Youth Services of Post-War Bosnia:
A Needs Assessment

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Abstract

This study examines the current state of supportive services for youth in post-war Sarajevo. It has been nearly a decade since a violent siege tore through city of Sarajevo. During wartime, children suffer greatly and are forced to bear the consequences of war for the rest of their lives. This research study was based on face-to-face interviews with workers who deliver supportive services for children, providing insight into the needs of youth in Sarajevo and the services they need.

Introduction

Problem Statement

Although the violent siege of Sarajevo is over, the pain and suffering still continue today, particularly for those children who have experienced war. During the three year siege, the infrastructure of Sarajevo was devastated. Now, nine years after the war, there is still a great need for supportive services, particularly for children. Current information on the state of social services for youth of Sarajevo is highly limited. This study is a beginning examination of the needs of both the children of Sarajevo and the social services supporting these children. It is hoped that the findings will be used to substantiate the future development of youth services in Sarajevo.

Description of Problem Background

In April of 1992, the longest, most violent siege known to modern history tore apart the country of Bosnia. Although the violence of this war officially ended with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord three years later, the pain and suffering felt by the people of Bosnia continues today. During the war, three percent of the country’s population was killed. Of the estimated 140,000 deaths, 16,000 were children (UNICEF,
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In the Bosnian war, many children were subject to bombing, gunfire, mine-related injury and even death on a daily basis during the 1300 day war. Intense exposure to fear, violence, and death have life-long psycho-social repercussions. In post-war time studies, more than one third of 422 primary school students surveyed in Mostar, a city in southern Bosnia-Herzegovina, reported experiencing significant posttraumatic stress disorder (UNICEF, 1998, p32). Other post-war trauma included “anxiety and fearfulness, sleeping disorders, irritability, nightmares, physical problems, depression, flashbacks, intrusive memories, lack of concentration, and suicidal thoughts,” (UNICEF, 1998, p.30). During the war, children’s “schooling, nutrition, social networks, play facilities, and health services were disrupted, and they [the children themselves] were plunged into an atmosphere of terror, threat, and uncertainty” (Angel, Hjern & Ingleby, 2001, p5). As a result of the wartime crisis there has been a dramatic increase of “substance abuse, suicides, domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, and divorce” (UNICEF, 1998).

The United Nations Commission for Human Rights has noted that the war of Bosnia-Herzegovina was “on a scale unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War,” and constituted a “very serious test of and challenge to the international system of human rights protection” (United Nations Chronicle, 1994). During the war the rights of children had been completely disregarded, and often children were the target of ethnic cleansing (United Nations Chronicle, 1994). Women and children faced some of the greatest stresses of war through physical and psychological danger, separation from family, torture, rape, and loss of economic stability and employment (UNICEF, 1998).

In an interview conducted by Scholastic Update with four teenage refugees from Bosnia, one teenager noted that as a result of the war, “everything completely changed…one minute we had everything, then we had nothing” (Brice, 1994, p26). Seventeen-year-old Amela Kamenica, a refugee from Sarajevo, said, “Before the war I really enjoyed life…. but after I found out about my father’s death everything seemed so useless…I couldn’t see any future for myself…I didn’t know where I was going…I wasn’t the same person” (Brice, 1994, p26). Clearly, war-time exposure takes away childhood. “There is a palpable feeling expressed by adolescents in particular that the future has been destroyed by events not of their own making, and along with this outlook an associated apathy and sense of lack of control over future events” (UNICEF, 1998, p.6)

One third of all schools in Bosnia were destroyed while many of the teachers were either killed or relocated (UNICEF, 1998). Following the war, there have been numerous efforts to rebuild and re-establish services for youth; however these efforts have been “seriously hampered by political, economic, and social chaos resulting from the war” (UNICEF,
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The struggling economy and severe lack of resources are significant barriers in the reconstruction of supportive services.

The United Nations has defined a main priority in the reconstruction of supportive services for children as, the improvement of “government involvement and the management of all services, to improve networking between the various parts of the country,” (UNICEF, 1998, p34). It has been noted that child advocacy is a key component in improving the supportive environment for children who have survived the war (UNICEF, 1998). “Ultimately, the will of the government should be to maintain permanent programmes for the protection and development of children, resulting in the preparation of a National Plan of Action for Children and the creation of a permanent committee for monitoring” (UNICEF, 1998, p37).

Statement of Research Purpose and Rationale

This study was designed to acquire information about and insight into the current state of youth services in Sarajevo directly from the professionals involved. It gave the professionals in the field a chance to speak about current conditions in youth service, with the possibility of educating outsiders and creating positive change. Since there was little research in the area of post-war youth services of Sarajevo, it has contributed to the body of professional knowledge on this subject.

