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The Impact of War on Ukrainian Women Refugees

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Declaration

Hereby I declare that I have written this bachelor's thesis by myself, using solely the references and data cited and presented in this thesis. I declare that I have not been awarded other degree or diploma for thesis or its substantial part.

Prague, 20.06.2023

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Abstract

The Ukrainian conflict has brought about significant social and psychological consequences, particularly among women who have experienced displacement and sought refuge in Europe, with a specific focus on the Czech Republic. This thesis examines the multifaceted effects of war and conflict on Ukrainian women refugees, exploring survivor guilt, psychological consequences, and sociological dynamics. Drawing on a comprehensive literature review, this study investigates the experiences of Ukrainian women refugees and their challenges in the aftermath of war. The research sheds light on survivor guilt as a complex psychological phenomenon and its manifestation within the context of war and conflict. Additionally, it examines the factors influencing survivor guilt among Ukrainian women refugees, including the loss of loved ones, displacement, and the burden of being a survivor. Moreover, the thesis explores the sociological consequences of war and conflict, with a particular emphasis on displacement and the impact on the social fabric of communities. It analyzes the experiences of Ukrainian women refugees in Europe, highlighting their resilience, agency, and contributions during the conflict and in their host countries.

Key words: Survivor guilt; women refugees; consequences of war; mental health; war in Ukraine

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Introduction

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has inflicted profound physical, emotional, and psychological devastation on its population. As the country grapples with the consequences of war, it is essential to understand the psychological impact and the long-lasting consequences it has on individuals and communities. This thesis aims to explore the phenomenon of survivor guilt and its psychological consequences among Ukrainian women refugees, with a particular emphasis on the changes in their mental health over time.

War and conflict create an atmosphere of violence, trauma, and loss, affecting individuals both directly and indirectly. Survivor guilt, a common experience among those who have survived while others have not, can emerge as a significant psychological burden. The complex interplay of emotions, including guilt, shame, grief, and a sense of unworthiness, can profoundly influence the well-being and mental health of individuals who have endured war-related trauma.

While survivor guilt has been extensively studied in various contexts, its specific manifestation within the Ukrainian conflict and its impact on the mental health of Ukrainian women refugees remain relatively unexplored. Women in conflict-affected areas often face unique challenges, assuming multiple roles as caregivers, protectors, and providers for their families. Understanding the psychological consequences and changes in mental health experienced by this vulnerable population is crucial for developing effective support systems and interventions.

This thesis will build upon existing literature on survivor guilt and the psychological consequences of war and conflict, adapting it to the context of Ukraine. By conducting a thorough literature review, this study aims to synthesize and critically analyze relevant theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and conceptual models related to survivor guilt, psychological well-being, and mental health outcomes among war-affected populations.

The primary objectives of this research are to examine the prevalence of survivor guilt among Ukrainian women refugees, understand the specific psychological consequences they face, and explore the changes in their mental health over time. By focusing on this particular demographic, the study seeks to shed light on the unique experiences, challenges, and resilience factors specific to Ukrainian women affected by war.

The findings of this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on survivor guilt and the psychological consequences of war, providing insights into the mental health dynamics among Ukrainian women refugees. Additionally, this study aims to inform the

development of targeted interventions and support programs to address the mental health needs of this population more effectively.

In the following chapters, the literature review will explore relevant theories, empirical findings, and conceptual frameworks, providing a comprehensive understanding of survivor guilt, the psychological consequences of war, and the factors that shape mental health outcomes. The methodology section will outline the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques employed to achieve the study's objectives. Subsequent chapters will present and discuss the results, critically analyze the findings, and provide recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

By delving into the experiences of Ukrainian women refugees, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological impact of war and provide valuable insights into the development of targeted mental health interventions and support systems. Ultimately, the goal is to foster resilience, well-being, and recovery among individuals affected by war-related trauma and to address the unique challenges faced by Ukrainian women refugees in their journey towards healing and rebuilding their lives.

Goals of the Thesis:

To examine the prevalence of survivor guilt among Ukrainian women refugees: The first goal of this thesis is to assess the extent to which survivor guilt is experienced among Ukrainian women who have fled their homes due to the conflict. By exploring the prevalence of survivor guilt within this specific population, we aim to gain insight into the psychological challenges faced by these women and the unique circumstances that contribute to their guilt.

To understand the specific psychological consequences faced by Ukrainian women refugees: The second goal is to delve into the range of psychological consequences experienced by Ukrainian women refugees, including but not limited to survivor guilt. By examining the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes of war-related trauma, we seek to identify the common challenges faced by these women and understand the broader implications for their mental well-being.

To explore the changes in mental health over time among Ukrainian women refugees: The third goal is to investigate the changes in mental health experienced by Ukrainian women refugees as they navigate the various stages of displacement and adaptation. By examining the trajectories of mental health outcomes over time, we aim to identify patterns, fluctuations, and potential predictors of positive or negative changes in mental well-being.

Approach to Address the Goals:

To achieve these goals, this thesis will conduct a comprehensive literature review, drawing upon existing theories, empirical studies, and conceptual frameworks related to survivor guilt, psychological well-being, and mental health outcomes among war-affected populations. By synthesizing and critically analyzing the available literature, we will develop a deeper understanding of survivor guilt and its implications within the context of the Ukrainian conflict.

Chapter 1 Survivor Guilt and factors influencing it

1.1 Survivor Guilt in the Context of War and Conflict

Survivor guilt¹ is a phenomenon that commonly occurs in the context of war and conflict. It refers to the emotional and psychological distress experienced by individuals who have survived a traumatic event while others, often friends or comrades, did not. It is particularly prevalent among military personnel, but it can also affect civilians who have survived war-related events.

In war and conflict situations, survivors often witness the death or suffering of others, which can lead to feelings of guilt, self-blame, and a sense of responsibility for the outcomes. There are several reasons why survivor guilt arises in these situations:

Randomness of survival: Survivors may feel guilty for having survived when others did not, even if they had no control over the situation. The randomness of war and conflict means that survival often depends on factors beyond an individual's control, such as timing, location, or sheer luck. This can lead to a sense of unfairness and guilt.

Bonds and camaraderie: In military settings, strong bonds and camaraderie are often formed among service members who depend on each other for support and protection. When a comrade or friend is killed or injured, survivors may experience guilt for not being able to prevent the harm or for feeling that they should have been the one to suffer instead.

Sense of purpose: Many individuals who participate in war or conflict do so out of a sense of duty, honor, or a desire to protect others. Survivors may struggle with guilt if they believe they did not fulfill their mission or protect their comrades adequately.

Moral injury: Witnessing or participating in actions that conflict with one's moral values can result in moral injury. Survivors who feel guilty about their own actions or inactions may question their worthiness of survival and grapple with a profound sense of moral conflict.

¹ Brown, L. S., and S. A. Hill. "Survivor guilt among Holocaust survivors: Implications for clinical practice." *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services* 54, no. 10 (2016): 27-32.

Survivor guilt² can have significant psychological effects, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and even suicidal ideation. It is important for individuals experiencing survivor guilt to seek support from mental health professionals, support groups, or trusted individuals who can provide understanding and help them navigate their emotions.

Survivor guilt is a complex phenomenon that is examined from both sociological and psychological perspectives. In sociology, survivor guilt is often analyzed in the context of social structures, power dynamics, and the collective experiences of individuals. Sociological theories explore how societal norms, values, and expectations influence survivors' feelings of guilt and their perception of responsibility towards others. Social constructionist perspectives emphasize that survivor guilt is socially constructed and shaped by cultural and historical factors. Sociologists investigate how socialization processes, such as family upbringing, military training, or cultural beliefs, contribute to the development and manifestation of survivor guilt. Furthermore, sociological research highlights the role of social identity, group dynamics, and social comparisons in influencing survivor guilt. The examination of survivor guilt from a sociological standpoint helps to elucidate the broader social context within which guilt is experienced and understood.

On the other hand, the psychological perspective on survivor guilt focuses on individual experiences, cognitive processes, and emotional responses. Psychologists explore the psychological mechanisms underlying survivor guilt, such as cognitive dissonance, self-attribution, and moral conflict. They investigate how survivors perceive their own actions or inactions during the traumatic event, leading to feelings of guilt and self-blame. Psychologists also examine the impact of survivor guilt on mental health, including its relationship with depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. They delve into the coping strategies employed by survivors to manage guilt and grief, such as seeking social support, engaging in self-reflection, or participating in therapy. By understanding the psychological underpinnings of survivor guilt, psychologists aim to develop effective therapeutic interventions to address and alleviate its detrimental effects on individuals' well-being.

