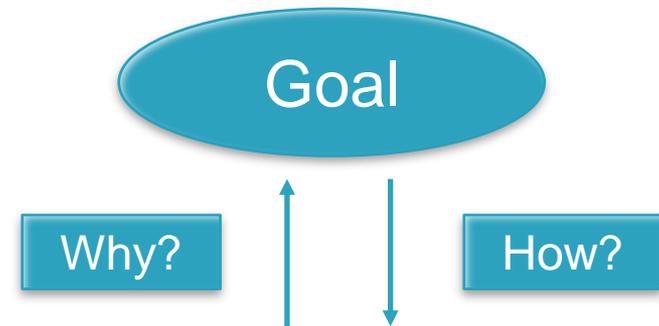
- Exchange program for young children:
  - ALLEF (Apprendre la Langue en Famille)
  - Careful, lengthy selection process to match families
  - Reciprocity: Mutual hosting of children – 6 months

NOTE: Both parents comment on the ease of integrating younger children – they accept host parents and become part of the family quickly.

Guest child then experiences family life:

*“Every family faces small challenges that are also overcome in the presence of the guest child, because guest child is part of the family, and this is seen as normal. It is not important that it is not the biological child”  
(E2)*

- Can openness to the world be taught in the family?
  - **Perspective of parents (Why & How)**
    - Family values
    - Parenting style
    - Co-Parenting



- **Perspective of children**

Transmission?

- Qualitative study
  - Purposeful sampling – extreme case study
  - Semi-structured interviews – separately with both parents and 3 children (N=5)
  - Development of an interview guide – adapted to parent/ child perspective
  - Transcription of the interviews
  - Qualitative content analysis.
  - Interviews were conducted in German by the second author after obtaining informed consent (Nov/ Dec 2022).
  - On average interviews lasted 40 minutes.

- Both parents
  - Emphasize the need to **trust** – both in their own children’s ability – and host families. / and stress the impossibility to control all risks
    - *“Trust in other families is important, you have to give your child to the other family and see and accept it with all its rules as the child's new family.” (E2)*
  - “Necessity of the ability **to let go** – parents & child
    - *“He was immediately in the thick of it. When the French family came to pick him up, without turning around, he was right in the middle of it, living the life in the other family.” (E2)*

- Both parents
  - emphasize the importance of building **autonomy** in their children

*“Children were already self-confident, self-efficient and independent before the exchanges and were reinforced in this through exchanges” (E2)*

*“Because everything was new and unknown, the children had to approach people and situations and learned that it is never wrong to approach others. They are fearless and themselves” (E2)*
  - Emphasize importance of **openness** – not being prejudiced
    - *“Respect for other living beings and absence of prejudice is taught” (E2)*
    - *“Children should experience first-hand what it is like to be a foreigner and not just talk about it in theory.” (E1)*
- **Empathy – Perspective taking**

- Reference to Size – several siblings:
  - *“It is easier for large families to take in someone new. You already have a lot of people in the house and it's easier to take in someone new as a family. Children have always had to share everything and one more person makes no difference. Family size and number of children is essential” (E1)*
  - He also notes that only larger families (min. 3 children) took part in the ALLEF exchange.
  - Both parents also commented that it is easier for large families – to *let go*.

*Note:* Contrast to the **Helicopter Parenting** (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012)

- “developmentally inappropriate, intrusive involvement parents “
- Curtail autonomy

- *“The family always had a lot of people around and there was always a lot going on” (E2)*

Within this large family household:

- *“Community is very important. You live in a community and have to do something for it. Social values should be lived ....Egoism is not tolerated in the family” (E2)*

# Perspective of children – Older son (K!)

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION



- First exchange – big success. Guest brother stayed first with them – then he followed his “brother” to France -> felt like an adventure, an extended sleep-over.
- “Brother” integrated him at school/ friends / activities
  - Over the six months, you really become brothers and sisters. It was like going with your brother to visit his family in France. You already knew the family
  - **Concept family is extended** – family does not only include blood relations
  - Home is – where the friends are.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> exchange in New Zealand – more challenging, as there was no “brother” to connect with – BUT:
  - “At school, you are the new kid and the foreigner. Everyone finds you exciting and talks to you. As a result, you talk a lot with others and quickly develop friendships and become integrated.” (K1)
  - **Social skills – ease of communication**
  - **Perspective** taking echoes his parents’ values:
    - *“In a new country, a new pair of glasses is put on. Through the new glasses, one develops new ways of seeing and looks at things from several perspectives.”* (K1)
    - *“Realise that you are the foreigner somewhere else. Through stays abroad you get this perspective. You are on the other side, not only geographically. You take on other perspectives.”* (K1)
  - **Considers the exchanges as life changing.**

- **Comparison** with older brother – own experience did not match his.
  - Family relationship in France was not as close as her brothers
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> exchange in Canada – good for language learning – but no lasting friendships (guest family – commercial enterprise).
  - School – at lower level than in Germany
  - *“Canada was only useful in terms of language acquisition. The friendships formed there did not last and were not taken along The culture was experienced a little, but could also have been done in a holiday.” (K2)*
  - *“At the time of the exchanges these were important and one was happyIt is positive that you can do everything on your own and independently.” (K2)*
- Reintegration into the German system/ Germany was difficult
- It is still difficult to get involved with people in Germany.

- Openness –
  - *“Every person is perceived as they are. A human being is a human being”*  
(K2)
  
  - *“No problems with people, no matter where they come from, what they look like or what they believe. All are welcome and no one should be excluded.”*  
(K2)
  
  - BUT
  - She now feels most at home in her old hometown with her pets.