Methodology

Sample

In the spring of 2004, the researcher traveled to Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews with providers of youth services in post-war Sarajevo. The sample included eleven professional persons working in youth services, representing perspectives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governmental organizations, and an international governmental organization (IGO) and was fairly representative of the population, composed as it was of both men and women from the three main ethnic groups (Bosnian-Muslim, Bosnian Croatian, and Bosnian Serbian) of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The subjects included in the data sample were selected by the researcher and were part of a non-probability sample (Marlow, 2001, p. 134). This type of sampling, known as availability sampling, included key informants who were available at the time of the study. Research findings that are both non-probability and based on availability sampling are not
generalizable to the entire population of persons serving youth in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Marlow, 2001, p. 143).

Relevant features of the subjects identified through the interviews included gender, age, and ethnicity. Other subject characteristics included number of years in youth services, employment position, education/training, whether they worked for an NGO or a government organization, and whether their agency was country-based or international. Of the eleven subjects in this study, all participants worked in direct or indirect youth services in Sarajevo. All were professionals who represented the diverse array of services in their field and spoke from their own personal experiences.

There were eight women and three men. Seven were under the age of 30, while four were 30 years of age and older. All of the three main ethnicities of Bosnia-Herzegovina were represented, and many of the participants chose to identify themselves as Bosnian. Ethnic identities in this study were as follows: six identified themselves as Bosnian (BiH), two subjects identified themselves as Bosnian/Muslim, one subject identified him or herself as Catholic, one subject as Serbian and one as a national from another country.

In terms of education, all participants had either graduated from a university or were currently working to obtain a degree at a university. Two subjects were enrolled as students at the University of Sarajevo, six subjects had graduated or were soon to graduate with degrees in social work, one subject had completed management school, two subjects had graduated or were soon to graduate with a degrees in pedagogy, one subject had graduated with a degree in English, and one participant had a degree in law.

All subjects had received, on-going training and in-services throughout their professional and/or voluntary careers. Examples of such training included management training, at-risk youth training, training in humanitarian principles, crisis management training, emergency preparedness and response training, NGO and sustainability training, prevention of addiction training, and training in the protection of clients.

Of the eleven subjects, eight worked under a Non-Government Organization (NGO), two worked under a Governmental Organization (GO), and one worked under the jurisdiction of an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO). Eight of the agencies were in-country (Bosnia-Herzegovina based), while three of the organizations were international. In terms of years of service, seven subjects had worked and/or volunteered for five years or less, while four subjects had worked in youth services for over five years. The range of years of overall youth service experience extended from one year to thirty years, with an average of 7.2 years for the eleven participants. (Here the fewer persons with the longer years of service had
an effect on the overall average.) Five subjects worked in direct practice, three subjects worked in indirect practice, and three subjects worked in both direct and indirect practice.

*Research Design and Overview*

This descriptive study was in the form of a one-group posttest-only design (XO). There were numerous threats to internal and external validity relating to this design. Internal validity is “the extent to which the changes in a dependent variable are due to the introduction of an independent variable and not some other factor” (Marlow, p. 87). External validity “refers to the extent to which the research results are generalizable to the wider population” (Marlow, p.89). Threats to internal validity included subject selection and history, while threats to external validity were selection-treatment interaction and history-treatment interaction (Marlow, 2001). These threats existed because there was no comparison groups used and the subjects were not selected randomly.

The data-collection method of face-to-face semi-structured interviews of key-informants was chosen because it provided information from the source. This type of study provided central structure to the interview while giving subjects the opportunity to have their individual voices heard. The strengths of conducting face-to-face, semi-structured interviews include higher response rates, reduction of the occurrence of unanswered questions due to the presence of the interviewer, increased flexibility in the interview, and opportunities for the interviewer to not only explain and clarify the questions but also to observe the subject’s response. Drawbacks to conducting face-to-face, semi-structured interviews include the potential impact the interviewer may have on subject responses, safety concerns for the interviewer, and the fact that this type of research is very time consuming and expensive (Rubin & Babbie, 1993).

*Subject Selection*

The researcher worked directly with a mentor from Sarajevo, who was a professional social worker in the field of youth services. This assistance was an essential part of the research process as it provided her with guidance, advice, and support. The mentor set up contacts with potential subjects, assisted the researcher in locating appointments in an unfamiliar city, and provided translation during interviews. The researcher found this person to assist her, with the assistance and advice of one her social work professors, and worked with the mentor for several months by electronic media to prepare for the trip to Bosnia.
The researcher brought information packets with a letter to the youth service agency and a letter of informed consent to Sarajevo with her. She and the mentor distributed them to the various agencies offering services for youth. The letter to the agency provided a description of the study, a list of risks and benefits in participation and a request for a referral to employees of their agency who might fit a profile for potential subjects. The social service agencies were also contacted directly by telephone or by email in an effort to discuss the research further and set up possible interviews with subjects. A copy of this information packet is included in the appendices of this paper (refer to Appendix A and Appendix B).

The basic criteria for possible subjects in this study were that the subject had to currently work in Sarajevo in direct or indirect youth services.