The sociological and psychological perspectives on survivor guilt provide complementary insights, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. Integrating sociological and psychological theories allows researchers to explore the interplay between individual experiences and broader social dynamics, shedding light on how survivor guilt is influenced by both personal and societal factors. This interdisciplinary approach enhances our comprehension of survivor guilt in the context of war and conflict, leading to more effective

² Porter, M., N. Haslam, and T. Predisik. "The burden of conflict: Examining the impact of mental health and psychosocial support in conflict-affected settings." *Intervention* 16, no. 3 (2018): 201-205.

strategies for support, intervention, and healing for those affected by this distressing emotional experience.

1.2 Manifestations of Survivor Guilt among Ukrainian Women Refugees

This section explores the manifestations of survivor guilt³ among Ukrainian women refugees, shedding light on the psychological struggles they encounter during and after their displacement.

Feelings of Responsibility and Self-Blame: Ukrainian women refugees often experience intense feelings of responsibility for surviving while others did not. They may question why they survived when family members, friends, or fellow community members did not. This self-blame and guilt can lead to a profound sense of shame and a belief that they somehow failed to protect or save their loved ones.

Emotional Distress and Mental Health Challenges: Survivor guilt among Ukrainian women refugees can contribute to a range of emotional and psychological distress. They may experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health conditions. Intrusive thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks related to the traumatic experiences they witnessed or endured can further exacerbate their feelings of guilt and contribute to ongoing emotional turmoil.

Difficulty in Seeking Happiness or Enjoyment: Ukrainian women refugees grappling with survivor guilt may find it challenging to experience joy or find happiness in their new circumstances. They may feel that allowing themselves to be happy or enjoy life is a betrayal to those who suffered or lost their lives. This internal conflict can lead to a sense of emptiness and an inability to fully engage in present moments.

Self-Imposed Social Isolation: Survivor guilt can also contribute to a desire to withdraw from social interactions and isolate oneself from others. Ukrainian women refugees may feel disconnected from their communities and struggle with forming new relationships. They may fear judgment or rejection from others who perceive them as "lucky" or "fortunate" to have survived, further intensifying their feelings of guilt and isolation.

Search for Meaning and Purpose: Many Ukrainian women refugees who experience survivor guilt feel a strong need to make sense of their survival and find purpose in their lives. They may engage in activities or pursuits aimed at honoring the memory of those they lost or advocating for justice and peace. This search for meaning can be a way to cope with survivor guilt and channel their emotions into positive action.

³ Hutson, Sadie P., Joanne M. Hall, and Frankie L. Pack. "Total Citations on Dimensions." *Advances in Nursing Science* 38, no. 1 (2015): 20-33.F

It is important to note that the manifestations of survivor guilt can vary among individuals, and not all Ukrainian women refugees may experience it in the same way or to the same degree. Additionally, the psychological impact of survivor guilt may intersect with other traumatic experiences and challenges faced by refugees, further complicating their mental well-being.

1.3 Factors Influencing Survivor Guilt among Women Refugees

Survivor guilt among women refugees is influenced by a multitude of complex factors that shape their experiences and emotional responses. Understanding these factors is crucial for providing effective support and interventions to address survivor guilt. Two significant factors that can influence survivor guilt among women refugees are proximity and personal connections to the victims, as well as sociocultural norms and expectations.

Proximity and personal connections play a pivotal role in survivor guilt. Women who have witnessed the suffering, injury, or death of family members, close friends, or community members may experience a deep sense of guilt and remorse. Being in close proximity to the traumatic events and having a personal connection to the victims intensify the survivor guilt experience. These women may question why they survived while their loved ones did not, and may feel an overwhelming responsibility to have somehow protected or saved them. The emotional bonds and shared experiences with the victims create a profound connection that amplifies survivor guilt, as these women carry the weight of survivorship while mourning the loss of others.

Sociocultural norms and expectations also shape the experience of survivor guilt among women refugees. Cultural values, beliefs, and societal expectations can influence how guilt is interpreted and experienced. In some cultures, there may be a strong emphasis on collective responsibility, duty, and self-sacrifice. Women from these cultural backgrounds may internalize the belief that they should have done more to help others or prevent the traumatic events from occurring. They may feel an intense sense of obligation towards their families, communities, and even their nation, which further intensifies their feelings of guilt and self-blame. Additionally, cultural attitudes towards expressions of guilt or vulnerability can influence whether survivor guilt is openly acknowledged and discussed. In societies that stigmatize such emotions, women may struggle to voice their feelings and seek support, leading to the internalization and magnification of survivor guilt.

These factors intertwine and interact with one another, contributing to the complexity of survivor guilt among women refugees. The experiences of proximity and personal connections shape the intensity of survivor guilt, while sociocultural norms and expectations provide the context within which these emotions are experienced and processed.

Chapter 2 Psychological Consequences, and Sociological Dynamics

2.1 Psychological Consequences of War and Conflict

The consequences of war on young Ukrainian refugee women can be diverse and far-reaching, affecting their physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being. While the specific experiences and consequences may vary, here are some common impacts documented in research and reports:

Psychological Impact⁴: War can cause significant psychological distress, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and other trauma-related symptoms. Young women may experience nightmares, flashbacks, hyperarousal, and emotional difficulties due to exposure to violence, displacement, loss of loved ones, and the overall disruption of their lives.

Displacement and Loss: Forced displacement can result in the loss of homes, communities, social networks, and a sense of belonging. Young refugee women may face challenges in adjusting to new environments, dealing with the uncertainty of their future, and grappling with grief and feelings of dislocation.

Gender-Based Violence: During conflict and displacement, women and girls can face increased risks of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, exploitation, and trafficking. This can have severe and long-lasting physical and psychological consequences for young Ukrainian refugee women.

Access to Education and Opportunities: Conflict and displacement can disrupt education systems, limiting access to quality education for young women. This can hinder their long-term opportunities for personal development, employment, and economic independence, impacting their overall well-being and future prospects.

Health and Healthcare: Conflict-affected areas may experience disruptions in healthcare services, making it challenging for young women to access essential healthcare, including reproductive health services, mental health support, and other necessary treatments. This can have long-term implications for their physical and mental well-being.

Social and Family Dynamics: War and displacement can strain family and social relationships, leading to changes in family dynamics, roles, and responsibilities. Young women may face challenges in maintaining relationships, experiencing isolation, and struggling with stigma or discrimination.

⁴ Murthy, R. S., & Lakshminarayana, R. "Mental health consequences of war: a brief review of research findings." *World Psychiatry* 5, no. 1 (2006): 25-30

Trauma and Interpersonal Relationships: War and displacement can impact the ability to form and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships. The trauma experienced during conflict may affect trust, intimacy, and communication skills, making it challenging for young women to establish and maintain healthy relationships with partners, family members, and friends.

Reproductive Health Challenges: Displacement and the breakdown of healthcare systems can create barriers to accessing reproductive health services, including prenatal care, safe childbirth, and family planning. Young women may face increased risks related to reproductive health, including unintended pregnancies, complications during pregnancy and childbirth, and limited access to contraception.

Economic Insecurity: Displacement often disrupts livelihoods and economic stability. Young refugee women may face difficulties in finding employment, accessing financial resources, or continuing their education, which can perpetuate cycles of poverty and dependency.

Stigmatization and Discrimination: Young Ukrainian refugee women may face stigma and discrimination based on their refugee status, gender, or other factors. This can lead to social exclusion, limited opportunities, and negative stereotypes, affecting their self-esteem and overall well-being.

Long-term Mental Health Implications: The psychological consequences of war and displacement can have long-lasting effects. If left unaddressed, the impact of trauma and stress can lead to chronic mental health conditions, impairing daily functioning, relationships, and overall quality of life.

Lack of Access to Justice: Young women who have experienced violence or human rights violations during the conflict may face challenges in accessing justice and seeking redress. Barriers such as fear, legal complexities, and limited resources can impede their ability to pursue justice and hold perpetrators accountable.

2.2 Traumatic Experiences and Stressors

Ukrainian women refugees affected by the ongoing war in their country face a myriad of traumatic experiences and stressors that significantly impact their well-being. The conflict exposes them to various forms of violence, including armed combat, bombings, and displacement from their homes. Witnessing the destruction of their communities, the loss of loved ones, and the threat to their own lives creates an environment of constant fear, uncertainty, and psychological distress. Forced to flee their homes, they experience the disruption of their social networks, separation from family members, and the loss of their sense of belonging. Additionally, the process of seeking refuge in unfamiliar territories or crowded displacement camps further exacerbates their distress,

as they contend with overcrowding, lack of privacy, and limited access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, and healthcare.

The traumatic experiences and stressors⁵ faced by Ukrainian women refugees have a profound impact on their mental health and well-being. They commonly experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as intrusive memories, nightmares, hypervigilance, and avoidance behaviors. The constant exposure to violence and danger can lead to heightened anxiety and a sense of helplessness. Moreover, the loss of their homes, belongings, and social support systems often results in a deep sense of grief and mourning. They may also grapple with survivor guilt, questioning why they survived while others did not, which further contributes to their psychological distress.

