

Dear ISSBD Members, Friends and Family,

We are living in very difficult times. On behalf of the ISSBD Executive Committee, we reach out to you with heavy hearts. We are facing two very difficult public health challenges: the pandemic of COVID19 and the uniquely American but also world-wide challenge of injustice and discrimination. As developmental scientists committed to understanding and promoting behavioral development, we have a role to play in addressing these challenges. Current experiences are unique both for what they teach us and for how they call us to action.

1. COVID19 – never has there been such an instant worldwide education of how human behavior matters. We have learned about how the virus spread – thru human contact; how it must be addressed – through human sheltering in place; about how we react/suffer from that social isolation. There have been interesting positive and negative behaviors: the numerous examples of how people reached out to those most vulnerable and socially isolated, the essential workers - from health care workers to grocery workers - has been truly remarkable and inspirational. But we've also seen an unfortunate increase in depression and domestic violence.
2. Injustice and Discrimination – the murder in the U.S. of a black man while being arrested has resulted in worldwide outrage including similar events in many other countries, e.g. Brazil (João Pedro) and France (Adama Traoré). Oftentimes we are oblivious to racism and related injustices. Recent events in the US, recorded and made public for all the world to see, have outraged us. Numerous additional cases are being identified. We have seen how human behavior – in the form of violent injustice takes its toll. We have seen how once confronted people react with outrage and urgency; we have seen support in cities throughout the U.S. and around the world. Despite some violent outbreaks, the number of peaceful protests has been truly extraordinary and heartening.

In this time of a global crisis, we are reminded of the many tragedies arising from economic and health inequalities among people around the world. We are also reminded of the importance of community, of coming together to understand, address, and solve these problems. We have seen evidence of people caring for one another, whether it is to take actions that protect the health of our loved ones, friends, and neighbors by preventing covid-19 spread or to join in peaceful protests to draw attention to the brutality widely experienced by many around the globe.

As experts in behavioral development, we have the potential to contribute in positive ways to addressing these and other pressing societal issues. To begin, we are creating a standing committee on Global Issues and Behavioral Development. We invite you to express your interest in serving on this committee and/or sharing with us ideas you might have for how we can use our expertise to address these and related issues going forward.

With respect, concern, and hope for our future,

On Behalf of Toni C. Antonucci, President and the ISSBD Executive Committee