Data Collection

Interviews were scheduled prior to meetings, and meetings took place at a location chosen by the subject. The semi-structured interviews varied in length from 30 minutes to three hours. Because of the language barrier, a translator assisted in six of the eleven interviews. An audiocassette recorder was used with the permission of the subject to record all interviews. All eleven subjects gave their permission to being recorded.

The interview was split into three sections (refer to Appendix C). The first section documented basic demographic information and included questions related to the subjects’ gender, age, and ethnicity. In addition the survey established educational level, professional training the subject had received, the type of agency in which the subject worked, whether the agency was international or country based, how many years he/she had worked in youth services, and whether such work was in direct or indirect practice.

The second section of the interview examined the subjects’ perspectives on the needs of Sarajevan youth and the priorities needed to address these needs. Needs were defined through the lens of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and examined children’s physiological needs, safety needs, “belongingness” needs, self-esteem needs, and finally their needs in terms of self-actualization.

The final section of the interview examined the subjects’ perception of the strengths of youth services in Sarajevo, the gaps in youth services, what could be done to fill these gaps and what the subject’s vision was for the future of youth services of Sarajevo.
Data Analysis Techniques

All interviews were transcribed verbatim into field notes on a word processor by the researcher. Following transcription, information was compiled and sorted on three separate levels. The first sort compared the ways in which the eleven subjects responded to each question of the interview. Common themes and trends were noted and outliers were also examined. For each question the researcher extracted the common themes in addition to any outliers. The second sort compared the ways in which employees of the different types of agencies (NGO, IGO, and Government Organization) responded to the questions. The final sort split the sample into age groups, (participants over 30 years of age and participants less than 30 years of age), and compared their answers.

The purpose of the data sorts was to examine if there were any similarities or differences in the manner in which subjects answered the interview questions. The sorts also extracted common themes presented by the research participants. The second and third sorts were designed to examine how working for a certain agency or being of a certain generation might perhaps influence a subject’s direction. There was no discernable difference when the age-related and agency-related sorts were concluded, so these sub-group comparisons were not included in the following analysis.

Measurement Validity and Reliability Issues

Research measurement reliability “indicates the extent to which a measure reveals actual differences in the phenomena measured, rather than differences inherent in the measuring instrument itself” (Marlow, p. 181). Possible sources of error in a research project like this included unclear definition of variables, use of retrospective information, and variations in conditions for the collection of the data. Although the use of a semi-structured interview created overall consistency in the interviews, the questions were open to individual interpretation by the subjects. As a result, unclear definitions of variables were created. This could also be said about the use of language interpreters in which data could have been “lost in translation.” The use of retrospective information which depends on individual subject recall may distort data collected. Finally the variations of the conditions of data collection (age, ethnicity, and gender; in addition to location) also created possible sources of error in the research.

On the other hand, the variables being tested were clearly defined and consistent within the configuration of a semi-structured interview. There were no reliability tests used because this descriptive study was in the form of a one-group posttest-only design.
Marlow has defined measurement validity as “the extent to which you are measuring what you think you are measuring” (2001, p. 185). All constructs being measured were relevant to the concept under study, establishing content validity for the survey. All variables were defined clearly and concretely.

The benefits of conducting semi-structured interviews include a high response rate, in addition to the ability to gain in-depth information in regard to the subject matter (Marlow, 2001). The researcher was also able to clarify any ambiguous questions that arose during the interviews. The major weakness of conducting the semi-structured interviews was that neutrality was naturally lost in an interview situation. While the interviewer remained objective and professional, she was affected by what she was being told. Undoubtedly, her subjects would have been able to see this in her.

Ethical considerations of this study included confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, and the accurate reporting of research findings. The greatest potential risk to subjects involved was the exposure of a subject through the publication of this study. If a subject were to be linked as a source of sensitive information in the publication, he/she could conceivably face potential social and financial consequences. There was the potential risk that identified participation could have affected their employment or positions in the helping community. While this seems to be a considerable risk, it was highly unlikely to occur, because this study used strong precautionary measures to prevent this from happening. Subject confidentiality was ensured in the research by using no identifying information in the study. All identifying information (e.g. signatures on the letters of informed consent) was kept separate and secure during and after the study. A letter of informed consent was used to establish the risks and benefits to subject participation in addition to verifying that participation in this study was voluntary.

First of all, the names and other potentially identifying information of subjects were not used in the text of this study. There was no use of identifying factors that could link an opinion to a subject. Since the interview questions asked how a subject felt in regards to the “service array,” there was no way of linking “who said what.” Any additional identifiable information was kept under lock and key. This information was to be destroyed after five years.

Human diversity issues of this study included having an equal representation of all three of the main ethnicities of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Care was taken to interview key informants from the Bosnian-Muslim, Bosnian-Serbian, and Bosnian-Croatian ethnicities.
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Results

The purpose of this study was to gain information on the state of youth services in post-war Sarajevo in addition to giving professionals from the field a chance to voice their perspective on the current situation. The objective of this research was to educate outsiders of the current conditions of youth services in addition to creating a practical needs assessment that the agencies of Sarajevo may choose to use in return to develop programs and/or funding.