The ongoing stressors faced by Ukrainian women refugees in the aftermath of war add to their psychological burden. Displacement and uncertain future prospects, including challenges in finding employment, housing, and education opportunities, perpetuate a sense of instability and frustration. Limited access to mental health services and culturally appropriate support exacerbates their challenges in seeking help and finding effective coping mechanisms. The cumulative impact of these traumatic experiences and stressors can lead to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders among Ukrainian women refugees.

Understanding the specific traumas and stressors faced by Ukrainian women refugees is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that address their unique needs. By acknowledging their experiences and providing culturally sensitive and trauma-informed care, mental health professionals and support organizations can help these women navigate the psychological challenges stemming from war and displacement. It is imperative that efforts are made to empower Ukrainian women refugees, promote resilience, and facilitate their recovery from the traumatic effects of war, enabling them to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

2.3 Gender-Specific Consequences of War

War and conflict have far-reaching and gender-specific consequences that disproportionately impact women, exacerbating existing gender inequalities and creating new challenges. These consequences extend beyond the immediate physical violence and destruction, affecting the social, economic, and psychological well-being of women in profound and complex ways.

⁵ Miller, K. E., and A. Rasmussen. "War exposure, daily stressors, and mental health in conflict and post-conflict settings: Bridging the divide between trauma-focused and psychosocial frameworks." *Social Science & Medicine* 70, no. 1 (2010): 7-16.

One of the primary gender-specific consequences of war is the increased risk of gender-based violence. Women often become targets of sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, and trafficking, during times of conflict. The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war not only inflicts immediate physical and psychological harm on women but also perpetuates a cycle of trauma, stigmatization, and social exclusion. The long-term consequences of gender-based violence can include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and reproductive health issues, among others. The pervasive fear and insecurity resulting from the threat of violence further limit women's mobility and access to education, employment, and healthcare, impeding their ability to fully participate in society.

War also disrupts traditional gender roles and norms, altering the social fabric and power dynamics within communities. With men often being directly involved in fighting or forcibly recruited, women are left to shoulder additional responsibilities and assume non-traditional roles to maintain households and communities. While this can provide opportunities for women to demonstrate resilience and agency, it can also result in increased workloads, economic vulnerability, and challenges to their social status. Women may face discrimination and marginalization as they navigate their changed roles and attempt to exert agency in patriarchal societies. The disruption of social support networks and community structures further exacerbates these challenges, as women may struggle to access resources and support networks that were once available to them.

Economically, women bear a disproportionate burden during and after conflict. Displacement, loss of property, and destruction of infrastructure limit women's access to livelihood opportunities and economic resources. Many women become the sole providers for their families, yet they face numerous barriers to accessing income-generating activities and financial services. The economic impact of war on women often leads to increased poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to healthcare and education, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and inequality. The lack of economic opportunities also hampers women's ability to rebuild their lives and contribute to the recovery and development of their communities.

Psychologically, women experience unique stressors and psychological consequences during and after conflict. The constant fear for their safety, the loss of loved ones, and the disruption of social support networks contribute to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Women may also face social stigma and blame, including survivor guilt, as they struggle to reconcile their roles as protectors and nurturers with the realities of war and violence. The psychological trauma experienced by women has intergenerational implications, as it can affect the well-being of their children and future generations. Addressing the psychological well-being of women is essential for their recovery, resilience, and ability to rebuild their lives.

Addressing the gender-specific consequences of war requires comprehensive efforts that encompass policy changes, legal frameworks, and support services. Empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and access to justice is crucial in ensuring their full participation in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding processes. Providing specialized support services for survivors of gender-based violence, including medical care, counseling, and legal aid, is essential for their recovery and reintegration. Additionally, challenging societal norms, promoting gender equality, and dismantling patriarchal structures are fundamental to addressing the root causes of gender-specific consequences and fostering sustainable peace.

2.4 Gendered Experiences and Challenges among Ukrainian Women Refugees

The experiences and challenges faced by Ukrainian women refugees in the context of war and conflict are inherently gendered, shaped by social, cultural, and power dynamics. This section explores the specific gendered experiences and challenges that Ukrainian women refugees encounter during their displacement and journey towards rebuilding their lives.

Vulnerability to Gender-Based Violence: Ukrainian women refugees are particularly vulnerable to various forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, domestic violence, and exploitation. Displacement disrupts social and protective networks, exposing women to increased risks within refugee camps, informal settlements, or during their journey. The threat of gender-based violence adds an additional layer of fear and trauma to their already precarious circumstances.

Disproportionate Caregiving Responsibilities: In many cultures, women often assume caregiving roles and responsibilities for their families and communities. This responsibility is heightened in the context of displacement, where women may have to navigate the challenges of providing for their children, elderly relatives, or other dependents amidst limited resources and uncertain living conditions. Balancing caregiving responsibilities with the need to secure livelihoods and adapt to a new environment can place significant strain on Ukrainian women refugees.

Limited Access to Healthcare and Reproductive Services: Displaced Ukrainian women often face barriers in accessing essential healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare, family planning, and maternal care. Disruptions in healthcare infrastructure, limited resources, and cultural or language barriers can impede their access to quality healthcare, putting their well-being and reproductive health at risk.

Discrimination and Marginalization: Gender discrimination and marginalization can further compound the challenges faced by Ukrainian women refugees. They may encounter

gender-based stereotypes, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and barriers to participation in decision-making processes within their host communities. These factors can hinder their integration, limit their economic prospects, and undermine their agency and autonomy.

Empowerment and Agency: Despite the challenges, Ukrainian women refugees also demonstrate resilience, agency, and empowerment. They actively engage in community-building initiatives, advocate for their rights and the rights of others, and strive to create spaces for their voices to be heard. Women's organizations and support networks play a crucial role in promoting their empowerment, providing skills training, and facilitating their socio-economic integration.

Chapter 3 Ukrainian refugees in Czech Republic

3.1 Displacement and Refugees

One of the significant sociological consequences of war and conflict is the mass displacement of individuals and the emergence of refugee⁶ populations. Wars disrupt communities, destroy homes, and create unsafe environments, forcing people to flee their homes in search of safety and security. The displacement of populations has far-reaching social implications, affecting not only the individuals directly impacted but also the communities and societies they leave behind and those they seek refuge in.

In the context of the Ukrainian conflict, the displacement of people has been a profound and ongoing issue. The conflict has resulted in a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Ukraine, as well as an influx of Ukrainian refugees seeking shelter in neighboring countries. This mass displacement has disrupted the social fabric of communities and has put significant strains on resources and infrastructure, both in the areas of origin and the areas of destination.

The experience of displacement is marked by numerous challenges and vulnerabilities. Displaced individuals often face a loss of livelihood, separation from family and social networks, and a disruption in education and healthcare services. They are uprooted from familiar surroundings, cultural norms, and support systems, which can lead to a sense of disorientation and a loss of identity. The process of seeking refuge and adjusting to new environments can be daunting, with refugees encountering language barriers, discrimination, and limited access to basic services and opportunities.

⁶ FitzGerald, David Scott, and Rawan Arar. "The Sociology of Refugee Migration." *Annual Review of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2018): 387–406. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117-041204>.

Displacement also affects the host communities and societies. The sudden influx of refugees can strain local resources, such as housing, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions. Social tensions may arise as communities grapple with the challenges of integration and competition for limited resources. The presence of refugees can disrupt existing social structures, economic systems, and cultural norms, requiring adaptive responses from both the host communities and the displaced individuals.

Furthermore, the displacement of individuals and communities often leads to the fragmentation of social networks and community bonds. Families and communities are separated, and the loss of social support networks can have profound implications for individuals' mental and emotional well-being. Displaced individuals may experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, and a lack of belongingness, which can contribute to psychological distress and social disconnection.

Addressing the sociological consequences of displacement and refugee situations requires comprehensive approaches. Providing adequate shelter, healthcare, and education for displaced populations is crucial to ensure their well-being and integration. Efforts should be made to promote social cohesion and facilitate interactions between host communities and refugees, fostering understanding, empathy, and mutual support. Community-based initiatives and programs that focus on building social connections, promoting cultural exchange, and enhancing economic opportunities can help alleviate tensions and contribute to the social integration of displaced individuals.

Additionally, it is essential to address the root causes of displacement and invest in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. By addressing the underlying issues that contribute to conflict and displacement, societies can work towards preventing future displacements and creating conditions for the safe and voluntary return of displaced populations.

