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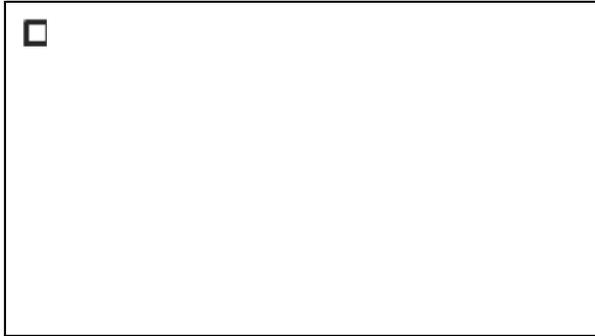
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Media Relations

March 4, 2013

Second-Generation Balkan War Victims Struggle with Violence, Substance Abuse



Prof. Laurence French discusses the findings presented in his new book “War Trauma and its Aftermath: An International Perspective on the Balkan and Gulf Wars.”

DURHAM, N.H. – Second-generation teenage victims of the Balkan Wars (1991-2002) are struggling with violence and substance abuse due in large part because their parents were never treated for war trauma, according to new research from the University of New Hampshire.

The research findings by Laurence French, senior research associate at UNH Justiceworks, are presented in the article “Assessing the Aftermath of War Among Teens in Bosnia & Serbia: Measures of Substance Abuse and Delinquency with the POSIT (Problem-Oriented

Screening Instrument for Teens)” in the journal *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*.

“The focus on unmet social/cultural and psychological needs of traumatized children and youth is important because not doing so could be costly to society in terms of later disorganization by this group as they mature. Substance abuse, dysfunctional families, and poor educational and employment records are likely to increase among this untreated population,” French says.

“Violated war victims represent a difficult class of traumatized people to treat effectively. Suicide is often the final solution to their suffering. The children of these victims are at high risk of suffering from secondary PTSD and consequently more prone to resorting to alcohol as the treatment of choice for their untreated problems,” he says.

French and researchers Goran Kovacevic of the University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Lidija Nikolic-Novakovic of the International University of Novi Pazar, Pancevo, Serbia, surveyed high school students in spring 2010 from three major sectarian groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Muslim Bosniaks, Catholic Croats, and Orthodox Serbs. The average age of the students was 16.5 years old. Students were asked about a number of issues, including substance abuse, physical health, mental health, family relations, and aggressive behavior/delinquency.

The researchers found that Muslim Bosniak males and Serbian females were the highest at risk of substance abuse. While alcohol is the most common form of substance abuse in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the authors note that alcohol is forbidden among Muslim Bosniaks and is not available in Muslim community stores.

The researchers also found the Muslim Bosniak males and Serbian females also were at highest risk of mental health issues. Finally, the researchers found that Catholic Croat males and Serbian females were most at risk for engaging in destructive behaviors and delinquency.

In contrast, family relations did not appear to be an issue for most of the teens, which the researchers believe is due to the cohesion of each sectarian enclave. “Ironically, the finding of strong family cohesion indicates that sectarian separatism is a major factor in school and family socialization, making postwar teens even more nationalistic than their parents who encountered the Balkan wars firsthand,” French says.

A sociologist, criminologist, and psychologist, French has worked with traumatic stress clients for more than 40 years. He is the author of “War Trauma and its Aftermath: An International Perspective on the Balkan and Gulf Wars” (University Press of America, 2012). He was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, from 2009 to 2010. He previously served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1959 to 1965. He holds Ph.D.s in sociology (social disorganization/social psychology) from UNH and in cultural psychology (educational psychology and measurement) from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

PHOTO

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/french.JPG>

UNH researcher Laurence French gives a talk on “PTSD in the Balkans” at the University of Tuzla in Bosnia. French was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, from 2009 to 2010.

VIDEO

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgUsLuRm1G4>

Prof. Laurence French discusses the findings presented in his new book “War Trauma and its Aftermath: An International Perspective on the Balkan and Gulf Wars.”

GRAPHIC

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/yugoslavia.pdf>

Map of the new boundaries of the former Yugoslavia.

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