Needs of Youth in Sarajevo

Abraham Maslow, well known psychologist, defined a set of basic universal human needs in a hierarchy: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. Maslow’s theory states that unless these needs are met, one cannot move forward from one step to the next. This was the lens through which needs were examined in this study. The hierarchy was used as a means to gauge where youth are in terms of development. Each subject was asked to define “where youth are” in terms of each of the five steps of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Although every response was individual, the researcher was able to see general patterns of how the subjects responded. The five hierarchical steps are listed below with the general themes which emerged in each need area, supporting quotes, and any outliers (Goble, 1970).

Step 1: Physiological Needs:

Physiological needs are the basic sustaining needs of life; they include food, air, and water (Goble, 1970). During the siege in Sarajevo these most basic needs were not met for the majority of the population. Responses to the question of physiological need for youth in Sarajevo varied amongst the participants, but by in large, it was established that there still is a need today. One subject somberly noted that “these needs are not satisfied because of the situation we have here in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (pause) Those are the consequences of war, many people are fighting for survival and many people do not even have money for bread.”

In another interview it was noted that there is currently an unemployment rate of 50%, which contributes greatly to this need. A subject mentioned that “many [outside] people get the wrong idea because the unemployment rate [in Sarajevo] is so high, there are numerous highly educated people with Ph.D., master, and bachelor degrees who cannot get jobs.” Numerous subjects mentioned subgroups in the society who are especially susceptible to this need. These subgroups include refugees, single parent families (often a parent had been killed during the war),

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children with special needs (mental and physical health), and minorities, which include the Roma population (known incorrectly as “gypsies” in popular culture).

One subject said that she believed that 40% of youth in Sarajevo have their physiological needs met (are not physically neglected), while 60% are neglected. She went on to say:

This may come as a surprise to you because the youth in Sarajevo that are seen on the streets are those that have cell phones and brand name clothes and look good and look happy. But that is the problem. That is the 40% you see on the streets. However the 60%, that is the youth that are neglected, you cannot see on the streets, and those are the ‘have-not,’; they do not have the cell phones and the brand name clothes to show off on the streets and therefore you will not see them around and therefore you will not see the unhappy part of Sarajevo…I explicitly point out that this is my perspective and is a subjective view of the needs of youth in Sarajevo.

Step 2: Safety Needs

Safety needs refers to shelter, security/protection from abuse, violence, and suicide, and unmet mental health, and chemical dependency treatment needs (Goble, 1970). Six subjects identified all of these needs as being largely unsatisfied for youth in Sarajevo. Subjects stated that violence is on the rise and that mental and emotional health for children is unstable. One subject said that:

There is a lot of violence on the street because there is not law here as you have….here parents can beat children in the street and no one will punish them….no one. (pause)…Abusing, we have lots.

Another subject noted that most children are dealing with some kind of trauma, whether it is physical, emotional, or psychological. Many children are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Three of the subjects noted that there are many concerns about safety needs because issues such as abuse or chemical dependency are not discussed openly. One subject noted, “There is a lot of taboo in Sarajevo. People are taught not to say anything about their problems so it hard to do any type of prevention when people do not talk about their problems.”

One person noted that all of the concerns (shelter, security protection from abuse, violence, suicide, mental health, and chemical dependency treatment) are being addressed, but insufficiently. Another explained that:
You cannot compare our system [of safety needs] to other world countries because our system is an infant compared to other world countries who have been setting up their system for decades or centuries. We are just starting and this is our first decade for setting up since the war. It cannot be expected of Sarajevo to come up with an efficient system to fulfill safety needs because they are just over the war. However we are on the right track for setting up a safety needs system.

**Step 3: Belongingness/Love Needs:**

Belongingness/love needs refers to the supportive network of family, peers, and mentors that is essential to a child’s development (Goble, 1970). Strong family networks are an important value of the Bosnian culture (personal communication, Tamara Miskovic, spring 2004). Subjects also mentioned how strong and supportive family and community ties were during before the war and especially during the war. One subject summed this traditional value well: “The only true love you can feel and [that can] fulfill the need of love and belongingness is within the circle of the family.”

However, many subjects noted concerns that the war and continuing Western influence are changing that traditional family value. One subject said: The consequences of war including economical hardships has impaired our ability to care for one and other and to support each other and to be there for one and other when we need another person the most. Another subject said,” The relations in families that sometimes were very traditional have been destroyed [by the war].”

The subjects’ responses revealed the strength of this need in Sarajevo. One subject felt that the needs were largely being met and that people are very connected to their families and peer groups, which really help one another. A second subject said there is, “support but not enough possibilities.”

