

representations. As they mature, these children may suffer from inability to regulate their emotions, creating volatile interpersonal relationships as they continually negotiate the fragile boundary of rejection and abandonment (Guttman, 2002). According to Erikson (1950), a person progresses through the crisis of trust vs. mistrust during the earliest stage of life, infancy. An infant forges an image of the caregiver as a reliable provider of his needs. Based on this early relationship, a person's basic view of the world emerges as trusting and confident or fearful and avoidant. As an individual matures, trust (or mistrust) expands to shape a general interpretation of life and society. Those who establish a paradigm of trust are able to weather misfortune with optimism, while those who have developed global mistrust respond to difficulty with anxiety or avoidant behavior (Newman & Newman, 1999). Erikson (1950) acknowledges that a blow to previously achieved trust often leads to a reduction in one's ability to cope with negative circumstances.

Institutionalized children, then, are likely not only to experience delays in negotiating their psychosocial development, but also may face an inability to progress beyond initial stages of trust versus mistrust given the long-standing lack of a permanent caregiver.

A definitive long-term consequence of early abandonment or removal from one's primary caregiver is a resulting devaluation of the self as the individual grows to wonder why he was "rejected". Self-doubt and persistent fears of inadequacy often plague foster and adopted children, who are too young developmentally to understand the reasons behind separation from their parents. Stigmatization by other children who have stable caregiving relationships further compounds a child's view of the self as damaged or unloveable (Kools, 1997). Ultimately, a child's ability to rely on assumptions of safety, predictability, and control are requisite for healthy crisis resolution and developmental progression (Newman & Newman, 1999).

As part of normal development, children from intact homes oftentimes fantasize about a second set of parents with “superhuman” qualities, such as having royal descent or enormous wealth. These fantasies are a normal part of childhood boundary negotiation with parents, and help children deal with confusing feelings of simultaneous love and hate for their family members (McGinn, 2000). In intact families, children are forced to integrate positive and negative conceptualizations of their parents, as there is no other set of parents to occupy the “idealized” roles the child creates. Eventually, the child develops a more balanced view of the world, including the ability to acknowledge that all people have both positive and negative sides.

However, children residing in long-term foster care face obstacles to developing a balanced view of others in that there is nothing preventing them from believing that a mythical and ideal set of parents waits to reunite with them. As the child carries a hope that the “fantasy” set of parents exists, he may have difficulty integrating “bad and good” into his relations with temporary primary caregivers. This problem is further amplified if children move frequently into and out of placements; numerous relocations prevent them from forming conceptualizations of themselves in relation to a primary caregiver. Alternatively, children may form the assumption that the “fantasy” set of parents is bad, and that they as the rejected offspring, are guilty by association.

This discussion of the primary caregiving context illustrates the importance of early intervention with respect to placing children in stable foster care settings and setting the stage for therapy regarding attachment, self-image development, and a balanced view of others. To this end, Life Books may be employed as therapeutic tools to discuss the child’s history, the terms of his early abandonment, and the future possibilities which remain open to him (Groze & Rosenthal, 1993). A strength of many agencies was the use of Life Books to facilitate

documentation of each child's history and to facilitate foster care and reunification transitions. Utility of life books may be extended further in direct therapy with children by encouraging them to express the feelings of confusion, rejection, self-doubt or insecurity that frequently accompany the absence of a primary caregiver (Groze & Rosenthal, 1993; Edwards, 2000). Life books may be used as a therapeutic vehicle for anchoring a child's experiences and weaving the threads of a coherent history into an otherwise chaotic existence.

Implicit in this discussion is the idea of bringing the child's self-image and questions about his worth to the forefront so that misconceptions may be addressed early. A counselor may help the child to integrate his "fantasy" parents by playing their role in therapy and providing a more balanced interpretation of the birth parents and the foster caregivers. While this work normally occurs as a child plays out his role in a family context, it is not impossible for this work to be done therapeutically by a skillful and interpretive therapist (Meeks, 1971).