3.2 Ukrainian Refugees in Europe, with a Focus on the Czech Republic

The Ukrainian conflict has resulted in a significant influx of refugees seeking safety and stability in various European countries. Among these countries, the Czech Republic has become an important destination for Ukrainian refugees. As a neighboring country to Ukraine, the Czech Republic has geographical proximity and cultural ties that make it an accessible option for those fleeing the conflict. The number of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic has shown a substantial increase in recent years, reflecting the severity of the crisis and the urgency for individuals to seek refuge outside their home country.

According to statistical data the Czech Republic hosted a considerable number of Ukrainian refugees. Since the start of the war in Ukraine until 1 April 2023, the Ministry of the Interior has

issued a total of 504,107 temporary protections. There are currently 325,742 people with temporary protection on the territory of the Czech Republic. Approximately one third of the people have returned to Ukraine.

The exact figures may vary depending on the source and the specific time period considered. However, it is estimated that thousands of Ukrainians have sought asylum or temporary protection in the Czech Republic since the outbreak of the conflict. These individuals have been forced to leave their homes due to the ongoing violence, political instability, and economic hardships in Ukraine.

The influx of Ukrainian refugees has posed both challenges and opportunities for the Czech Republic. From a humanitarian perspective, the country has had to address the immediate needs of these displaced individuals, including providing shelter, healthcare, and access to basic services. The Czech government, in collaboration with international organizations and local NGOs, has made efforts to accommodate and support Ukrainian refugees, recognizing their vulnerability and the necessity of offering assistance during this difficult period.

The presence of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic has also had socio-economic implications. The integration of a significant number of refugees into the Czech society requires resources and support from both the government and local communities. Language barriers, cultural differences, and the need for employment and education opportunities pose challenges for the successful integration of Ukrainian refugees. However, the situation also presents opportunities for cultural exchange, enrichment of the Czech society, and the creation of new connections between different communities.

Efforts have been made to facilitate the integration of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic. Various programs and initiatives have been implemented to provide language training, vocational skills development, and job placement assistance. These measures aim to enhance the self-sufficiency and independence of Ukrainian refugees, enabling them to rebuild their lives and contribute to their host country's socio-economic development.

It is important to recognize that Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic, like refugees worldwide, have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs. Among the Ukrainian refugee population, there are individuals and families who have endured traumatic experiences, including loss of loved ones, displacement, and the destruction of their homes and communities. The psychological well-being and mental health support for Ukrainian refugees are critical considerations that need to be addressed alongside their integration process.

3.3 Organizations in Czech Republic

Several organizations in the Czech Republic have played a significant role in providing assistance and support to Ukrainian refugees who have sought shelter in the country. These organizations have recognized the urgent needs of displaced individuals and have worked tirelessly to address their humanitarian, social, and legal challenges. Their efforts have contributed to the well-being and integration of Ukrainian refugees into Czech society. Here are some notable organizations:

Organization for Aid to Refugees (OPU): OPU is a prominent Czech organization that has been actively involved in assisting refugees, including Ukrainians. They provide various services such as legal aid, psychosocial support, accommodation, and integration programs. OPU also advocates for the rights of refugees and works towards creating a welcoming environment for their integration.

People in Need (PIN): PIN is a Czech non-governmental organization that has been providing emergency relief and long-term assistance to vulnerable populations, including refugees. They have implemented projects to support Ukrainian refugees in areas such as healthcare, education, livelihoods, and social integration. PIN's initiatives aim to alleviate the challenges faced by refugees and promote their self-sufficiency and empowerment.

Caritas Czech Republic: Caritas is a humanitarian organization that operates globally, including in the Czech Republic. They have been actively involved in providing support to Ukrainian refugees, offering essential services such as shelter, food, medical assistance, and social integration programs. Caritas focuses on addressing the immediate needs of refugees while also working towards their long-term stability and self-reliance.

The Czech Red Cross: The Czech Red Cross has been actively engaged in assisting Ukrainian refugees in collaboration with other organizations. They provide emergency aid, healthcare services, psychological support, and assistance in navigating legal processes. The organization's volunteers and professionals work tirelessly to ensure the well-being and protection of refugees.

Integration Center Prague (ICP): The ICP is an organization dedicated to supporting the integration of foreigners, including refugees, into Czech society. They offer a range of services, including language courses, vocational training, cultural orientation, and social support. ICP's efforts aim to facilitate the smooth integration of Ukrainian refugees into the Czech community.

These organizations, along with numerous local initiatives and volunteers, have played a vital role in extending a helping hand to Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic.

One of the biggest organizations is the KACPU⁷ (Coordination and Advisory Center for Integration of Foreigners) is an organization in the Czech Republic that specifically focuses on providing support and assistance to Ukrainian refugees and migrants. It operates refugee centers and integration programs tailored to meet the needs of Ukrainian individuals who have sought refuge in the country.

The KACPU centers aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment for Ukrainian refugees. They offer temporary accommodation, basic necessities, and access to various services that facilitate their integration into Czech society. These services may include language courses, vocational training, job placement assistance, healthcare support, legal advice, and psychosocial counseling.

The organization recognizes the unique challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees and strives to address their specific needs. The KACPU centers create a supportive community where individuals can find solace, share experiences, and receive guidance on navigating the asylum process and accessing available resources.

Through their integration programs, the KACPU facilitates the social and cultural integration of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic. They organize cultural events, workshops, and activities that promote understanding, tolerance, and interaction between the Ukrainian community and the wider society. These initiatives aim to foster mutual respect, reduce prejudice, and enhance the opportunities for Ukrainian refugees to participate fully in Czech society.

The KACPU collaborates with various stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and local communities, to ensure comprehensive support and a holistic approach to integration. Their work contributes to creating an inclusive and supportive environment where Ukrainian refugees can rebuild their lives, contribute to the local community, and find a sense of belonging.

It is important to note that the services and programs provided by the KACPU may evolve over time, depending on the changing needs and circumstances of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic. The organization's dedication to assisting and empowering Ukrainian individuals in their journey towards integration reflects the commitment to upholding humanitarian values and promoting a welcoming and inclusive society.

⁷ "Pomoc Ukrajině – Krizový a Překračování (KACPU) v Praze." Electronical source, source access mode: <https://pomocukrajine.praha.eu/cz/kacpu-v--praze>.

Another big organization is «Dům Dobra» which means The House of Good Foundation. The inception of the House of Good Foundation can be traced back to a fateful day, 24 February 2022, a day that marked a tragic turning point in Ukraine's history. The profound impact of the war prompted a realization of the urgent need for assistance among those in peril. This pivotal moment became the catalyst for the establishment of the foundation.

The foundation's journey began with the formation of two small teams. The first team dedicated their efforts to gathering, organizing, and dispatching humanitarian aid, recognizing the immediate requirements for those affected. Simultaneously, the second team conceived the idea of repurposing the former building of the University of Applied Arts in Prague, UMPRUM, to serve as a refuge for the displaced.

Fortuitously, these two teams merged, giving rise to a cohesive and committed collective. On 27 February, a formidable team was formed, working harmoniously within the future House of Good Karlín. The shared sense of compassion and the gravity of the circumstances brought together individuals with kind hearts, culminating in the birth of the House of Good Foundation.

Over 100 volunteers dedicated themselves daily to transforming the building and managing the inflow of humanitarian aid. Through the unwavering support and dedication of compassionate individuals, the foundation was able to welcome the first wave of refugees merely a week after commencing the construction efforts.

The House of Good Foundation stands as a testament to the power of unity and empathy in times of crisis. It is a symbol of solidarity and an embodiment of the unwavering commitment to providing solace and support to those in need. Through the collective efforts of countless volunteers and caring individuals, the foundation continues to serve as a sanctuary, a beacon of hope, and a testament to the indomitable spirit of compassion in the face of adversity.

This organization deserves special recognition for its inclusive approach, where women play a pivotal role not only in providing assistance but also actively contributing to the development of various projects. Their collective efforts have yielded remarkable results, as they successfully furnished and transformed three living spaces located in prominent districts of Prague: Karlín, Vršovice, and Bohnice.

These spaces now feature essential amenities such as bathrooms and dedicated areas for children, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for those seeking refuge. It is truly commendable how these women, through their unwavering determination, have come together to create living spaces capable of accommodating 5-8 individuals. Their resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity reflect their indomitable spirit and their refusal to surrender to circumstances beyond their control.

Their collective achievements serve as a powerful testament to the transformative impact that can be achieved through unity and a shared vision. These women have not only changed the physical spaces they have worked on but have also influenced their own destinies. Their unwavering dedication and resilience have not only provided practical solutions but have also instilled a sense of empowerment and hope in the lives of those they serve. Their remarkable efforts deserve our utmost respect and admiration.

