Introduction

Silent and hurried grey figures, walking with heads down, looking up only to assess safety in crossing the street, women in Post-Soviet Ukraine made their first impression on this visitor in December, 2000. A year later, women's chins were held more level to the ground and some red, green and purple could be seen in their outerwear. Occasionally there would be eye-contact with a stranger. By 2004, the streets of Lviv and Kiev were bustling with voices, laughter, arguments as women and men hustled about doing errands, stopping periodically on street corners to visit with a neighbour.

The history of Ukraine is fraught with territorial division after re-division. As Ukraine struggles to establish itself as a nation, there are many challenges beyond those of governmental politics and a struggling economy. With each shift in occupier came a shift in ideology and the confusion that comes with the new unknown (Czaplicka, 2000) (Billington, 1970). Many Ukrainian citizens are able to quickly cite what is not working for them, particularly when it comes to personal economics, but they are loathe to describe a picture of a future any different from their past. They are disappointed, dispirited and afraid. When basic needs are not being met, it is very difficult to consider anything beyond those needs (Maslow, 1954, 1970); however, if Ukraine is to move forward as a nation, the challenges of civic involvement rest squarely on the shoulders of its citizens.

Thesis underlying this project

What has this got to do with peace-building in Ukraine? Many citizens of Ukraine, supported by their language and history, believe that they can have no positive impact over the future of Ukraine; however, if Ukrainians are to actively influence changes evolving in their country, they must be able to channel the strength and courage to go beyond the tremendous challenges of meeting their physical needs. Until this happens, no government will be able to create a democracy in Ukraine. This project

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focuses in on women who reached the age of majority during Soviet times. Women in this age bracket tend to work two or three jobs and run households with adult children and now grandchildren as well as, often, their own parents. While they do not recognize it themselves, they have the power to influence the thinking of three generations of Ukrainians. In response to the spirit of helplessness felt by many Ukrainians, the project outlined here seeks to engage a small group of women on either side of Ukraine to tell their stories and begin to vision together a positive future for Ukraine. This paper provides background and rationale for the choice of methodology and participants in this project aimed to facilitate empowerment. Empowerment, particularly as it pertains to human rights and freedoms, is crucial for peace and justice.

My own motivation for involvement in this project was born from life-changing experiences as a social worker with a Canada-Ukraine partnered social development project during the first part of the twenty-first century. From my perspective, the privilege of facilitating empowerment with individuals and communities requires culturally appropriate strength-based approaches to involve all participants in a process of inquiry as to their experiences of the world, barriers (internal and external) to self-actualization, and the knowledge and resources necessary in the process of self actualization. This is a collaboration undertaken with humility on the part of the invited facilitator.

Background: Viewing the landscape

<u>Political & Economic Change</u>

In the shift from Soviet style socialism to fledgling free enterprise and even possibilities of democracy, Ukraine has experienced 'complimentary' shifts. People have gone from having physical needs, security, and a work-related identity provided by the State to a personal struggle to meet basic needs, no financial security, a free-for-all market supported by shadow economy and no clear picture

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of what is possible, let alone to be dreamed for the future. These structural changes also leave a cognitive dissonance impacting the individual's sense of purpose and identity, his/her sense of power (Maslow, 1954, 1970). Friere (1970) agrees that a society can suffer from internalized oppression inhibiting individuals and groups from recognizing and using what power they have to improve their lot. Indeed, to move from a place of being a small cog in an enormous wheel powered by the State, the individual must overcome considerable internalized oppression. Curiously, there is no word or phrase in Ukrainian that translates the English word, "assertive". There are, however, words for "passive" and "aggressive".

Politics, Economics, Culture and Identities

In the fleeting moments when she has time to put up her feet the mature Ukrainian citizen might ponder her place in her home, her community and in Ukrainian society. All around, the scenery is changing. Groups previously functioning in the shadows in Soviet Ukraine are now becoming more visible as new merchants step out of their Soviet apartments and build new, large homes. Ukrainian women, nurturers and sharing the provider role with their male partners, find economics to be a huge challenge to which reputation and role are tightly bound. These challenges are the things she is most likely to discuss with other women. The idea that she might have some impact on political power is just beginning to dawn on her.