For children who suffered early abandonment and subsequent long-term institutionalization, therapy should remain an ongoing effort for as long as it takes to see improvement in the child's self-concept and relationships with others. Oftentimes when children suffer a traumatic event, the things which happen to them are overwhelming, difficult to understand, and completely outside their control. The result can be a replacement of Erikson's (1950) "directed energy" with "psychic numbing", unresponsiveness, and guilt (Terr, 1990). This guilt serves as a psychological "balm" in that it reduces a child's feelings of powerlessness.

The child with trauma-related guilt may continuously recreate his early life events through play in order to find a solution which would have provided resolution. Repetitive re-enactment is a means for retrospectively establishing personal mastery over the environment. Without clinical intervention, children are typically unable to "solve" trauma and re-enactments

of stressful events may continue for years, often replacing productive activity such as schoolwork or social activities (Terr, 1983). Lack of trauma resolution may lead children to internalize guilt as a vehicle to mediate environmental unpredictability. However, this guilt may limit a child's self-confidence, preventing him from initiating novel behavior and continuing to learn (Newman & Newman, 1999).

The idea that early abandonment and institutionalization are significant traumas should be paramount in the consideration of therapists who work with these children, and counseling should be mandatory at all points of placement transition. Especially as primary caregivers are vital to helping children process environmental uncertainty (Edwards, 2000), therapists should remain cognizant of the implications of change for each child. Some children may achieve resolution of these issues quickly; others, however, may need ongoing therapeutic work for several years as they make sense of threatening early separations.

The discussion of long-term therapeutic work brings us to development issues specific to adolescence. Adolescence has been termed the "recapitulation of the traumas of infancy" (Kaplan, 1984), and is characterized by a reworking of identity development in relation to one's caregivers (Erikson, 1950). During adolescence, even children who resolved successfully the events of early abandonment may resurrect thoughts about their birth parents, including preoccupations with the former "fantasy" parents. During this time, teens may generate a multitude of questions about their origins.

To complicate matters, adolescence is typically a time when teens test parental boundaries, negotiating the limits of their freedom and internalizing ideas about consequences. The emotional work completed during this time is reminiscent of the boundary testing that normally occurs when infants discover they are separate beings from their primary caregivers. A

primary difference lies in the fact that teens are mobile, self-sufficient beings, unlike infants whose testing is necessarily limited by their inability to function independently. It is natural, then, for teens to pit their foster care or adoptive parents against the unseen birth parents once more.

Therapeutic work with teens in long-term foster care or adoptive placements should address these reprisals of the mythical “good” or “bad” birth parents, giving precedence to the teen’s internal image of himself as derived in part from them. Support should also be given to the teen’s foster or adoptive parents, as their child’s inquisitiveness about the birth parents may feel threatening to cohesion within the family.

#### Family Transition Management

During the interviews with RCR/FI, significant attention was paid to staff members’ requests for training in managing children’s transition from institutional care to foster families and reunification with their biological parents. Although a broad overview was given, a more comprehensive assessment of the social workers’ knowledge and in-depth training are required. Specifically, education in object-relations theory, attachment, and stages of child development may enable providers to understand better children’s reactions to separation and transition while accounting for their chronological and developmental ages (Micanzi-Ravagli, 1999; Neal & Frick-Horbury, 1998; McGinn, 2000).

Furthermore, the loss and healing processes of foster and birth parents requires therapeutic management. For birth parents especially, relinquishment of a child to institutional care, foster parenting, or adoption represents a loss, and grief often accompanies it (Noy-Sharav, 2002). As social workers facilitate children’s entry into foster care or reunification with birth parents, sensitivity to this loss and grief process is paramount. For birth parents who

relinquished their child to an institution, subsequent reunification may trigger revisitation of this loss, along with guilt for “failing” to be adequate caregivers for their children. This guilt may be exacerbated if their child developed emotional, cognitive, or behavioral problems as a result of being institutionalized.

On the same note, foster parents who welcome a new child into their homes not only enter a period of adjustment in the family life cycle (Grotevant, Wrobel, van Dulmen & McRoy, 2001), but may re-enact some of their own issues with parenting, loss, and change. These may include a sense of obligation to right the wrongs done to children through institutional care, or the desire to re-create and “fix” a prior parenting experience. Foster parents who do not have other children may have experienced the same sense of bereavement and unfulfilled expectations exhibited by childless adoptive couples.