**Step 4: Esteem Needs:**

Esteem needs refers to the need for self-respect, prestige, and recognized success in children (Goble, 1970). All interviewees voiced a pessimistic view about the esteem needs of youth in Sarajevo. It was said that the self-esteem of children has been “destroyed from the time they are born…when faced with the facts of life.” Many subjects gave examples of how the children’s self-esteem had been damaged; for instance, children observing their families unable to attain employment due to the situation or watching their peers leave for other countries. One person noted, “These
[esteem needs] are secondary needs, until we can solve the above [needs] how can we address this?” Another made a similar point when she said:

When the parent does not have self-esteem, how can they build the self-esteem in his or her child? This is something that foreign countries cannot understand and conceive because they have a high standard of living. Sarajevo does not have the infrastructure to support the parents’ to provide for their children.

One subject spoke about the importance of building programs to support children’s self-esteem:

It is very important to work with children in building self-esteem and self-respect, because if we don’t do that now, we will have a situation in the future. It is always coming back to you…it is always coming back. It is very important to support a lot of different agencies in building self-respect and self-esteem no matter what topic they are working with children, whether it be drugs or sexual health, it is all connected.

Stage 5: Self-Actualization:

The concept of self-actualization, promotion of full human potential, seemed to be a very bleak topic for all of the subjects in the research (Goble, 1970). Many subjects’ reactions conveyed the message to the researcher that the very idea of self-actualization is unheard of in the lives of youth in Sarajevo. This is seen in the following response: The question of self-actualization is a very difficult one to answer. The tragic reality is that youth of Sarajevo have dreams of growing up, graduating school, and relocating to a different country to live a normal life somewhere else because there is a belief that the normal life does not exist in their homeland.

Another subject noted that since the war:

We do not think about the future. Most of us live day to day. And they (youth) do not look so far in front of themselves. And as you saw, it is not important for us what will be tomorrow. We only want to live for today.

While a third person said, “They [youth of Sarajevo] cannot see the future…they are afraid of the future.”
Despite the pessimism, however there is hope, there will be self-actualization only in the changes…if they (youth of Sarajevo) stop thinking about politics and turn to improving of self and society…only that can improve and move towards self-actualization.

State of Youth Services in Sarajevo

During the interview, the subjects were asked to describe their personal observations of the strengths of services for youth in Sarajevo, the gaps in the services, their opinion of how these gaps could be filled, and what their vision is for the future of youth services in Sarajevo.

Strengths of Youth Services

Each subject was asked to note the strengths of the array of youth services in Sarajevo. The three major themes that emerged were: cooperation between the entities, the presence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and uniting of the children together.

The country of Bosnia-Herzegovina was split into two entities following the war. Each entity, the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, are ruled under their independent government, which is further split up into municipalities or local governments. Each municipality contains its own budget for social services. While some municipalities receive more funding due to geographical location, other municipalities experience shortages in resources. During an interview, surprisingly, it was mentioned that there is sharing of resources between the entities and municipalities. When one agency does not have the resources to meet the need of a client, the client will be referred to another municipality or even across the political division of the entities. This subject stated:

A great success is crossing the boarders…youth from Srpska Sarajevo can go to the Federation and from the Federation can go to Srpska Sarajevo. They [youth] have opportunity to use different contents. If one does not have service, they will refer onto the other. They [youth services] want to give as much information to their client because their client is the most important factor.

Non-Governmental Organizations were mentioned eight times as a major contributor to the stability of youth services in Sarajevo. One subject said, “It is very important that there are a lot of NGOs, because they fill some of the gaps that the government cannot. Specific NGOs that were
mentioned were SOS (German based NGO), HIV prevention, and drug/chemical dependency prevention. A different subject said “I think NGOs offer the greatest support to young people...they are able to work creatively with young people.”

Another common theme was the perspective that youth services in Sarajevo bring youth together and empower them towards a better future. It was mentioned repeatedly that the children are able to network with the agencies and their peers so they can create a better supportive network for themselves in addition to creating positive change. One subject said:

The most important thing about these services is that they provide the opportunity for these children to spend time contemplating about a better future and better things as opposed to these kids being on the streets and seeing how life is bad for them and not having the opportunity to learn things and just thinking about the negative stuff. Their time at these services is well spent thinking about positive things.

Gaps in the Service Array

The subjects named numerous gaps in the youth service array during the interviews. Three major themes in these gaps were structure, cooperation, and development.

Structure

There were countless gaps in the structure of youth services mentioned throughout the interviews. Gaps which were mentioned on numerous instances included a lack of centralized information, limited budget, redundancy/overlap of youth services, gaps in the education of professionals, a lack of new research-based knowledge, insufficient services for youth, a lack of access to youth service for youth living outside of the city center, laws that hamper youth services, problems in organizational self-sufficiency, lack of protection for professionals, no formal licensure for social workers, and a system of youth services that is overloaded. One person questioned the quality of care when one has ten workers for thousands of clients.