In addition to and not separate from the influences of capitalism on economics and culture in the case of Ukraine, family conflict is fueled by challenges to gender roles and identity. With a loss of guaranteed work for any adult, the reality is that whoever in a household can earn any money at all takes that job inside Ukraine or abroad (Kennedy, 1997) (Malarek, 2004). Along with political dissolution has come economic crisis in which women often become sole providers in what have traditionally been male-headed households. Once their mandatory military service is completed,

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many men are left at home or on the streets unemployed. This new fractured focus contributes not only to economic and identity issues for men, but to the double or triple bind of Ukrainian women. Ukraine has historically been an authoritarian, patriarchal society, albeit one where women had similar work expectations as men.

Present day transitioning roles and identities of men and women are further challenging the identity of the cultural group known as Ukrainians. Ukrainians have historically been treated as peasants and servants by Russians. Singing the once popular song, “My address is the Soviet Union” (Hayduk, 2002), was a tolerable concession to make for regular bread and butter. Now, the comfort of sharing a commonly identified oppressor is fading away. Also gone are the many social/cultural institutions established in Soviet times. These were often utilitarian activity clubs focusing citizens on some pride filling aspect of the Ukrainian culture while at the same time highlighting the indebtedness of the individual to the state for providing this opportunity (Hayduk, 2002). Now, with the infrastructure shaken or non-existent especially in areas that are not overtly pro-Russian, social process theorists (Schellenberg, 1996) would likely predict that more overt conflict is ripe for the country and indeed individual and group conflicts are becoming more obvious. Individuals are more vocal in expressing their desire for change, usually hoping for political reform with a capitalist base. These people are challenged by Russia originating neighbours among others who want to go back to the security of economic and social control that came with the old Soviet Union. Old Soviet methods of silencing dissidents are still evidenced in the disappearance of several controversial journalists and confirmed deaths of others who have challenged remaining Russian powers (Politkovskaya, 2003). Such information usually comes to Ukrainian citizens first by rumour – and then though foreign press and other media including the internet.

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Background threats may have thwarted some initially. More recently men and women are realizing new identities as they form political parties that are clearly anti-Soviet. The Orange Revolution, supporting the election of Viktor Yuschenko and his party surfaced in full and peaceful force in winter, 2005, providing a concrete focus for nervous/hopeful Ukrainians (Krushelnycky, 2006).

Promoting understanding and civic involvement through empowerment in Ukraine

The three pillars of peace are said to be identity/culture, power and knowledge (Senehi, class notes, 2008). These three are inextricably linked. For Ukrainians, none of these pillars have been solid or clearly identified throughout history as territories have been occupied, claimed by another country and reoccupied. In Ukraine, there have been many times when it's not only disadvantageous, but also dangerous to be identified as Ukrainian. Even if a Russified individual was in the top ranks of the Soviet system, it was dangerous to know too much about that system. But, knowledge is power (Friere, 1970) and power comes before politics (Foucault, 1980). In order for Ukraine to emerge as a functioning independent nation, the people of Ukraine must be able to realize and access their own knowledge and power.

So, what does accessing power or empowerment mean to the citizens of Ukraine? Feminists conceptualize power as the capacity for exercising agency within a context that may have a limited amount of resources and advantages available to each party. (French, 1985; Dominelli, 2002). The concept of power over is associated with coercion, domination, and control of others. Power over implies the 'othering' of an individual or group and is also associated with suppression of another's power – oppression. This is the experience of Ukraine. Furthering the power of oppression to maintain inequities, internalized oppression is a phenomenon existing when the oppressed or

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disempowered no longer require controls by the oppressor to maintain the status quo of inequities. Internalized oppression implies that the oppressed has absorbed the belief that he or she deserves, has, or is of less power and value. One must accept one's lot in life as 'natural'. This belief becomes largely unconscious and integrated into one's personal and cultural identity.