As we have given significant attention to therapy with the foster child, so must we delve into the very personal issues which foster and adoptive couples bring to the family relationship. For many couples, foster care or adoption represent an alternative to having children of their own (Noy-Sharav, 2002). Some couples may view foster care as both an opportunity and a representation of their own inadequacies if they enter into caregiving as a means to have a family (Noy-Sharav, 2002). Correspondingly, the foster or adoptive child may come to embody both an opportunity and personal failings. This is a difficult factor to negotiate within the family unit, especially when the system is disrupted by the child’s developmental challenges, illness, or behavior problems.

Much as children hold tightly to the fantasy image of their birth parents, foster or adoptive parents have often envisioned their “ideal” child as he fits within their image of the “hoped for” family. As events occur to disrupt these idealistic expectations, parents are forced to

cope with the pain of reworking their ideals to align with reality. Normal fluctuations within the family life cycle may seem amplified by the complicated nature of the foster or adoptive relationship. Therapeutic work should consider the special challenges faced by foster or adoptive families, and focus on how each change affects the family unit as a whole, and how that change impacts individual family members.

These issues illustrate the importance of more comprehensive screening measures for foster parents who plan to engage in long-term foster care. Current agency screening measures do not include a comprehensive psychological evaluation to determine whether potential foster parents have issues that would preclude them from being effective caregivers for children who often have multiple developmental and emotional needs. Individual interviews with social workers may be conducted to ascertain families' motivation for becoming foster parents and to identify 'red flag' issues that may be relevant to the quality of care they are able to provide. Additional attention must also be paid to identify families who engage in foster care for economic motivations – these families may have difficulty tolerating children who have significant special needs. This is an especial issue given that poverty continues to be a widespread national problem in Romania (Kerrigan, 1999). Whether interventions involve foster or birth parents, social workers should present use of support services as an integral part of the foster care or reunification process, encouraging regular contact and communication about significant issues in the family system (Groza & Ryan, 2002).

#### Client Outcome and Research

Therapeutic improvements may be well-served by implementation of outcome research, allowing practitioners to evaluate the success of their interventions. Currently, there is no established mechanism for assessing client satisfaction with service, the relative value of

different interventions, or the outcomes of institutionalized and foster care children as they approach adulthood. For example, research in the US shows that children who occupied multiple foster homes during their early adolescence are more likely to exhibit disruptive behavior or become involved with the legal system as adults (Kools, 1997). It would be helpful to gather similar outcome data as Romania refines its application of the foster care model.

Software implementation would assist outcome research tremendously, allowing agencies to identify children who enter the welfare system and follow outcomes such as length of foster care stays, number of behavior problems, educational achievement, and quality of socialization activities. Furthermore, tracking software would allow monitoring of reunification efforts, including length of time from institution to reintegration, parent/child satisfaction with the reunification process, reported behavior/developmental problems, school performance, and child social functioning.

With respect to prevention, tracking measures could be implemented to add reliability to abandonment prediction. Factors such as parent characteristics (age, income, ethnicity, social supports) and prior abandonment history may be relevant to families' decisions to relinquish a child.

#### Life Skills Training, Foster Care, and Adult Outcomes

While the critical issue facing Romanian child welfare workers now is provision of adequate family environments to abandoned children, future consideration must be given to adult outcomes of these same children. Inadequate attachment and multiple separations not only impact childhood developmental processes, but also the ability to maintain work and personal relationships during adulthood. In a study of college students who completed the Adult Attachment Interview and personal relationships questionnaires, Neal and Frick-Horbury (1998)

found that the quality of early attachment related to stability of adult self-image, while authoritarian vs. permissive parenting styles impacted self-other relationships.

While placing a child in stable foster care is a major achievement, it represents only the beginning of therapeutic work with the child. Not only should therapy include processing multiple losses and separations, but it should also build upon each child's strengths in soliciting and creating stable relationships within and outside of the foster family. These efforts might include socialization goals via activities with friends or memberships in sports or hobby clubs, skills training which builds upon the child's natural interests and talents, and mentoring about future educational or occupational goals as the child matures.