It was made clear that the post-war situation is highly disorganized. The social service system, which offered quality protection and services prior to the war, has been left in disarray following the war. One subjected noted, Anyone can start an organization: all you need is three signatures, so we are seeing a rise in organizations, but that raises the question of how
professional these organizations are. There is little financial support with
two to three organizations doing the same thing.
After the war Sarajevo saw an influx of international humanitarian
organizations and NGO’s taking over youth services. One subject noted
there was a problem with international donors approaching Bosnian youth
with their own cultural standards. Children from, let’s say America or
Germany or France, are occupied with internet connection or mobile
phones, where children here are occupied with how to have a roof over
their head, and you cannot offer them activities like children from the
outside countries. It is different.
Two subjects mentioned a need for specific services like more
counseling for youth who are experiencing mental health problems and a
need for a therapeutic community (drug treatment center) in Sarajevo.
There are three therapeutic communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but none
in Sarajevo and the country is seeing a dramatic rise in drug addiction in the
post-war era (personal communication, Tamara Miskovic, Spring 2004).
Gaps in the structure of youth services were summarized as
follows:
[Sarajevo’s social services was] a system that was very advanced
before the war in terms of multidisciplinary work and probably
with a view of social control within the socialist system somewhat
interventional. Then the system after the war has struggled, on
one hand with funding, on the other hand with human resources,
because the system was basically sidelined and replaced by NGO
service provisions and humanitarian aid organizations or
international humanitarian aid funded projects.

Cooperation

Another common theme relating to the gaps in youth services was
cooperation. This included a lack of cooperation between the NGO sector
and the government and a lack of cooperation between the international
donors and the NGOs. Subjects noted a huge need for coalition building,
networking, and partnership, which could solve many of the structural gaps.
One person noted:

With the police, social services, NGOs, the courts; there is
very little cooperation. Police, for instance, will not
perceive it as their role to intervene in anything that they
would not consider a criminal case. So when you see a
six year old alone and banging around in the street [there
would be no intervention by the police]. The whole notion
of the police intervening [in] anything that they would not
consider criminal, it doesn’t work. This has to do with a very traditional form of policing. There have been some attempts to introduce community policing as a means of prevention, but they have not come very far.

**Development**

Gaps in development that were mentioned during the interviews could be split into three sub-categories: advertising/marketing, professional development, and sustainability.

Numerous subjects mentioned that there was a lack in marketing and advertising. One subject said, “The kids do not know that services exist in Sarajevo that they could benefit from.” A lack of marketing is hampering the services from reaching their clientele and from developing strong programs.

Professional development is also a major gap in the system. Some subjects noted a lack of new information as well as agencies that were not working to evaluate and perfect their services. One subject noted, “There are professionals who do not know the needs of children….there has been little-to-no assessment of needs, so a lot of projects are useless.”

Some subjects believed the gap in professional development stems from a major gap in the university education system. Four subjects said that while in faculty (university), they received no practical information; they were taught purely theory. This means that individuals are entering the field with little to no field experience. There is also a law in Sarajevo that states that any voluntary work a student contributes will not be accepted as professional experience. Only professionals in the field receive recognition for voluntary work. This law inhibits students from gaining vital field experience, not to mention further limiting the agencies that are experiencing budget crises which voluntary work could alleviate in part. In response to this law a subject pointed out, “Of course students will not volunteer if their work will not be accepted.”

In terms of sustainability of NGO’s there were many concerns. It has been nearly a decade since the war, and the international donors are starting to pull out, leaving NGO’s with no funding or means of funding themselves. This could create a major collapse in the already loosely constituted service system. The government does not have the money to support all of the needed services. One subject summarized the situation, saying:

In the post-war period there is no development of funding for the NGO sector. There is no established procedure; no budget lines, no planning mechanisms, no monitoring, or
evaluating mechanisms at the local level were tax money would be allocated to NGO services, which in turn would report back and so forth. There is very little planning all together on the local level, which means that these services are fairly weak. Both the services for the NGO sector developed at the local level and the centers for social work are fairly stretched in terms of capacity and frustration levels, which again have sort of weakened the entire system.

Ways to Fill in These Gaps

Many valuable ideas were offered by the subjects about how these gaps could be filled. Networking, coalition building, and condensing of organizations were mentioned the most. One subject said, “If we want to have coalitions and work together, all of us have to invest something, and then we need to accept that something will happen, and then we will have money or some more enthusiasm to go and do some more things.”

There was also a call for better education of professionals, employment of a greater number of qualified staff, and improvement of society’s recognition of the value of social work.

As far as the youth are concerned, one subject underlined the importance of working on the self-esteem of youth, and another subject suggested more workshops for children which would include topics on how to be strong, have self-respect, and work on their life skills.

Vision for the Future

Overall the vision for the future of youth services was optimistic, as illustrated by the following verbatim quotes:

- When I have looked back two years, it is super…it is wonderful, we are moving ahead. People who are asked in this country care more about these questions. They have more organizations now, and stronger, more sustainable ones. Of course it could be stronger; the government is involved, but not enough.
- We have to work very hard to give young people a chance. Do not let others speak [for the youth]; young people are very capable. We need healthy young people, let them think for themselves. I am an optimist, I believe it will happen.
- Start fresh so we can learn from our past experiences. We need more funds, more self-sustainability.

