

A STATEMENT MOTIVATED BY THE INVASION OF UKRAINE

SSHHD Steering Committee
Spring, 2022

The Ukrainian people have already experienced traumas from the Russian invasion that will last a lifetime. More than five million civilians have been forced to flee their country. Hundreds more—many of them children—have been injured or killed.

As the Steering Committee of the [Society for the Study of Human Development](#), we speak in unison to condemn Russia's war against Ukraine. We add our voice to all those who have called on Russia to honor requests for humanitarian assistance to besieged Ukrainian cities; we ask for Russia to allow Ukrainians safe passage as they seek to leave war-torn areas and reach safety in other countries. We note, too, that the enormous economic and societal burdens of this massive influx of refugees should not be borne by Europeans alone. We implore the United States and other countries to accept Ukrainian refugees; we urge community and faith-based organizations to welcome and support those refugees in both the short- and long-term.

Russia's aggression has also been manifested in the form of censorship. We add our voice to those who have urged the Russian government to allow a free and open exchange of ideas so that the Russian people can make informed decisions about whether to support this war.

Writing this statement provided us with a compelling opportunity to reflect on the personal and systemic biases that shape the way that individuals and scholarly societies like ours respond to global calamities. Why is it that we and others have been moved to express solidarity with Ukraine while we have sat in relative silence as other humanitarian crises unfolded? We call on those who read this statement to likewise consider their own and others' comparative reactions to the traumas of Ukraine and elsewhere. Perhaps standing in solidarity with Ukraine is easy because we in the United States are immersed in a 24/7 news cycle that tells us that the situation in Ukraine is somehow different from other global crises. We more commonly hear messages that "[people like us](#)" don't experience wars; intentional political destabilization; or massive threats to safety, survival, or our way of life. Reading about the possibility of nuclear war in Ukraine implies an existential threat to the West that seems largely absent when we instead read about conventional wars fought in the Global South.

It is more difficult to acknowledge the pervasiveness of conflict and oppression across the globe that stems from the hatred and rejection of "others." Over 82 million people have been forcibly displaced, and high-income countries have not fully embraced their share

of the people who need new homes. Many of these countries allow the continuation of oppression of “out groups” within their own boundaries and share their own responsibility for destabilizing democratically elected governments. It is time to call on all countries to reconsider practices within their own borders as well as to make room for refugees who come from beyond those borders.

With respect to the continuing crisis in Ukraine in particular, we note that the National Council on Family Relations has assembled a [list of organizations assisting Ukrainians](#). Many of these organizations also serve individuals and families facing tremendous risk across the globe, and we encourage you to support those organizations to the best of your ability. In addition, and closer to our societal home, the Steering Committee of SSHD and the current and incoming Editors of the Society’s journal – *Research in Human Development* – are developing ways to support, disseminate, and use scholarship relevant to trauma. Our hope is to increase understanding of how traumas affect human development, and to use that understanding to promote resilience and healing wherever needs arise.