### **Organizational**

The following is a list of organizational level recommendations for Romanian social service agencies. These suggestions are designed to encourage strategic planning as agencies conceive of new projects and solicit funding for them, as well as to promote healthy expansion and growth. Additional consideration is paid to developing a philosophy of equality as agencies engage in relationships with donors that, in turn, promotes integrity of agency mission. Lastly, suggestions are made to encourage an inter-agency collaborative effort in strategic planning so that multiple organizations may benefit from the localized expertise of individual agencies.

#### Capacity building

Romanian social agencies should build the capacity of their organizations to complete their specified goals. This includes committing to training of staff in relation to service provision, defining the roles and responsibilities of the board of directors so that it can contribute effectively, and building systems for management oversight and evaluation of agency progress. Selecting a board and working with it will help in fundraising efforts. A properly constructed

advisory board greatly broadens the range of expertise and experience available to entrepreneurs.

In Romania, the board of directors is an emerging concept that needs further amplification to meet agency needs. The structure and formation of boards was a concern expressed by several social welfare academicians during the university interviews. In comparison with the United States, an invitation to serve on a board of directors does not carry an implication of honor in Romania. As such, receiving and giving invitations to serve does not confer the same status as it does in the United States. It is not a normalized practice to serve on a board, and board members may not have extensive familiarity with the non-profit sector in which their agencies operate. Further collaboration between social service agencies, universities, and Western scholars may be useful in cultivating and structuring board membership to better serve agencies. Given the pressing needs of Romanian NGOs, the fiduciary and fundraising responsibilities of the board become primary. The management staff of NGOs need to direct considerable attention toward selecting a board and working with it to help in fundraising efforts. A properly created advisory board can greatly broaden the resources available to management.

Another aspect of capacity-building concerns the necessity of developing grant-writing skills and acquiring detailed knowledge about donors' expectations in evaluating whether programs qualify for receipt of funds. This entails not only knowledge of best-practice models to demonstrate service delivery effectiveness in terms of client outcome, but also development of program evaluation skills in order to clearly represent the value of services to clients and the community. Conducting regular program evaluations may persuade possible donors that agency services are a cut above other alternatives, including the option of doing nothing (Groza, 2003). Program evaluations provide the opportunity to educate donors about realistic expectations of

services and requisite funding levels. An evaluation effort also can add value by exposing inefficient use of resources and highlighting programs that are no longer relevant.

Up to this point, Romanian non-profit organizations have not seen themselves as having distinctive “organizational identities” and thus do not form strategic alliances with each other. This is an issue that needs to be addressed, because identities for strategic positioning in specific sectors may increase program attractiveness and result in increased revenue. For example, if a health-service agency markets itself as a local authority on the subject, it may attract volunteers, academicians, collaborations with other non-profits, and donations. Partnerships with the local media are becoming more widespread in agency promotion of education campaigns (NGO Sustainability Index, 2001). Marketing an organizational identity may become a profitable avenue to explore in the future, as the social service sector evolves.

Volunteer management is another method in which agencies can capture needed human resources to help with basic agency activities. Although Romania now has a legal definition of ‘volunteer services’ and an emerging body of individuals willing to donate their time, social service agencies must manage this resource effectively in order to benefit from it (NGO Sustainability Index, 2001). Training in volunteer management may be a worthwhile investment of agency resources.

#### Role of Donors

Many of the agencies interviewed demonstrated substantial dependence on a single, large donor for financial viability. Although this relationship helps agencies initiate services and become visible in their communities, over-dependence on sole sources of funding carries the risk of financial failure after the funding cycle ends. Typically, large donors donate funds for a limited time, after which they reallocate their donations to other areas of need. Throughout the

interviews, we noted that preparing for this major financial transition was not emphasized in the strategic plans of the agencies or their donors.

