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**International Comparative Research on Youth Mentoring
Relationships in Ireland and the Czech Republic
Research project's proposal, time plan and up to date review
January 2011**

Mentoring has been viewed as an important element in youth's social support structure and has gained popularity in the literature during the past decades. Such popularity is owed to consistent findings that the positive influence of nonparent adult supporters or "mentors" is related to positive outcomes of children and adolescents in high-risk settings. In one landmark study of resilience (Werner & Smith, 1982), children exposed to poverty and family instability were tracked over a 30-year period. Those children who developed into autonomous and competent young adults had at least one extra-familial adult who provided consistent emotional support (Sanchez, Reyes, 1999:299). Nevertheless, the expansion of mentoring schemes in recent years has been based more on faith in what are perceived to be the merits of the approach rather than on robust empirical evidence that mentoring actually brings about the benefits expected of it. (Newburn, Shiner, 2006). It is partly because the principles of mediation of benefits in formal mentoring relationships haven't been discovered and clarified by the research yet.

The International Comparative Tracking Study in Youth Mentoring Relationships in Ireland and the Czech Republic aims to track the development of mentor's approaches in mentoring relationships and study what mentors provides in mentoring relationship, how they develop the relationships with non-familial children or youth, and how the perceived benefits of mentoring relationships are mediated through the mentor's developmental styles during the one year period of the mentoring relationship. The focus of the study will be mentoring relationships created through the BBBS programme in the Czech Republic and Ireland.

The main aim of the proposed study is to explore and compare the underlying processes of mediation of mentoring benefits through mentor's developmental styles. I aim to study the process through which mentoring benefits are/are not mediated to children through mentors and mentoring relationships. I will focus on how the perceived mentoring experiences and benefits are/are not mediated to children by mentors in the BBBS mentoring program in Ireland and the Czech Republic. I will compare the characteristics of mentors and explore how they influence the development of successful and other relationships in the similar programme settings in two different European countries.

The study aims to contribute to the development of a theoretical framework on the mediation of the benefits of mentoring, which is a current gap in the theory of youth mentoring. As a result, the study will inform good practice in youth mentoring interventions internationally, and contribute to the further development of the theory in relation to youth mentoring. It will also provide recommendations for policy makers and programme funders. The conclusions of the study will have relevance across the different socio-cultural context.

Principal Research Question:

What do mentors provide in mentoring relationships in the BBBS programme in the Czech Republic and Ireland that develops the quality of mentoring relationships and mediates the benefits of youth mentoring to the children and young people?

Methodology – Research Design:

The international comparative research study in mentoring relationships will firstly use the data collected in 10 case studies undertaken as part of the process evaluation study of the BBBS Ireland programme, that took place in 2008-2009. Secondary qualitative analysis of this data will be undertaken. Secondly, qualitative case-studies that will be undertaken in the Czech Republic:

Similar measurement methods to those used in the Irish case studies will be used to collect the data in the BBBS program in the Czech Republic. Data to answer the research questions will be collected in 12 case-studies, using the structured assisted interviews with questionnaires, semi-structured in-depth interviews and case file analysis as the methods of data collection.

Structured interviews will use the survey questionnaires that were previously used in the Irish process evaluation study. The questionnaires will be filled in by the researcher during the assisted structured interviews with the research respondents. The method of structured interviews was chosen as it was identified as a method of data collection that is more convenient for the research participants and available to be used due to the small research sample. The data gained from the structured interviews will answer especially the research questions on relation of mentoring benefits with mentors approach styles.

Semi-structured interviews will be held according to the similar interview guides as previously used in the Irish process evaluation study, for the reason of comparability of the data.

All the methods of data collection will be consented to by the research participants and are consistent with the BBBS confidentiality policy.

The respondents from the groups of parents, children and voluntary mentors will be recruited in cooperation with BBBS CZ case workers. Caseworkers will provide referrals with an information pack in order to inform them of the research study. The information pack includes informant consents and the contact details of the researcher whom the referees could contact if they choose to participate in the research study.

Data analysis:

The data analysis will use the qualitative NVivo programme, that will analyse the Czech and Irish case studies separately under the proposed research questions. Secondly, the comparative method of Charles C. Ragin will be used for the comparison of the data between the Czech and Irish case-studies. Finally, the conclusions will be drawn in the context of a comparison of formal mentoring relationships within the different socio-cultural contexts. (To be further discussed in January).

Time frame of the research study

January – April 2011

First time data collection (11th January – 15th February 2011)

Context Chapter

Interviews' transcription and translation

Case file analysis

May – October 2011

Second time data collection – Interviews

Lit. Review and Theory Chapter

Case file analysis

ISSP Summer School

ISSP Review Meeting

Data transcription and translation

First report on the data findings

November - December 2011

Third time data collection – Interviews

Case files analysis
Methodology Chapter
Data transcription and translation

January – June 2012

Data analysis
Report on findings

July –December 2012

Thesis writeup

February 2013 – Thesis Viva

Review of the work done up to date:

- 1st April 2009: Started the PhD. Research project in CFRC, NUI Galway
- June 2009: ISSP Summer School
- 1st August 2009: ISSP Summer School Article
- 1st September 2009: Submitted the research proposal that was agreed by the supervisor
- 1st March 2010: Literature review on youth mentoring interventions and relationships
- 1st April 2010: Finding the principal research questions
- June 2010: Clarifying the methodology
- June 2010: ISSP Summer School
- August 2011: ISSP Summer School Article
- October 2010: Published a monograph on youth mentoring in the Czech language
- September 2010: Started data collection – Established the cooperation with BBBS agencies and gained the informed consents from the research participants
- December 2010: Secured the approval of the REC committee
- January 2011: Starting the first round of the data collection in BBBS CZ

Review on the past teaching concerning to the research project and the teaching plan

- October 2009: Presentation on Evaluation Methods in Mentoring interventions. National Meeting of BBBS/5P programme, České Budějovice.
- February 2010: Social Support and Social Capital – Lecture for Master students on Community Development, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway.
- February 2010: Mentoring Interventions and social policies: Lecture for undergraduate students, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway.
- January 2011: Mentoring and Social Policy: Lecture for Master Students in Community Development. CFRC, School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway.

March 2011: Mentoring Interventions in the Czech Republic. Workshop for students at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. Hosting lecture (TBC).

Profile of the Principal Researcher – see the CV attached