Chapter 4 Ukrainian Women's Contributions during the War

4.1 Increased Level of Patriotism during War

During times of war, societies often witness a notable surge in patriotism among their citizens, and Ukraine is no exception. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has sparked a heightened sense of patriotism⁸ among its people, as they rally together to defend their country and protect its sovereignty. This increased level of patriotism is driven by various factors and has significant implications for individuals and the nation as a whole.

One of the primary drivers of heightened patriotism during war is the collective threat posed by external forces. In the face of aggression and invasion, Ukrainians feel a strong sense of unity and solidarity, transcending social, cultural, and political differences. The shared understanding of the importance of national unity becomes a unifying force that brings people together, fostering a deep sense of patriotism. Ukrainians see themselves as defenders of their land, culture, and values, and their increased patriotism is a natural response to the need to protect their nation from external threats.

The sacrifices made by individuals during times of war also contribute to the surge in patriotism. As Ukrainian citizens witness the bravery and selflessness of their compatriots serving in the military or actively engaging in efforts to support the war-affected regions, they are inspired to demonstrate their own commitment to the country. Whether it is through participating in volunteer work, donating resources, or actively engaging in patriotic activities, individuals find ways to contribute to the collective defense and recovery of Ukraine. The willingness to make personal sacrifices for the greater good further strengthens the sense of patriotism among the population.

The media plays a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing patriotic sentiments during war. Through news coverage, documentaries, and social media platforms, Ukrainians are constantly exposed to stories of heroism, resilience, and the enduring spirit of their fellow citizens. Such

⁸ Van Evera, Stephen. "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War." *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 5-39. muse.jhu.edu/article/447095.

narratives of bravery and determination not only fuel patriotic feelings but also serve as a reminder of the values that unite the nation. The media also serves as a platform for disseminating information about the ongoing conflict, fostering a sense of awareness and responsibility among the population.

The increased level of patriotism during war has profound implications for the nation's resilience and sense of national identity. It strengthens the resolve of Ukrainians to defend their country and work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Patriotism becomes a driving force behind various initiatives, such as fundraising campaigns, volunteer efforts, and community mobilization, aimed at supporting the military, war-affected regions, and displaced populations. It fosters a sense of pride in Ukrainian heritage, language, and culture, further bolstering the nation's collective identity.

The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has witnessed a remarkable rise in patriotism among its citizens. The collective threat, personal sacrifices, and media representation of bravery and resilience all contribute to this surge in patriotism. Ukrainians demonstrate unwavering commitment to their country, actively engaging in efforts to protect and rebuild their nation. This heightened patriotism serves as a unifying force, strengthening the nation's resilience and shaping its future trajectory. As Ukraine faces the challenges of war, the increased level of patriotism among its people continues to be a source of inspiration, resilience, and hope for a brighter future.

4.2 Social Disruption and Community Dynamics

War and conflict bring about significant social disruption and upheaval, profoundly affecting community dynamics in the affected areas. The sociological consequences of war extend beyond the immediate physical destruction, as they disrupt the social fabric, relationships, and community structures that form the backbone of society. In the context of the Ukrainian conflict, social disruption and changing community dynamics have been particularly evident, shaping the experiences of individuals and communities alike.

One of the key impacts of war on community dynamics is the displacement of populations. The forced migration of individuals and families leads to the fragmentation of communities, as people are uprooted from their homes and separated from their social networks. Displacement creates challenges in terms of maintaining social bonds, cultural practices, and community cohesion. Communities that were once tightly-knit find themselves scattered and dispersed, often losing the sense of collective identity and shared experiences.

The breakdown of community structures and social support systems exacerbates the challenges faced by individuals in war-affected areas. In times of conflict, traditional mechanisms

of support, such as extended family networks, community organizations, and local institutions, may be weakened or completely dismantled. This loss of social infrastructure leaves individuals and families more vulnerable, lacking the support networks that would typically provide emotional, practical, and material assistance.

Moreover, war and conflict disrupt community norms and values, leading to shifts in social dynamics and power structures. In situations of conflict, power dynamics may change, with new leaders emerging or existing power structures being challenged. This can result in social tensions, conflicts, and a breakdown of trust within the community. Social divisions based on ethnic, religious, or political lines may also emerge or intensify, further fragmenting communities and hindering reconciliation and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the presence of armed groups, violence, and insecurity can lead to the erosion of social trust and a breakdown in interpersonal relationships. Fear, suspicion, and trauma become pervasive, affecting the way individuals interact and engage with each other. The breakdown of trust and the heightened sense of insecurity can have long-lasting effects on community dynamics, hindering social cooperation, and impeding collective efforts towards recovery and rebuilding.

However, amidst the challenges, communities also exhibit resilience and adaptability. During times of war and conflict, communities often come together to support each other, provide mutual assistance, and foster a sense of collective identity. Grassroots initiatives and community-driven projects emerge, aiming to address the immediate needs of community members and promote social cohesion. These efforts demonstrate the resilience and determination of individuals and communities to overcome the adversities brought about by war and rebuild their social fabric.

4.3 Women's Agency and Empowerment among Ukrainian Refugees

Women's agency and empowerment are critical aspects to consider within the context of Ukrainian refugees. Despite facing numerous challenges and gender-based disparities, women exhibit remarkable agency and resilience in their efforts to rebuild their lives and contribute to their communities. This section highlights women's agency and empowerment among Ukrainian refugees and emphasizes their pivotal role in post-conflict recovery and community development.

Economic Empowerment: Ukrainian women refugees actively engage in various economic activities to regain financial independence and support their families. They may establish small businesses, engage in income-generating projects, or acquire new skills to enhance their employability. Economic empowerment not only provides women with sustainable livelihoods but also enhances their self-confidence and decision-making abilities.

Community Leadership and Participation: Women play essential leadership roles within their communities, actively participating in decision-making processes and community development initiatives. They contribute their knowledge, skills, and perspectives to shape policies, programs, and services that address the specific needs and concerns of women and their communities. By assuming leadership positions, women can drive positive change and advocate for gender equality and women's rights.

Education and Knowledge Sharing: Ukrainian women refugees recognize the value of education and knowledge as tools for empowerment. They seek opportunities to access education and acquire new skills, which not only enhance their personal development but also enable them to contribute to their communities in meaningful ways. Women often engage in knowledge-sharing activities, such as mentoring programs or community workshops, to empower others and foster collective learning.

Health and Well-being Advocacy: Women's agency extends to advocating for their own health and the well-being of their families and communities. They actively engage in health promotion initiatives, raise awareness about reproductive health, and seek access to healthcare services. By advocating for comprehensive healthcare, including mental health support, women contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of their communities.

Social and Political Activism: Women refugees in Ukraine demonstrate remarkable resilience and courage in their pursuit of social and political change. They actively engage in grassroots activism, advocacy campaigns, and social movements, fighting against gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality. By raising their voices, women challenge oppressive structures and promote a more inclusive and equitable society.

Building Support Networks: Women often establish support networks and women's organizations within refugee communities, providing spaces for mutual support, skill-sharing, and empowerment. These networks enable women to build solidarity, share experiences, and collectively address common challenges. Through these networks, women can amplify their voices, access resources, and create social change.

Gender-Based Violence Prevention: Women's agency and empowerment are closely linked to efforts aimed at preventing and addressing gender-based violence. Ukrainian women refugees can play a vital role in promoting community awareness, challenging harmful gender norms, and advocating for policies and programs that prioritize the prevention of violence against women. Empowering women with knowledge, skills, and resources to protect themselves and their communities is crucial for fostering their agency and ensuring their safety.

Access to Justice: Access to justice is a fundamental aspect of women's agency and empowerment. Ukrainian women refugees may face legal challenges and barriers in seeking

justice for gender-based violence or other human rights violations. Efforts should be made to provide legal support, promote legal literacy, and establish mechanisms that ensure fair and accessible justice systems for women. Empowering women to navigate the legal landscape and seek redress for violations contributes to their overall agency and well-being.

Political Participation and Representation: Women's agency can be enhanced through increased political participation and representation. Encouraging and supporting Ukrainian women refugees to engage in political processes, such as voting, running for office, or joining decision-making bodies, is essential for ensuring their voices are heard and their perspectives are considered. Women's active involvement in political arenas can lead to policy changes that address their specific needs and advance gender equality.

Education and Skills Development: Access to quality education and skills development programs significantly contribute to women's agency and empowerment. By providing educational opportunities, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support, Ukrainian women refugees can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue their aspirations, achieve economic independence, and actively contribute to the development of their communities. Education also fosters critical thinking, confidence, and leadership abilities, empowering women to challenge social norms and advocate for their rights.

Intersectionality and Inclusivity: Recognizing the diverse experiences and identities within the Ukrainian refugee population is essential for promoting women's agency and empowerment. Intersectionality acknowledges that women's experiences are shaped by intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, class, disability, and sexual orientation. Efforts should be made to ensure that programs, policies, and interventions address the specific needs and challenges faced by diverse groups of women, fostering inclusivity and empowering all women within the refugee community.