One recommendation for managing transition is for agencies to solicit assistance in creating a viable exit plan with their supporters at the beginning of the funding period. A second recommendation is that agencies collaborate with their initial donors to attract a larger base of contributors as part of organizational capacity building. This enables agencies to adapt their methods of revenue generation while they remain fully supported, rather than waiting until funding contracts are nearing expiration.

Cultivating a large resource of diverse donors will help agencies minimize financial risk. Using this strategy, the agency decreases exposure to loss if a significant contributor withdraws. Furthermore, it may be easier to solicit a small amount of funds from replacement donors rather than attempting to replace substantial contributions from a single donor.

Harnessing the growth of e-philanthropy to attract donors is an avenue for cultivating a large resource of diverse funders (Young, 2003). This could be as simple as creating an on-line presentation of the organization's mission, activities and performance measures to draw a well rounded picture for potential donors. Simple and inexpensive ways of enhancing the visibility of the website in search engine results can be used effectively.

#### Corporate Collaborations

Building collaborations with the corporate sector is another method of risk-spreading for the agencies. Established relationships between social service agencies and industry are not common practice currently (NGO Sustainability Index, 2001). However, in return for monetary or material assistance, agencies can offer corporations substantial benefits in terms of improved public and community relations, enhanced employee morale, and greater marketing

effectiveness. Corporations can also secure needed expertise and knowledge from trusted NGOs, and can cultivate new markets by collaborating with nonprofits. Corporations in the United States have also benefited from tax privileges associated with nonprofit collaboration. Romanian NGOs would do well to identify corporations that complement their missions.

Corporations with compatible missions can be valuable to NGOs in sponsoring shared "events". Such events are useful for both the NGO and the sponsoring company to build a community presence, while securing community endorsement of the NGO's services. For example, a condom manufacturing company may be interested in supporting HIV/AIDS initiatives. As another example, art displays by HIV+ or disabled children may encourage further visibility in the community. For unsponsored or partially sponsored events, the concept of a 'suggested fee/donation' at exit points would do well to cover the cost of event, without losing community participation due to mandatory entrance fees (Young, 2003).

#### Endowments

In the future endowments could prove to be a profitable, self-sustaining mechanism for ensuring agency financial viability in Romania. However, before this resource can be effectively utilized, non-profits must cultivate their knowledge of the endowment concept and develop marketing skills to create a presence in the community. Efforts may then be directed toward attracting endowments from the planned giving arena.

A preliminary step in this process is for Romania to develop a legal framework to support endowments. The non-profit sector also needs to establish a stable history. Currently, many organizations are too young to maintain the long-term commitment necessary for managing endowments. In addition, the taxation of international gifts significantly reduces the advantages of these plans.

Endowment funds are typically invested in a wide portfolio of financial instruments in an effort to strike a balance between earning high interest rates, and safeguarding the principle. As self-sustaining sources of funds, endowments could cover a substantial percentage of operating costs, leaving additional monetary resources available for client services and thus are resource worth developing.

In addition, endowments also minimize the financial risk associated with dependence on time-limited sources of funds. This brings organizational stability and provides a cushion against unanticipated changes in costs and funding over time. Large endowments in the United States signal prestige and permanence, thereby attracting major donors. Additionally, endowments can help the NGOs pursue their own missions without excessive pressure from donors (Young, 2003).

#### Fee for Service

Most of the services offered by the NGOs we interviewed are provided at no cost. While the basic economic condition of the client population might warrant this, it may be worthwhile to charge a nominal fee for therapeutic services. Many social service agencies are devoted to changing client behavior and attitudes, and paying a modest fee may increase the likelihood that clients will be committed to programs. Requiring clients to pay a minimal fee may foster this commitment and can enhance the mission.

A challenge most Romanian NGOs will face is the dynamics of fee-setting for services that were earlier offered gratis. This is likely to prove particularly difficult in the backdrop of the influence of the Communist era when all services were free. A strategy typically used to cushion the transition to a fee-for-service structure is an introduction of a simultaneous 'product' change. Some nonprofits which have adopted this approach continue to offer a version of the service free,

while presenting a preferred option at a set price (Oster, Gray & Weinberg, 2002)

### Controlled Expansion

Given that agencies compete for limited funds in Romania's dynamic economic environment, several agencies interviewed felt tempted to adapt their projects and ultimately their missions to be compatible with those of the foundations from whom they are seeking assistance. Over time, agencies risk mission drift by expanding their services to appeal to donors rather than turning down financially supportive contractual relationships. Currently, many agencies do not see themselves as equal partners in relationships with donors; consequently, they view themselves as without choice in guiding their overall focus.