Empowerment is generally seen as a transformative process through which people gain understanding of themselves and their world and, through this, greater control over their lives as participants in the world. This self-awareness is accompanied by recognition that the self is not deficient, but human, with a right to live fully with some self-determination, connected with others.

Some fundamental components associated with empowerment are self-efficacy, political awareness and political participation (Rappaport, 1984). Political awareness or critical consciousness allows an individual's sense of social justice to develop through 'liberation education (Friere, 1970) or transformational education that helps people think critically about their relationship to political structures and authorities. This involves asking "what should be?" Political participation taken in its broadest sense is another element of empowerment through which the individual and community is aware not only of what should be (human rights) but also that they are elements of change or of the status quo. Through assuming their political rights and responsibilities the individual and/or the community takes control of its own life.

Processes of empowerment involve interaction and relationship with the self and with others. There is not one process of empowerment. Arguably, in the process of individual empowerment, the whole community benefits and is assisted in its own empowerment. Community empowerment develops through collective, collaborative involvement in participatory endeavours that increase the capacity for community efficacy. A group that fosters empowerment fosters this strength and growth

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not only for the group as a whole, but for each individual within the group for it is the combination and collaboration of the individuals that comprise the strength of the group.

Objectives for this Project

As an outsider and pracademic[i] I have no investment in the outcome of choice for governance in Ukraine. As a global citizen, I do have a responsibility to assist people to live peacefully and wholly wherever they are. In my capacity as a social worker and university instructor, I have a previously established collegial relationship with some men and women in Ukraine. This relationship has both advantages and disadvantages as I offer my interest and energy to two different Ukrainian communities. As a middle-aged Caucasian Canadian grandmother, I come with a gendered lens, considering the perceived power that may come with age, ethnicity and gender. This lens, best acknowledged, will influence the exploration of power and empowerment with women in Ukraine (Dominelli, 2001) (Ristock, 2002). Working with similar age and same gendered people should help to level the power differences. My age-mates also happen to be the group of women who have lived as adults in Soviet times. The idea is that if women can explore the elements of empowerment, they may themselves be better able to access their own power and the power of their communities for the betterment of Ukraine. Because Ukraine is split in its vision of future, this will necessitate working with one group of women from the West of Ukraine – largely nationalists by inclination and history and, separately a group from Crimea in East Ukraine – an area that is much more pro-Russian than its western counterpart.

I would like, with critical curiosity to enter into some phenomenological inquiry including, but not restricted to the following qualitative elements:

- Participatory action research through storytelling

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- In-depth interviews – individual and group
- Participant observation

The first individual interviews will be conducted soon after the introduction of the project in order to help the women to articulate a little about their own lives that they may not have the opportunity to share while in the group itself. At this point, I would also like to be clear that the involvement of the individual in the project is strictly voluntary and that my only agenda is exploration with the women and assisting them to find their own voices. Of course I will advise them of the dissertation aspect of the project and obtain their permission to write about them as well as take their pictures. I will be clear that no pictures will be used on my part without their permission. Since I will be using an interpreter for the entire process, permission will be needed for both interpreter and photographer to be part of the process.

Final individual interviews will be conducted at the end of the project, once all of the group work has been completed. The focus of these interviews will be for the participants to reflect upon their experience – its value and challenges as well as to express their future plans, whatever they may be.

Group interviews will be conducted with the small regional groups at the beginning of the project and at the end. Additionally, a large group interview will be conducted near the beginning of the time together as a large group and at the end of the project. The initial group interviews will be used to facilitate choices for the group as to more in-depth exploration of different topics or any action decisions that may be made by the group(s).

In addition, participants will be asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire constructed by myself in collaboration with the group. Interpreters and photographer will be included in the evaluation process as they will by their very presence be part of the group processes.