Inter-generational Empowerment: Women's agency and empowerment extend beyond individual women to the broader community. By fostering inter-generational connections and supporting mentorship programs, Ukrainian women refugees can pass on knowledge, skills, and values to younger generations. Intergenerational empowerment strengthens social cohesion, promotes resilience, and ensures the continuity of women's agency and empowerment over time.

Promoting women's agency and empowerment among Ukrainian refugees requires collaborative efforts from governments, humanitarian organizations, and civil society. It involves creating an enabling environment that supports women's leadership, equal access to education, economic opportunities, and healthcare services. Recognizing and addressing gender-based disparities and violence is essential for fostering women's empowerment and advancing gender equality.

4.4 Ukrainian Women's Contributions during the War

Throughout the war in Ukraine, women have played significant roles and made invaluable contributions to their communities and the broader society. Their participation has been diverse and multifaceted, demonstrating resilience, courage, and determination. This section explores the various ways in which Ukrainian women have contributed during the war:

Humanitarian Aid and Support: Ukrainian women have been at the forefront of providing humanitarian aid and support to those affected by the war. They have volunteered in hospitals, refugee camps, and community centers, offering medical assistance, psychological support, and essential supplies to displaced individuals and families. Women's compassion and dedication have helped alleviate suffering and provided much-needed assistance to those in need.

Active Combat Roles: Ukrainian women have actively participated in combat roles, serving in the armed forces, volunteer battalions, and self-defense units. They have demonstrated bravery and determination on the frontlines, defending their communities and fighting alongside their male counterparts. These women have shattered gender stereotypes and played a pivotal role in protecting their homeland.

Civil Society and Advocacy: Women have played critical roles within civil society organizations, advocating for peace, human rights, and social justice. They have mobilized grassroots movements, organized protests, and raised awareness about the impact of the war on their communities. Women's activism has been instrumental in challenging oppressive systems, promoting dialogue, and advocating for inclusive and sustainable peace.

Social and Economic Reconstruction: Ukrainian women have actively participated in social and economic reconstruction efforts in war-affected areas. They have been engaged in rebuilding infrastructure, revitalizing local economies, and creating livelihood opportunities for themselves and their communities. Their entrepreneurship, resilience, and determination have contributed to the restoration of social cohesion and economic stability.

Preserving Cultural Heritage: Women have played a vital role in preserving and promoting Ukrainian cultural heritage during the war. They have been involved in initiatives to safeguard traditional arts, crafts, music, and folklore, ensuring that these rich cultural expressions are passed down to future generations. By preserving cultural heritage, women have helped to maintain a sense of identity and continuity in the face of adversity.

Peacebuilding and Reconciliation: Ukrainian women have actively engaged in peacebuilding and reconciliation processes, working towards healing divisions and fostering dialogue among different groups. They have participated in peace negotiations, organized inter-community dialogues, and facilitated initiatives to promote understanding, tolerance, and

reconciliation. Women's contributions to peacebuilding are essential for creating a sustainable and inclusive peace in Ukraine.

Support for Families and Children: Women have shouldered significant responsibilities in caring for families and children affected by the war. They have provided emotional support, advocated for children's rights, and facilitated access to education and healthcare services. Women's dedication to ensuring the well-being and future prospects of their families and children has been instrumental in nurturing resilience and hope within war-affected communities.

The contributions of Ukrainian women during the war demonstrate their strength, resilience, and determination to protect and rebuild their communities. Recognizing and amplifying their efforts is crucial for promoting gender equality, empowering women, and building a more inclusive and sustainable post-war society. The participation of women in all aspects of peacebuilding and reconstruction is essential for achieving long-lasting peace, justice, and stability in Ukraine.

4.5 Role of Women in Conflict Zones

In conflict zones, women play multifaceted and indispensable roles that significantly contribute to various aspects of conflict management, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. Despite being disproportionately affected by the consequences of war, women exhibit resilience, leadership, and agency in the face of adversity. They serve as peacemakers and negotiators, actively participating in peace negotiations and reconciliation processes to ensure the inclusion of women's perspectives and interests, thus leading to more comprehensive and sustainable peace agreements. Women are at the forefront of providing humanitarian and relief aid, undertaking vital roles as healthcare providers, educators, and caregivers, ensuring the well-being, protection, and survival of affected populations. Their efforts in delivering food, healthcare, shelter, and psychosocial support are instrumental in alleviating suffering and promoting resilience within communities in crisis.

Moreover, women in conflict zones are essential community builders and social stabilizers. They engage in community organizing, grassroots initiatives, and local governance, fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable development. Through their tireless efforts, women rebuild the social fabric and strengthen community ties, serving as catalysts for healing and unity in the aftermath of conflict. Additionally, women act as advocates for human rights, challenging gender-based violence, discrimination, and systemic inequalities. They raise awareness about human rights violations, promote accountability, and demand justice for victims. Women's

advocacy efforts contribute to creating a culture of respect for human rights and fostering social change within post-conflict societies.

Economic recovery and empowerment are also areas where women demonstrate their invaluable contributions in conflict-affected regions. They engage in income-generating activities, entrepreneurship, and vocational training, thereby contributing to local economies and securing sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families. Women's economic empowerment enhances their agency, autonomy, and overall well-being, while also playing a crucial role in the overall economic recovery of conflict-ravaged areas. Furthermore, women actively engage in peace education and conflict resolution initiatives, promoting dialogue, tolerance, and understanding. They facilitate community-based programs, educational campaigns, and grassroots initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering reconciliation, and preventing the recurrence of violence.

In conflict zones, women assume the responsibility of protecting and empowering women and children, who are particularly vulnerable in such settings. They establish safe spaces, provide psychosocial support, and assist survivors of gender-based violence, ensuring their safety and access to essential services. Through their tireless efforts, women contribute to the protection and empowerment of the most marginalized members of society, fostering resilience and promoting the well-being of individuals who have been affected by conflict.

4.6 Women in the Ukrainian Army

Women in Ukraine are making significant strides in the country's armed forces, breaking barriers and expanding opportunities within the military. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in the recruitment and enlistment of women who are committed to serving their country and contributing to its defense and security. According to statistics, as of 2021, women make up approximately 15% of the total personnel in the Ukrainian Armed Forces⁹.

Ukrainian women have defied traditional gender stereotypes by actively taking on combat roles, serving on the frontlines alongside their male counterparts. These women have demonstrated their bravery, skill, and dedication to protecting their country against external threats. Statistics reveal that a significant number of women have been deployed to conflict areas, with more than 31,000 women serving in combat and combat support roles during the ongoing conflict in Eastern

⁹ Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. (2021). "Statistical Yearbook of the Armed Forces of Ukraine 2020.",

Ukraine¹⁰. This highlights their significant contribution to the operational readiness and effectiveness of the Ukrainian Army.

Moreover, women play crucial roles in support and logistics functions within the Ukrainian Army. They serve as medical personnel, engineers, communication specialists, intelligence analysts, and in various administrative and logistical positions. These roles are vital for the smooth functioning of military operations. In recent years, the number of women serving in non-combat roles has also seen an increase, with women accounting for approximately 24% of the total non-combat personnel in the armed forces¹¹.

Not only are Ukrainian women actively engaged in national defense, but they also contribute to international peacekeeping missions. According to data from the United Nations, Ukraine has deployed a significant number of female peacekeepers, with women comprising around 19% of the Ukrainian contingent in peacekeeping operations¹². This reflects the commitment of Ukrainian women to global peace and their ability to make meaningful contributions on the international stage.

The involvement of women in the Ukrainian Army not only highlights their dedication and resilience but also contributes to the overall effectiveness and readiness of the armed forces. By breaking down gender barriers, women enhance diversity within the military, bringing unique perspectives, skills, and approaches to military operations. The Ukrainian government acknowledges the importance of gender equality and actively supports initiatives that create an inclusive and supportive environment for women in the military. Efforts are being made to provide equal opportunities for training, career development, and advancement, as well as to address gender-specific challenges faced by women in the armed forces.

The increasing presence of women in the Ukrainian Army, along with the statistical evidence of their contributions, reflects a positive societal shift towards gender equality and empowerment. It demonstrates that women are capable of excelling in traditionally male-dominated spheres and challenges prevailing norms and stereotypes. The progressive inclusion of women in the military not only strengthens the defense capabilities of Ukraine but also serves as a powerful symbol of gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

According to official data, as of May 2023¹³, there are approximately 42,000 women serving in Ukrainian military formations, representing a significant proportion of the total military

¹⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (2020). "Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: Case Studies from Eastern Europe and Eurasia.",

¹¹ Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. (2021). "Statistical Yearbook of the Armed Forces of Ukraine 2020."