Integrity of mission also stands at risk of being compromised as nonprofits turn to commercial ventures to earn income for operations. To ensure that commercial activities do not compromise the NGO's mission, the agency can establish a committee to conduct periodic review of all projects. This requires development of explicit rules governing the nature and type of activities that are acceptable. It would be valuable for nonprofit boards and management to spend time explicitly articulating the mission, defining the limits they wish to place on commercial activities and establishing a framework that considers ventures in this context (Civil Service Society Foundation, 1998)

### Transparency in Reporting

In an effort to attract donors and to overcome deep-seated distrust of government influence, emphasis must be placed on transparency in reporting and management practices. Fear of corrupt practices is deeply entrenched within Romanian society, especially for non-profit organizations which depend heavily upon government funding. Transparency includes exhibiting good management control systems, strict financial accountability, and demonstrating

measurable impact on clients and other stakeholders. Denizia Gal, a professor at the University of Cluj-Napoca, discussed that Romanian administrators become concerned when asked budgetary questions because previous questions of this nature “are not always designed to help” (personal communication, May 9, 2003). In the United States, agency transparency regarding budget and other operations is paramount. It is often considered to be a return for the tax-exempt status that the non-profit sector enjoys.

#### Collaboration between Non-Profit Agencies

Many of the agencies we interviewed appear to suffer from similar difficulties in terms of the global social service environment. For example, several of them experienced financial distress in their time of transition from single donors to self-sustaining income mechanisms. Although their direct practice services often differed, agencies may suffer from the same obstacles, and therefore would benefit from problem-solving with other organizations. ‘Technology transfer’ in terms of planned-giving strategies or program-evaluation methods may be beneficial to all agencies despite differences in clientele.

To facilitate open communication, agencies may benefit from the proactive use of government sponsored fora designed to refine the utility of government services provided to the NGO community. Interfield collaboration also reflects current trends within the U.S. social service sector, enabling organizations to reap substantial benefits from collective agency experience.

## Social Policy

Political advocacy efforts are a valuable area for agency investment in this time of dynamic policy change in Romania. Agencies should direct efforts at strengthening their advocacy skills in order to impact the nascent political and legal frameworks being erected by the government. To date most non-profits have been able to bring about legal changes through advocacy, such as the efforts of Artemis in presenting women's issues and domestic violence at the forefront of policy debates. Currently, social work does not have a strong political presence in Romania – this may be due to the absence of a visible coalition of practitioners and administrators who consistently speak out about government policy.

A particular strength of the NGO community is that it takes financial burden from the government by providing services that the government would otherwise have to underwrite. This position may serve as a bargaining chip in advocating for stronger child welfare laws or non-profit tax exemption status.

An organized political presence will also serve as an impetus for the government to refine child welfare laws that are currently in place but ineffective. Social workers may lobby to put pressure on the government to allocate financial resources to support enforcement of laws such as mandating reporting of child abuse. Furthermore, the discipline of social work may collaborate with lawmakers to standardize the current body of law that represents an amalgamation of laws from many foreign countries, yet has not been adapted to Romania's legal system specifically.

“Brain drain”, or the exodus of valuable educators and employees to prized jobs out-of-country, was cited by many academicians and agencies as a threat to their investment in training. Although most of the agencies we studied demonstrated very low rates of turnover,

administrators were cognizant of the fact that many workers wish to relocate to the United States or other Western countries. The training workers are receiving and their collaboration with American donors makes them highly marketable outside Romania. Similarly, university professors acknowledged that many top students go abroad for advanced education but never return to apply their skills in Romania, choosing instead to remain in the United States or in other Western European countries.