Another noted a caution, however:
• My vision for the future of youth services in Sarajevo [is that] most of them will be closed because we have less and less donors and we do not have many ideas for self-financing.

Application of Findings

The research provided an in-depth look into the current state of youth services of post-war Sarajevo. Although the use of a one-group posttest-only design limited research validity, the research offered a chance for eleven voices to be heard. Since there is a severe lack of public information available on the current state of youth services in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this information will contribute to the professional knowledge base in addition to calling attention to the needs of youth services. It is important that the international community is aware of the current state and needs of the youth service array in Sarajevo so that the international community can support Sarajevo’s effort to a sustainable future.

This needs assessment may be used by agencies in Sarajevo as a tool in program development and a means to develop program funding.

Relationship to Literature Review

The findings of the research support the finding of the literature review. Although the situation has greatly improved since the war, there are many areas of concern for youth services of Sarajevo. Although youth services of Sarajevo are under much stress, the professionals interviewed were highly dedicated and demonstrated hope and optimism for the future.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are numerous methods in which this research project could be expanded on in the future. This would include:

• Interviewing a larger sample size of youth service professionals in Sarajevo which would increase project validity.
• Conducting a needs assessment of youth services in rural communities and villages of Bosnia-Herzegovina. (The researcher found that the further away from the urban city centers she traveled, the fewer resources were available.)
• Conducting a needs assessment of services in other war affected countries in order to compile a cross-cultural comparative.
Youth Services of Post-War Bosnia: A Needs Assessment

Appendices:

**Appendix A**

**Youth Services of Sarajevo**

**Informed Consent**

You are invited to participate in a research study on “Youth Services in Sarajevo”. You were selected as a possible participant, because you were recommended by your agency director. You also fit the survey participant profile: you currently work providing either direct or indirect services to youth and you also have both war-time and peace-time work experience with youth.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study. Also, understand that when researchers involve people in their research, we are required to tell you what your rights are as “a subject in a research study,” as well as what will be done with the information collected, whether your name will appear anywhere, any potential risks involved from such participation, and who you can contact with your questions and complaints. We must also document that we have provided you with this information before you decide whether or not you choose to participate.

This study is being conducted by Bethany Wilfert, student of the University of Wisconsin’s Social Work Program and a McNair Scholar. I am being directly supervised in this research by Ms. Elizabeth T. Blue, Professor of Social Work at the University of Wisconsin – Superior. Contact information is provided below. The University of Wisconsin – Superior Social Work Program, Department of Human Behavior and Diversity, is sponsoring this study, and I am being mentored both by Ms. Blue and by Ms. Judy Anne Dwyer, Associate Professor of Social Work, who has an extensive international background.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to answer a series of interview questions about youth services in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Participation will run from 30 minutes to an hour, depending on how the conversation evolves.

Your confidentiality is insured in this study which will use no identifying information in the publication. All identifying information such as signatures on this informed consent form will be kept locked and secured. After the study any identifying information will be destroyed.
No identifying information will be used in any way in the publication of this study.

You, as a participant, may benefit from the knowledge that your input will be constructed into a study which in return could be used to benefit your organization or other organizations serving youth in Sarajevo. You and/or your agency may request a copy of the completed study for your use. This study will also be submitted for publication in the McNair’s Scholars Journal and other scholarly venues. Thus, it may also be used to educate people and raise awareness of current conditions of youth services in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There is little potential risk that the information and insight you provide could be linked to you as a professional. If this did occur it could reflect on your status as an employee of your organization. I will safeguard against this potential risk by not using your name or any identifying material in this study and by keeping any contact information I have separate from any interview materials, both securely locked.

It is your right to decline participation in this study. There are no consequences if you decide not to volunteer to be a part of this study. It is also your right to withdrawal from this study at any time, even after beginning the study; if you do so, there will be no adverse consequences for this action.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or how you were treated, please contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bethany Wilfert</th>
<th>Elizabeth T. Blue</th>
<th>Dr. David Prior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>428 N. 11th Ave. E. Duluth, MN 55805</td>
<td>Coordinator, Social Work Program Chair, Human Behavior and Diversity University of Wisconsin, Superior PO Box 2000 Superior, WI 54880-4500</td>
<td>Provost &amp; Dean of Faculties University of Wisconsin, Superior PO Box 2000 Superior, WI 54880-4500</td>
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<tr>
<td>(218) 728-2293 <a href="mailto:bwilfert@students.uwsuper.edu">bwilfert@students.uwsuper.edu</a></td>
<td>(715) 394-8492 <a href="mailto:eblue@uwsuper.edu">eblue@uwsuper.edu</a></td>
<td>(715) 394-8449 <a href="mailto:dprior@uwsuper.edu">dprior@uwsuper.edu</a></td>
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This project has been approved by the Institutional Review Committee for the protection of its human subjects, protocol number ______.