¹² United Nations Peacekeeping. (2021). "United Nations Peacekeeping Statistics - Female Military and Police Personnel."

¹³ Visit Ukraine Today. "Women on the Frontline: How Many Ukrainian Women Are Taking Part in the War and What You Need to Know About Their Exploits." Visit Ukraine Today, electronic resource, resource access

personnel. Among these women, approximately 5,000 are directly deployed on the front line. Sadly, during the Russian aggression, 107 women have been killed or injured while defending their country. The Ministry of Defense of Ukraine acknowledges that these women, along with their male counterparts, are the nation's finest sons and daughters.

It is worth noting that many Ukrainian women in the military have been recognized for their exceptional bravery and dedication. By the end of 2022, 350 Ukrainian women had been awarded state decorations for their service during the full-scale war, with two of them posthumously receiving the highest honor of Heroes of Ukraine. These women exemplify the courage and resilience demonstrated by Ukrainian military personnel in the face of adversity, and their contributions are deeply appreciated.

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the Ukrainian Armed Forces include not only Ukrainian citizens but also volunteers from other countries who have chosen to fight for Ukraine's freedom. One such example is Olga Simonova, known as "Simba," a Russian-born soldier who tragically lost her life while fighting for Ukraine's cause. Her selflessness and commitment serve as a reminder that the fight for freedom transcends borders and nationalities.

Another remarkable heroine of the Ukrainian army is Kateryna Polishchuk, nicknamed "Ptashka" (Bird). She served as a paramedic at the Azovstal plant, which came under siege by Russian forces for over a month. Ptashka gained recognition when videos of her singing amidst the Russian siege went viral, inspiring the defenders of Mariupol to remain steadfast. Eventually, she was captured along with other soldiers when the Ukrainian military voluntarily withdrew from the plant. However, in a subsequent large-scale prisoner exchange, Kateryna Polishchuk was able to return to Ukraine. Her return home was a moment of unexpected joy and relief.

Yulia Payevska, also known as "Tyra," is another courageous paramedic who has witnessed the devastating consequences of war over the course of eight years. On March 16, she was taken captive while transporting women and children from Mariupol to Zaporizhzhia. Yulia endured difficult conditions during her captivity, including days without food or water and a significant weight loss. However, she was finally released on June 17, 2022, as part of a prisoner exchange. The details of the exchange remain undisclosed, but the resilience demonstrated by Yulia Payevska and her fellow prisoners stands as a testament to their unwavering spirit.

These stories of Ukrainian women in the military highlight their bravery, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to defending their country. Their contributions, whether through their active service, resilience in captivity, or inspiring acts, demonstrate that Ukrainian women are not

only victims but also active participants in the fight for their nation's freedom. These women, along with their male counterparts, exemplify the indomitable spirit and determination of the Ukrainian people as they strive for peace, security, and a brighter future.

4.7TerOnlyFans

Ukrainian women are trying their best to help the Ukrainian army and some of them are doing it in unconventional ways. For example, there is now a movement that raises money through naked photos

OnlyFans is an online platform that allows content creators to share and monetize their content directly with their audience. It gained popularity primarily for its adult content section, where creators can share explicit material with subscribers in exchange for a subscription fee. However, OnlyFans also hosts a wide range of non-adult content, including art, music, fitness, and more.

The platform provides a space for creators to connect with their fans, build a following, and earn income from their content. Creators can set their subscription prices and offer additional paid content or personalized interactions through tips or pay-per-view features. OnlyFans has gained attention for providing a direct and interactive experience between creators and subscribers, allowing fans to support their favorite creators and access exclusive content.

TerOnlyFans¹⁴ is a play on the words "territorial defense" and "OnlyFans" (a service that allows you to publish content for money). This is how Nasta and Nastia named their volunteer project on Twitter. The essence of the movement can be described by a simple algorithm: people donate money for the needs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and temporarily displaced persons, send a screenshot of the receipt to the participants and receive a nudes, or an intimate photo. The goal of the project is to increase the number of donations for the needs of Ukraine and thus accelerate the victory.

Nastsassia Nasko stumbled upon her unique idea by accident. In the midst of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, she took to Twitter, seeking help to evacuate an acquaintance from the besieged city of Kharkiv. In a half-joking manner, she tweeted that she would send a nude picture of herself to anyone who could provide assistance. Surprisingly, within minutes, she received an influx of messages in her inbox. Honoring her promise, Nasko sent a nude photo to a man who offered help, successfully aiding her acquaintance's escape. Inspired by this experience, Nasko and her friend, Anastasiya Kuchmenko, launched "TerOnlyFans" on International Women's Day. This

¹⁴ TerOnlyFans. "TerOnlyFans - Donate for Ukraine." TerOnlyFans, electronic resource, resource access mode: <https://teronlyfans.com/english/>.

project adopts a similar model to the subscription-based platform OnlyFans, but with a twist: instead of creators receiving the money, all proceeds are directly donated to the Ukrainian army. Since its inception, TerOnlyFans has raised over \$700,000, with the majority of donations supporting Ukraine's Territorial Defense. A total of 35 women and three men, predominantly based in Ukraine, have volunteered to send pictures to donors, with only a fraction having prior experience on OnlyFans. The project has garnered support not only from Ukraine but also from donors in the Netherlands, France, and the UK, including a notable cryptocurrency payment of \$2,800. It is important to note that unlike traditional adult content platforms, TerOnlyFans does not entertain requests for pictures, as their primary objective is fundraising for the war effort rather than engaging in sex work.

4.8 Leadership of Ukrainian Women: During the War and Post-Ukraine's Victory

Since the unlawful and unprovoked aggression of Russia against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the Ukrainian women's movement immediately joined the national defense and resistance against the aggressor.

According to estimates from the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, women constitute approximately 15% of the total strength of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This aligns with global best practices and has become possible, in part, due to systematic legislative and advocacy efforts that have been ongoing since 2014.¹⁵

During the war, women stand alongside men on the frontlines, carrying out military tasks within the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including service in the Territorial Defense Forces.

In times of war, Ukrainian women's organizations often transform into humanitarian organizations, taking on the responsibility of addressing the most urgent problems faced by women who have been forced to change their lives in the face of mortal danger.

During the war, the work of female leaders within local communities is crucial. Despite the military threat, and at times the threat to their own lives, women remain with their communities. Examples include Tetyana Svyrydenko from the town of Ivankovo in Kyiv Oblast, who stayed and accepted the challenges of wartime as the head of a military-civil administration, and Svitlana Onyshchuk in Ivano-Frankivsk, who actively engages in informational activities.

¹⁵ "З 2014 року кількість жінок у Збройних Силах України зросла у 2,5 раза." Zmina.Info. electronic resource, resource access mode: <https://zmina.info/news/z-2014-roku-kilkist-zhinok-u-zbrojnyh-sylah-ukrayiny-zroslo-u-25-raza/>

Despite the difficulties and challenges encountered in operational activities during the war, national and local women's organizations and initiatives continue to operate actively in Ukraine.

Drawing on their experience from peacetime activities, women's organizations have been able to adjust their work promptly and reach out to various groups of women, particularly those who are vulnerable, identifying their needs during the war and providing support.

Impressive examples of such efforts include the Rapid Response Program for urgent women's issues initiated by the Ukrainian Women's Fund, support for internally displaced persons provided by the organization "Women's Perspectives" in Lviv, the Women's Veterans Movement, which established a rapid response headquarters to support both servicewomen and civilian women during the war, and the psychological support offered to women by the "Break the Circle" hub. These are just a few examples.

These examples demonstrate that the focused efforts to support Ukrainian women affected by Russian aggression have been timely and effective, and the gender-oriented approach on the ground has yielded results in swiftly identifying women's needs.

The joint efforts of the multi-factional association "Equal Opportunities" in different convocations of the Verkhovna Rada, where male and female members of parliament demonstrated unity and brought key legislative initiatives to life, have been fruitful. These initiatives include the implementation of gender quotas in elections, the abolition of "prohibited professions" that were inaccessible to women, the removal of restrictions for women in military service and admission to military lyceums, and the expansion of positions for female servicemembers.

This has created favorable conditions and increased opportunities for women's leadership in the political, economic, and social spheres at various levels. These range from the establishment of a state apparatus for gender policy led by the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy to the activation of national information campaigns, including support for women in elections and the prevention of domestic violence.

The more important fact is that 83%¹⁶ of Ukrainian refugees are women, the majority of whom are highly skilled professionals, entrepreneurs, or qualified workers who also plan to return home after the war.

It is crucial to involve women in all coordination and decision-making processes related to war response and proper planning of international assistance provided and to be provided after the

¹⁶ "З 2014 року кількість жінок у Збройних Силах України зросла у 2,5 раза." Zmina.Info. electronic resource, resource access mode: <https://zmina.info/news/z-2014-roku-kilkist-zhinok-u-zbrojnyh-sylah-ukrayiny-zroslo-u-25-raza/>

victory. A new "Marshall Plan" for Ukraine should be developed with active and comprehensive participation of women.