Agencies and educators should focus on creating incentives and exit barriers for valued professionals who may be attracted away from social service in Romania. One way to retain professionals is based on the US human resource model of “vesting”, which offers attractive retirement benefits to workers who remain with their companies for specified periods of time. Additionally, agencies may market themselves both in- and out-of-country to establish prestige inherent to their organizations and enhance their attractiveness to employees. Lastly, government efforts to woo workers to stay may involve subsidies that make Romanian social services salaries more equivalent to those in the US or Western European countries. If funds cannot be devoted to this effort, other benefits, such as increased vacation time or childcare benefits may be used instead.

### **Study Limitations**

With respect to Burke’s (1994) transformational model, we wish to point out some potential pitfalls in presenting data within this framework of change. Notably, the data collected under this model are open-ended and qualitative, leaving much room for interpretation and placement within the levels of the model. In organizing the data, the team noted that levels of the model are not always distinct from one another and that categorization of the interview data seemed arbitrary at times. For example, interview data that appeared to fall under “Individual

Needs and Values” often seemed relevant to “Motivation”; although the data itself was distinct, its interpretation often was not. Interpretation of the interviews is necessarily framed by the researchers, and measures are required to establish reliability in categorizing interview comments within the model. This point is extremely relevant to making recommendations for agency change, in that one set of recommendations would come from factors associated with “individual value and agency fit”, whereas another would come from issues surrounding “employee incentives and motivation”.

Our team resolved this problem via consensus debates, during which a majority vote was taken regarding where to place specific interview data within the model. In retrospect, our team would choose to add an inter-rater reliability piece to the data analysis, with each person categorizing the data set independently, then calculating a reliability value for the team as a whole. This still leaves room for lack of consensus, however, and the ultimate utility of the model involves presenting a set of cohesive recommendations to agencies which participated in the evaluation.

Additionally, the model leaves substantial room for investigator bias in that interview data may be interpreted differently by each researcher and the resulting conclusions (and agency recommendations) may be skewed by these individual interpretations. For example, if one researcher interprets agency financial struggles as stemming from lack of director knowledge about the funding environment, whereas another researcher interprets that same data as reflecting agency integrity of mission, two (perhaps incompatible) sets of recommendations could be derived.

On a positive note, however, the transformational model offers a unique avenue for gathering agency data in a non-threatening, helpful manner. Despite its lack of quantitative

rigor, the model offers a vehicle for conducting in-depth agency examinations, pointing out areas of improvement while emphasizing strengths and accomplishments. Using this model contributed to the team's effectiveness at engaging agency staff and enabling them to feel comfortable in sharing their ideas about obstacles to and avenues for growth.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude our examination of the nascent field of Romanian social work, several points must be noted. Among the most important is the willingness of Romanian social service professionals and educators to open themselves up to examination in the effort to improve their field. It is not always easy to tolerate the scrutiny of outsiders, especially in light of the continuous battle Romanian providers face in serving the needs of disadvantaged populations. The people with whom we worked unfailingly opened themselves up to constructive criticism in the hope of improving their services.

One of the concerns held by each team member throughout each stage of the project was to avoid being perceived as coming from a position of superiority. Our intention as a team was to present examples of American best practices with the idea of stimulating a process of indigenous model development created specifically for the Romanian context. During our visit, it became clear that many Romanians view US social workers as the "experts", often deferring to our "authority" on a variety of subjects. Throughout the interviews, our team endeavored to walk the fine line between providing helpful information and dispelling the aura of authority that is often applied to Westerners.

Similarly, the providers and educators with whom we worked exhibited enormous dedication to their craft despite uncertain job security and difficulty acquiring sufficient materials with which to conduct their work. The social workers exhibited enormous compassion and skill

in caring for clients, and it was invigorating to see the dedication and cooperation on the part of agency staff. There were many times in which our team wished to bottle up the reservoir of energy and motivation we saw in the staff and bring it home with us. The field of Romanian social work has come a long way and has overcome formidable obstacles in a short period of time. Not only was it motivating to characterize social service growth thus far, but also exciting to anticipate the direction the field will take in the future. Our profound thanks goes out to the Romanian people for sharing their world with us.

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