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Questions for Exploration:

Changes I experienced in women who began to speak in more subjective ways (e.g. stating what they believed, what they wanted) left me with many questions I would like to explore further. An area where I would like to begin to focus is described briefly as follows:

How do women who have lived as adults in Soviet times in Ukraine see themselves in this Post-Soviet era?

- How do they see themselves as individuals?
- How do they see themselves in relationships?
- How do they see themselves as community members?
- What would they like for themselves?
- What would they like for their families/ children/ grandchildren?
- What would they like for Ukraine?

Exploring these questions should provide the women with material to rebuild and strengthen the pillars of identity, power and knowledge. Narrative and storytelling are powerful tools for safe exploration and communication with self and others.

Storytelling on the Way to Understanding

Sustainable problem-solving requires mutual trust and confidence in the interpersonal relationship (Rothman, 1997) (Umbreit, 1995). There are many, sometimes conflicting stories told about Ukraine. Some of these stories are told by people who have never seen Ukraine as an entity unto itslef. Other stories are shared within the country by one group about another and are influenced not only through direct experience and interaction of the citizens, but also through the various genres

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of media. As late as 2002 flats within large Ukrainian cities still had built-in radios that were tuned to a government station[ii]. Stories about Ukraine and the world outside were still under government influence. Group histories and personal narratives continued to be constructed and interpreted by whatever information was available to those telling the stories.

What stories can and must now be told? Herman (Herman, 1992/1997) states, "Helplessness and isolation are the core experiences of psychological trauma. Empowerment and reconnection are the core experiences of recovery."(p. 197) There is a trauma and internalized oppression shared by the populace of Ukraine who lived in Soviet times. This is not to say that others have not experienced trauma, but the very conditions of living with language and experience denied, with no voice for decades is the common experience of Ukrainians by virtue of being Ukrainian (Memmi, 1965) (Amis, 2002). Centuries of repeadedly shifting occupation and politics has further confused identities within Ukraine (Rubenstein, 2003). At times the west was controlled by Poland or Germany while the east was occupied by Russia.

As travel within Ukraine now exceeds the trips to state-sponsored camps for many Ukrainians, there are more opportunities to influence understanding and meaning about the different experiences of fellow-Ukrainians living in different regions. There are numerous internationally sponsored projects assisting development of social and other services in Ukraine. These projects now connect people from different regions for education and training of trainers. While studying and working together, people converse about their day to day lives. They tell stories. Storytelling is low-tech, easily accessible, direct interpersonal communication (Senehi, 2002). Storytelling provides the teller with agency and voice, both of which have been silenced over many years of fear and despair (Fanon, 1963). Sustainable problem-solving requires mutual trust and confidence in interpersonal relationships (Rothman, 1997).

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Constructive storytelling offers the possibility of mutual recognition, creating opportunities for exploration, growth and understanding. Through this understanding grows the possibility of ongoing relationships that facilitate problem solving and common visioning (Senehi, 2002). Shared understanding is shared knowledge – one of the cornerstones and/or pillars of living, positive peace (Lederach, 1995).

Storytelling provides the opportunity for the narrator to stand firm and share a 'truth' that can be experienced as well by the listerner in a non-threatening engagement. The listener is invited safely into the narrator's world providing opportunities for recognition of self and other.

"Stories simultaneously engage mind and heart" (Senehi, 2002, p. 52). Peace-building – healing of any trauma or conflict requires healing of emotion and intellect (Senehi, 2002) (Herman, 1992/1997). Indeed, storytelling has become a way of addressing historical trauma and has been key in thr foundation of truth commissions. Able to cross time and geography from the past to the present and into the future, storytelling may be used to explore seemingly contradictory experiences in a non-threatening way. After all, they are 'only stories' – neither right nor wrong.

Storytelling with Women in Ukraine

> "Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other." (Stanley Aronowitz in Friere, p.8)

Dialogue requires that the speakers are aware of themselves and the reality that they will impact the dialogue in the way they speak, in their tone and in their silences as well as through the content of the discussion. Mutual respect is a requirement for open communication and mutual respect is something that may be taught. Facilitating mutual respect is tolerance for discomfort and difference.