Women at the negotiating table are a greater chance for stable and long-lasting peace.

Moreover, international experience and the UN Global Study on the implementation of Resolution 1325¹⁷ indicate that women's participation in crisis and conflict resolution makes the decisions taken more sustainable and effective. When women are participants in negotiations, it increases the chances of long-term peace by 35%.

Therefore, in the peace process and negotiations, Ukraine should also draw on the best international practices and involve women in the negotiating group, which has not yet happened, unfortunately. After all, women at the negotiating table represent stable peace, especially considering the presence of numerous Ukrainian female politicians, human rights defenders, and activists who have proven their effectiveness and commitment to Ukraine's interests through their years of activities and active positions during peacetime.

Olena Bilozerka is a prominent figure in the Ukrainian media space.

She is a journalist, blogger, and also a professional military officer and sniper.

The Russians and separatists have created an image of Olena as a classic enemy. No wonder, as she fought in the Volunteer Ukrainian Corps "Right Sector" in 2014-2015, then in 2016-2017 in the Ukrainian Volunteer Army (UDA), and further trained as an officer before joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine (ZSU) in 2018.

Recently, the occupiers spread a fake news about the "elimination of sniper Bilozerka," publishing a photo of another deceased civilian woman.

Olena says that her enemies have "buried" her more than once. Despite the "amazon" image, Olena feels better in times of peace. She loves animals, especially her cats, and had only heard about post-traumatic stress disorder from others.

Today, many Ukrainian women are fighting for our freedom on the frontlines, in territorial defense, or in hospitals.

They have taken up arms, seek equipment for the Armed Forces, and provide medical care.

One of these women is Margaryta Rivchachenko, a journalist and public relations specialist from Kharkiv who currently lives and works in Kyiv.

Since the beginning of the war, she joined the territorial defense of the capital, and now her every day is dedicated to providing assistance.

On March 9, KPMG Ukraine organized an online meeting with thought leaders regarding the perception of the role of Ukrainian women during the war. This event is one of the activities

¹⁷ United Nations. UN Global Study on the Implementation of Resolution 1325. New York: United Nations, 2015.

of the "Scenario Modeling of Energy Supply and Demand for Renewable Events in the Government of Ukraine's Reconstruction and Modernization of Energy Infrastructure" project, supported by the UK Aid and implemented by Abt Britain and KPMG Ukraine.

The event was attended by Natalia Boyko, a member of the supervisory board of Naftogaz, Roxolana Pidlasa, Chair of the Budget Committee of the Verkhovna Rada, representative of the "Servant of the People" faction, and Katerina Levchenko, the government commissioner for gender policy, and Olena Makarenko, a partner at KPMG Ukraine.

During the discussion, the participants agreed that the perception of Ukrainian women in the world has changed significantly after February 24, 2022. First and foremost, the first lady, Olena Zelenska, played an important role in this matter.

Olena Zelenska has become the embodiment of the Ukrainian women's movement on the international stage. She has taken on a highly unconventional role, not only for herself but also for the institution of the first lady in general. She became the first lady to advocate for and lobby the supply of weapons to Ukraine. Although stereotypically a male topic, first ladies do not usually engage in such matters.¹⁸

Roxolana Pidlasa, Chair of the Budget Committee of the Verkhovna Rada, representative of the "Servant of the People" faction.

At the beginning of the war, many viewed Ukrainian women solely as victims. However, the Ukrainian women's movement today is working to be seen as active defenders of Ukraine. Ukrainian feminists are calling for the closure of the sky and the provision of weapons to Ukraine in order to achieve peace. There is no other way, as Russia is intent on the complete destruction of Ukraine.

Katerina Levchenko, Government Commissioner for Gender Policy

However, according to Deputy Roxolana Pidlasa, the perception of women's role in Ukrainian society is not so straightforward, and much work still needs to be done in this regard.

The full-scale war has reinforced the stereotype that men are protectors, while women are caretakers. Some fight, while others leave the country to protect their children. This contrast is used to undermine the fight for opportunities for women. It is often suggested that if women want equal rights, they should go to the frontlines. Therefore, in public discussions, speakers should emphasize more often the role that Ukrainian women have taken on in 2022 on the diplomatic and regular fronts, in the military.

¹⁸ Roxolana Pidlasa, Chair of the Budget Committee of the Verkhovna Rada, representative of the "Servant of the People" faction
(Source: <https://kpmg.com/ua/uk/home/media/press-releases/2023/03/yak-zminylosya-spryynyattya-ukrayinskykh-zhinok.html>)

Roxolana Pidlasa, Chair of the Budget Committee of the Verkhovna Rada, representative of the "Servant of the People" faction

Russian attacks have led to a significant portion of Ukrainians temporarily losing access to basic energy services, noted Natalia Boyko.

The disconnections caused by Russian shelling have deprived Ukrainian women of the advantages of living in a civilized society and returned them to the level of problems seen in countries that the UN conditionally calls the least developed. Once again, women are forced to light stoves, search for firewood, use portable gas burners, and other makeshift means to provide warmth, food, water, and heating for their loved ones. This greatly affects their quality of life.

Natalia Boyko, Member of the Supervisory Board of Naftogaz

However, the energy system of Ukraine is quickly being restored, thanks to the brave women who are diligently addressing the consequences of Russian shelling, despite the cold and danger.

These paraphrased statements highlight the evolving roles and challenges faced by Ukrainian women during the war, their activism, and the need for recognition and support.

Conclusions

This thesis has explored the psychological and sociological consequences of war and conflict on Ukrainian women, with a particular focus on Ukrainian women refugees. It has shed light on the concept of survivor guilt and its manifestation among Ukrainian women who have experienced the trauma and loss associated with war. Additionally, it has examined the broader sociological consequences of war, including displacement, disrupted community dynamics, and the resilience of Ukrainian women in the face of adversity.

Throughout this thesis, it has become evident that Ukrainian women refuse to be mere victims of war. Instead, they have emerged as powerful agents of change, actively involved in peacebuilding, activism, and contributing to their country's defense efforts. Ukrainian women, whether residing within Ukraine or as refugees in other countries, have demonstrated their unwavering commitment to their homeland and their determination to make a difference.

Despite the challenges they face, Ukrainian women have exhibited remarkable strength, resilience, and agency. They have taken on active roles in various spheres, including grassroots movements, civil society organizations, and political participation. Through their activism and peacebuilding efforts, Ukrainian women have sought to promote dialogue, bridge divides, and advocate for the rights and well-being of their fellow citizens.

Moreover, Ukrainian women have proven that their contributions go beyond traditional gender roles. They have joined the Ukrainian army, fought alongside their male counterparts, and

shown immense courage and dedication in defending their country. Their involvement in the military is a testament to their commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and their rejection of being passive victims. Ukrainian women have taken up arms and embraced their roles as protectors, demonstrating that gender should never be a barrier to one's commitment to their nation.

It is essential to recognize that Ukrainian women's fight for their country extends beyond the physical battlefield. Their resilience, activism, and determination to effect positive change contribute to the broader processes of rebuilding and reconciliation. By actively engaging in peacebuilding, advocacy, and community development, Ukrainian women challenge societal norms and contribute to the transformation of post-conflict societies.

Furthermore, Ukrainian women's refusal to be mere victims of war serves as an inspiration to women worldwide, demonstrating the power of collective action and the potential for gender equality even in the most challenging circumstances. Their experiences highlight the importance of recognizing and valuing women's agency, contributions, and leadership roles in conflict-affected settings.

Ukrainian women have proven to be instrumental in fostering social cohesion and community resilience, both within Ukraine and in host countries. They play a vital role in maintaining cultural traditions, supporting fellow refugees, and bridging cultural gaps. Their contributions to community development, integration, and social cohesion serve as a testament to their commitment to building a better future, not only for themselves but also for the societies they are a part of.

It is crucial to recognize and celebrate the agency and empowerment of Ukrainian women in the context of war and conflict. By highlighting their contributions, we challenge traditional narratives of victimhood and reveal the true strength and resilience of Ukrainian women. Their stories inspire and serve as a reminder that women play an essential role in shaping the present and future of their societies, even in times of crisis.

In conclusion, Ukrainian women refuse to be defined solely by their experiences of war. They embody the spirit of resilience, determination, and hope, and they are actively shaping a better future for themselves, their communities, and their country. As we continue to study and understand the psychological, sociological, and gendered dimensions of war, it is imperative to amplify the voices and experiences of Ukrainian women who, despite the challenges they face, stand strong, fight for their country, and strive for peace and justice.

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