



Peacebuilding with Women in Ukraine: Using Narrative to Envision a Common Future

By Maureen Flaherty

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Twenty years post-independence Ukraine remains split, still floundering toward viable democracy. Active participation in civic affairs required for democracy is unfamiliar for most Ukrainian citizens, having internalized centuries of divisive oppression under a series of authoritarian regimes. Democracy-building and peace-building require participant agency and voice; rising out of oppression, people often need support to speak about and transform their lived experiences.

Peacebuilding with Women in Ukraine: Using Narrative to Envision a Common Future, by Maureen P. Flaherty, explores the roles women's shared narrative, dialogue, and group-visioning play in the support of personal empowerment and bridge building between diverse communities. Despite participants' initial beliefs that their regional counterparts shared little in common with them, in the process of telling their personal life stories women were able to reflect upon their own values and strengths, and with this rooting, they were then able to reach out to others. Rather than looking for differences, participants sought ways to express a shared vision for an inclusive, functional, peace-building future for themselves, their families, and Ukraine as a whole.

Peacebuilding with Women in Ukraine is a model for emancipatory social action and social change, while the women's stories offer a window into the formative years and present-day lives of eighteen women born and raised in the Soviet Union. This study is a unique contribution to peace studies and to the history and building of a country that has most often had its history written for it.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a significant work that relates the process of creating peace in the midst of difficult international and political tensions. Scholars and activists concerned with social action, social justice, and women's issues on a global scale will find in this work not only an engaging story, but also a model that can shape future projects aimed at building bridges across great divides. This is a model study of emancipatory change that provides important insight into not only the challenges of such work, but also the possibilities for nurturing hope and real social change toward human liberation and justice. (Peggy Chinn, University of Connecticut)

Flaherty's research and paradigm study of Ukraine's women, with their hopes and aspirations for peace building and civil society, reveal a most creative force for change in contemporary Ukraine. (Roman Yereniuk, University of Manitoba)

This book opens the door into the life stories of Ukrainian women from two different regions, whose gripping and colorful narratives weave a rich tapestry of adaptation, resiliency, and humor that sustained them during war, communism, perestroika, and the transition to independence. Using methodologies that allow for deep and trustful story-sharing, Dr. Flaherty draws gendered insights into the peacebuilding resources found in these women's commitments to their family, communities, and forging of a new civic identity. (Janie Leatherman, Fairfield University)

About the Author

Maureen P. Flaherty is assistant professor in Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, University of Manitoba, Canada.

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