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This means being able to 'contain' or entertain two seemingly opposing ideas in the mind at the same time – dismissing neither out of hand. Tolerance for one's own uncomfortable feelings and thoughts is a beginning step to being able to hear the ideas and accept the emotion of another. This tolerance for discomfort allows the listener to quietly receive emotional information and honour it by doing nothing – neither turning away from it nor trying to fix it. When the information is shared in the form of story, it is about the past and the past cannot be altered – only our perception of the past may change.

Some ways to foster and teach tolerance through storytelling and preparation for storytelling are shared by international storyteller, Laura Simms (Simms, 2003). These exercises provide a base for women of Ukraine to share their stories with each other. These and other exercises are shared in Appendix A and Appendix B of this paper. The sequence in which exercises will be used and whether they will be used will depend upon what occurs in consultation with the participants. My hope is that the women will enjoy exploring their personal stories, sharing them and folk tales with each other as they are able. A further hope is that the women will involve themselves in a kind of retreat situation with women from the east of Ukraine meeting and sharing stories and song with women of the West. Hopefully these encounters will be the conduit for visioning together. Whatever the women decide to do, I hope to facilitate them in this joining, this peace-building process.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of recent Ukrainian history and present day challenges for Ukrainian citizens – women in particular. Struggling to develop a civil society of their own, Ukrainians reach to understand and embrace their own knowledge and power – resources that can move Ukrainians beyond struggle for day to day survival to collaborative work toward a strong, healthy civil society. Many elements of Ukraine's collective power are found in personal and cultural

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stories which, brought into the twenty-first century, can help rebuild the pillars of peace upon which will stand the civil society of Ukraine.

Appendix A: Suggested Exercises for Opening to Self and Others

Exercises developed using information from …… unless otherwise stated. (Simms, Becoming the World - university course EDUA, 2008)

Opening to self:

Grounding exercise*:* Standing in a circle, participants are invited to spend some time looking around, seeing what is there, who is there, but not engaging with the people or environment. Starting from the right side, participants are asked to notice the walls, the windows, each other's feet, etc. The heads move in a circular fashion – from right to left – taking in the whole room, but 'with soft eyes' not acknowledging each other.

Variations: Listening to the sounds around us.

Listening to the sounds within us.

Alternate Grounding Exercise: (controlled falling to the ground) Individuals are instructed to take a ten-count to have their bodies move from standing to lying on the ground. There is a pause while on the ground and then the individual(s) take a count of fifteen to rise to standing, hopefully through continuous motion. This can be then varied to, for example, six seconds to go down and thirty-count to rise, etc.

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Opening to Other:

***Bow of Acknowledgement*:** Again in a circle, one person begins by walking into the centre and making eye contact with another person. Person # 2 joins the other face to face in the circle. Person #1 bows. Person #2 bows. They exchange places. The exchanges continue until everyone has been in the circle.

Variations:

- Person #1 bows, says own name, or name of object or animal. Person #2 bows, says own name, or name of object or animal (or special place). The participants bow one more time to each other and trade spaces.
- Person #1 enters the circle, and is met by Person #2. They bow. #1 reaches out to meet #2's hand. Maintaining eye contact and contact as long as feels right, the couple moves around so that they are positioned to go to each other's spaces and they exchange spots.

Note: This exercise, unlike the grounding exercise is best demonstrated by the facilitator and described as first done. As the group progresses there should be less need for explanation and demonstrations should serve to lead people to join.

***Conducting the Orchestra/Mirroring*:** This exercise follows organically from the bowing exercises. In pairs, one person is the conductor and the other the 'orchestra'. The conductor moves arms and other body parts and the 'orchestra' makes sounds in response.

Variations: One person conducts the other's movements. Eventually, with no words spoken, the pair is mirroring each other. As people become more adept at this exercise they will be able to switch who is 'leading' without openly communicating to the point that they may not even know who, if either is initiating the movement.

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All of these exercises may be done to music once the group has become familiar with them.

