

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

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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