_A copy of this form has been provided for your use._

_I have read the above information and willingly consent to participate in this experiment._

Signed: ____________________________ Date: ______
Dear Director of Social Services,

Dobar Dan. My name is Bethany Wilfert and I am a student of social work from the University of Wisconsin-Superior of the United States. I am contacting you because I am working on a research project in Sarajevo between 19 May and 15 June 2004, and am looking for possible subjects to participate in this study. This research will consist of a descriptive study of youth services (social services for children) in post-war Sarajevo. For this study I will be interviewing social service workers who work either directly or indirectly with children in Sarajevo. I will be subjects in this study the following questions:

- What are the specific psychological, social, emotional, and psychological needs of youth in post-war Sarajevo?
- What services are available to youth in Sarajevo?
- What types of barriers do the agencies face in providing direct services to youth in Sarajevo?
- What needs of the youth are not being met, and what are the reasons for this?
- What could be done to better meet these needs?
- What is the vision for the future of youth services in Sarajevo?

I have two criteria for potential subjects in this study. First, I will request that they have both war time and post-war time experience in working with youth; secondly, I will request that they currently work in direct (face to face) or indirect (administrative/planning) youth services. Interviews will be conducted outside of the agency and will be confidential. Subjects in this study can be assured that their name will not be published nor any identifying information. Participation in this study is voluntary.

Participants in this study may benefit from the knowledge that their input will be constructed into a summary report that in return, could potentially benefit their organizations and other agencies serving youth. Participants may also appreciate the knowledge that the findings of this study may be used to educate and raise awareness of current conditions of youth services in Sarajevo through a potential publication. I would be happy to supply
your agency with a copy of the final report which may be used to develop programs or seek funds for programs.

Please take a moment to consider whether there are any workers in your agency who might be interested in participating in this study. I will be contacting your agency between the dates of 20 May and 8 June to ask for any recommendations and to provide additional information. I will be contacting 30 agencies with the hope of finding 15 possible subjects for this study. Interviews will be set up with potential subjects between 8 June and 15 June at their convenience.

The first three weeks of my travels in Bosnia (19 May through 8 June) will be spent studying the culture, history and politics of Bosnia with the University of Wisconsin’s study abroad course “War and Peace in Bosnia.” There is a group of ten students and three professors participating in this course which gives us a unique opportunity to directly experience and appreciate the rich culture of Bosnia.

I am looking forward to my travels in Bosnia and feel great honor for this wonderful opportunity to learn and work with social services of Sarajevo. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Hvala Vam Mnogo,

Bethany Wilfert
Student of Social Work
Mc Nair Scholar
University of Wisconsin-Superior
Appendix C

Youth Services of Sarajevo Questionnaire

Subject #______   Date:____________________

Sex_______   Age:_______   Ethnicity:_______________

Educational
Level:__________________________________________________

Training:________________________________________________

Agency Information

Is the agency you work for (circle one):

1. NGO or Government Organization?
2. International or Country Based?

How many years have you worked in youth services?_____________________________

Do you work in direct or indirect youth services and please describe?

______________________________________________________________

Direct practice: counseling, case management, referral work, group treatment, advocate

Indirect Practice: agency administration, staff supervision, program planning, program evaluation, fund raising, public education, work with community groups for social change, efforts to lobby for legislation or change public policy, etc.
The Needs of Youth In Sarajevo

All people have basic needs in life such as food, shelter, love, support, knowledge, etc. From your experience of work with children, could you describe the following needs of children you have worked with:

Physiological Needs: (food, air, water, basic sustaining needs)
________________________________________________________________________
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Safety Needs: (shelter, security, protection from abuse, violence, suicide, mental health, chemical dependency treatment)
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Belongingness/love Needs: (family, peers, mentors, community)
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________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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Esteem Needs: (self-respect, prestige, recognized success)
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
Self-Actualization: (finding one's potential)

Could you prioritize the five categories of needs for youth from most important to least important for the youth you have worked with?

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Please describe the services your agency provides:

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Please tell me about services provided in Sarajevo for youth that you believe are outstanding. Why?

________________________________________________________________________

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Can you tell me about gaps in the service array of youth services in Sarajevo?

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**Are these gaps due to:**

Inadequate service:

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Problems in access to service (transportation, rules, etc):

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Unavailable/Non-existent Service:
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Other:
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In your opinion, how could these gaps be filled:
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What is your vision for the future of Youth Services in Sarajevo:
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References


Acknowledgements:

- Special thanks for the financial contributions from Chancellor Erlenbach, Vice Chancellor David Prior, and the anonymous donor who made this scholarly and life changing experience possible.
- Thank you to all of my dedicated and empowering advisors from the Social Work Program and the McNair Scholars Program; your guidance and wisdom are like a beacon in the dark.
- Havala, Tamara Miskovic, friend and mentor, dedicated to positive change for youth of Sarajevo, you inspire!