Writing Exercises:

The following written exercises may be used first to help the individual focus on her experience and then shared quietly one to one as a way of beginning storytelling. When the stories are shared, the originator speaks in the third person e.g. "there was a…". The listener is then asked to tell the story back, inserting the author of the story into it e.g. "There was a small girl who used to love to play…"

A special place to play:

Writing: Individuals are asked to remember a place they liked to play when they were children. In loving detail write a description of the place – where it was in proximity to other places like home, etc. What did the place look like? How did it smell? What sounds did you hear there? What did you do there? How did things feel there (tactile)?

Sharing: When the stories are shared, the originator speaks in the third person e.g. "there was a…". The listener is then asked to tell the story back, inserting the author of the story into it e.g. "There was a small girl who used to love to play…"

Letter to a child/grandchild

Reflecting upon the reality of Ukraine today, try to explain this to a grandchild in a letter of reassurance and care. Remember to use language that a small child will understand. Remember also that the child is living and will live in the country - hopefully in health and peace. Try to offer the child understanding and hope. This will likely involve keeping free from the details. You may need

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to find a kind way to communicate some of history to the child in order to explain what changes are occurring.

Group Sharing

About my name**:** This exercise is meant to help the participant focus on who she is – and then begin to safely communicate that with others. In groups of five to ten, each individual takes a turn to talk a bit about her name, its origin, etc.

A special object: Individuals are asked in advance to bring an object that is special to them. The object should be small enough to fit into one hand. In the same small groups, participants take turns sharing the meaning of their special object with participants.

Constructing a Personal Banner/Prayer Flag

Tibetan tradition includes construction of prayer flags that share stories and blessings believed to be sent on the wind throughout the world. In this banner-making activity, group participation is involved even though individuals work on their own banners. After construction, the banners may be hung at the places of the group's choosing. They should be visible at least for the time of the group gathering so that they provide inspiration to the group.

Materials:

- Pieces of cloth or strong paper, at least 8.5 x 11 inches each
- Pencils, magic markers, crayons
- Glue, tape,
- Rope or ribbon

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- Scissors

Directions:

- Give everyone a piece of paper to design her own flag. Show examples of flags, especially Tibetan prayer flags.
- Choose colours that best feel like yours or your family's colours.
- Colour vividly, including in it the place you played as a child, your special object, other symbols of your life. Feel free to make a border with symbols or words.
- Hang all of the flags on the same long rope so that they flutter together. They can be hung in the room or out of the window from a tree or pole.

Sharing voice through song:

The physical act of singing changes endorphins. The act of singing in a group builds community. Sharing songs with one another –serenading each other promotes understanding and respect.

In the regional groups have the women first each indicate a favourite song from childhood and one from adulthood. Share them with each other, singing together as many as they can. Each small group then chooses a couple of songs to sing to the other group when they first meet them – welcoming songs. If people have trouble thinking about songs, remind them of lullabies and folk-songs as well as nursery songs.

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Appendix B: Visioning the Future

The Path Process

Overview

There are many ways to facilitate discussion and consensus-building among people who may have diverse points of view, but for some reason they are called to work together. The PATH process is one exercise that can be used in a variety of settings from individual to group, from corporate to grass-roots community. In each of these settings, one of the main goals is relationship-building – finding commonalities and visioning a hopeful future. Beyond visioning, this exercise also offers the possibility to move to action planning which in itself can seem impossible, but with this process, action planning can be broken down into very small, 'do-able' steps.

The exact origins of this exercise are unknown. The exercise has been used for personal planning in the mental health field, for organizational visioning and strategic planning and for conflict resolution within organizations.

The examples that are used as handouts are from community development literature, and from team or organizational development literature. Of particular interest is the reference to the use of 'appreciative inquiry' as both a philosophy for the facilitator and a guiding principle for the process.