- *"I would say that the experiences abroad helped me to be more open because I had this change of perspective. But my mother always told me at the beginning of exchanges that I always had to be very open so that other people would come to me. And I learned that if you open up to other people, they will open up back to you."* K3
  - Change of perspective
  - Reference to mother – „must be open“
  - Reciprocity
- Ich würde sagen, dass mir die Auslandserfahrungen dabei geholfen haben, offener zu sein, weil ich diesen Perspektivwechsel hatte. Aber meine Mutter hat mir auch am Anfang von Austausch immer gesagt, dass ich immer sehr offen sein muss, damit auch die anderen Leute zu mir kommen. Und ich habe gelernt: Wenn man sich anderen Leuten öffnet, dann öffnen die sich einem auch zurück.“

- Confirms lived openness by parents:
  - *There were **never any restrictions** on friends, no matter where they came from, all were welcome.*
  - *Parents have always **taken in other** people, for example an Indian student who lived in the house for 6 months.*
  - *My mother always said that borders are not necessary because they are man-made lines created by wars. One has many similarities with other people from other cultures.*
  - *The parents' upbringing was liberal and there were hardly any limits. You were allowed to try and do everything and that was good because you **never had to lie.***

## Parenting style

- It is no longer just about the parents and their decisions for their children, but rather about joint *negotiation processes*
- Children thus have the opportunity to exert more influence, as they *are given more space to develop themselves*.
- In the process, they are exposed to *autonomy* and *self-determination*, which is important for further development (Walper et al., 2015).
  - Autonomy
  - Self-determination & strengthening of self-efficacy & taking on responsibility
  - Openness – to experiences & people – learning that there are different solutions to problems

Key values stressed by both parents (**Co-parenting**, Cohen & Weissman, 1984)

## Parenting style (see Baumrind, 1991, 2005)

- **Authoritative** parenting style (Responsiveness & Guidance, Baumrind) – increased communication & interaction => facilitates value transmission
  - **Permissive** parenting style – encouragement to try out things for themselves – *doing*
- **Joint rituals** (children are expected to participate)
- Clear communication of **rules** (mostly referring to living *together* - sense of community, helping others – egocentrism is not tolerated)
  - Both parents lead by example – House is open – everyone is welcome. Children are given responsibility from a young age – and parents “let go” Both parents share the same attitudes & act accordingly

# Within the family – reinforcements of Teaching program of exchange programs

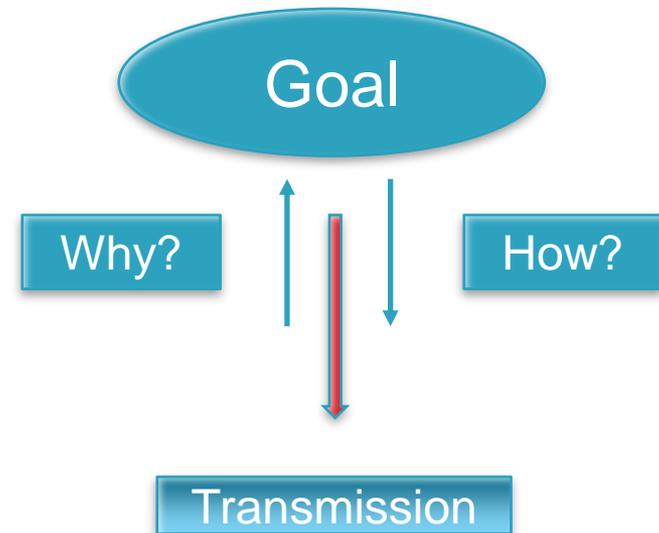
□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION



- Openness – encouragement to participate in exchange programs.
  - Exchange programs – “Competence teaching programs” (Kompetenzschulen) Genkova & Kruse (2021)
    - Active problem solving
    - Development of social competencies
    - Development of cultural competence
    - Self-efficacy & Trust in one’s own abilities
    - Emotional stability
    - Language skills – broaden range of communication.
  - Re-evaluation of relationship with country of origin (Kuhl, 2015)

Note: Success of foreign exchange – depends on length of stay & quality of interaction in the host country

- Can openness to the world be taught in the family?
  - **Perspective of parents (Why & How)**
    - Family **values**
      - Autonomy
      - Openness
      - Communication
  - **Perspective of children**
    - BUT – Exchanges not the same positive experience for all children
    - Context & personality effects
      - Older daughter – struggles with changing social contexts.



- Single Case – one family
- Refusal by 4<sup>th</sup> (youngest) child to participate
- Social desirability?
- Retrospect – different times lapsed since exposure
  
- Operationalization – outcome “weltoffen” – Definition of intercultural competence problematic
  - Intercultural competence – ability to active appropriately in different cultural environment (van Dyne et a. 2009 ...) – meta/ cognition/ emotion/ behaviour – *own* assessment.
  - Attitude ?
  - Behaviour ?
  
  - Intercultural competence – self-efficacy?

# Thank you for your attention

□ FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, HUMANITIES, ARTS AND EDUCATION

## Any questions?

[Elke.Murdock@uni.lu](mailto:Elke.Murdock@uni.lu)



- Assessment of importance of the stays abroad for their biographical development.
- Typology (Thomas, 2012):
  - **Nice to have:** The exchange experience has not left any lasting traces in the biography. Nice holiday and a valuable experience. The exchange was not very formative and left little impact.
  - **Mosaic:** The exchange experience, together with other events, contributes to a certain development. It fits like a "mosaic stone" into the overall biography of an individual.
  - **Domino:** The exchange experience provided the impetus/ impulse for a chain of other events and activities.
  - **Turning point:** The exchange experience led to a turning point in the previous biography. The exchange represents a turning point – leaving entrenched structures behind.