The actual diagram of the PATH process was drawn from memory and consultation (Rudy, D., 2003[1]; Bronstein, D., 2007[2])

[1] The exercise was used by the author in consultation with Dana Rudy in a team-building and strategic planning exercise conducted at Lviv Polytechnic University for the new Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in June of 2003.
[2] Dvora Bronstein, a Mental Health professional has used this exercise with clients over the years to help them focus on how there present situation and behaviour fits into their overall plan for themselves. This is done after the individual has created his/her own five year vision and plan.

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Laying the groundwork: Setting the Stage

First, people are invited to join together for at least a day, and preferably a week-end. They should be invited in advance with the understanding that the exercise is about building and hope. People should be invited to wear comfortable clothing and to leave cell phones at home. The setting should be retreat-like in that it is physically comfortable and free from distractions. Arrangements for meals and refreshments should be made in advance, having consulted participants about dietary restrictions, etc. It is a good idea to plan for plenty as this work/play takes lots of energy and food adds sustenance, comfort and helps create a celebratory atmosphere.

It is important to outline the schedule for the day at the very first, making sure that people are aware of break-times, where the bathrooms are, etc. Introductions of/by the facilitator are usually followed by an ice-breaking exercise that will help people to introduce each other. It is good to ask if people need anything else in order to make them comfortable.

Different from most planning processes, the PATH process starts with first looking at commonalities and 'positives' that people in the group can identify. One way to start this off is to hand out small sheets of colored paper and markers and ask people to close their eyes for a moment and think about what personal qualities are most important to them – what qualities they most want to be remembered for. Ask the participants to write one quality on each of the two pieces of paper and set them where they can see them for the duration of the path process. Sometimes, if the group is open to it, the facilitator may ask each participant to speak aloud the qualities they have noted.

The Process Itself

For the purpose of this workshop, we will use the scenario/role play in Appendix A (Rothman, J.) as base.

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The Vision

The facilitator will have already put a large drawing on the wall (Appendix B). S/he reviews the present situation and invites the group members to comment in non-blaming terms. The facilitator then asks the participants to begin to brainstorm about what they would like to have if they didn't have to worry about how they 'got there'. People are advised that there is no need for agreement on any of the contributions. As individuals talk, the facilitator or a volunteer writes down the ideas – or even draws pictures. This part of the exercise, the visioning part should take an hour or two, depending on the number of participants and their mood. It should not be rushed.

After this part is finished, it is a good time to have a break of some sort, including refreshments and stretching. When the group reconvenes, the facilitator or a volunteer reads the ideas out loud and people may comment or elaborate. Relish the moment.

What Do We Already Have?

The next step is to have the participants reflect upon what pieces of the vision are already in existence – even if they are very small fragments. These should be noted in the appropriate column. If the group is having difficulty with this part, or even with the visioning section, they may be invited to form smaller groups so that they can discuss more freely and then bring their comments back to the larger group.

What do we want to have done/in place in 5 years time?

Using brainstorming as noted, the group is then asked to think about what they would like and think could be possible to accomplish within 5 years time. As suggestions are written or drawn, discussion and comments are encouraged, keeping the atmosphere as collegial as possible. If

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participants decide to ‘think big’, that is fine. If possible, the end of this section is a good time to break for the day.

What do we want in one year? In one month?

The process is repeated with a one year period in mind. After this, it is very important to take a break. When people convene, if they are a large group, it is good to move to small groups and have them think seriously about what might be done in a month’s time – what can be committed to. As well, the group is asked to consider who they would need to enlist outside of the participants to help with the process. When the group reconvenes all of these responses should be noted on the wall/paper.

Who will be responsible for what?

At this point, people are asked to commit themselves to take on some aspect of the plan. If they are not able to do the task themselves, people are encouraged to commit to being responsible for getting a specific task done within the specified time. People are asked to reflect upon the time limit set and their own abilities and commitments and take time to make themselves committed deadlines for completion of tasks. Before the group disbands for the day, they are also invited to set a meeting time for progress review – perhaps in a week – or at the most, at the end of the month. At that time they will review their progress and decide if different or more people need to be enlisted and if their plan needs to be adjusted – and to celebrate their accomplishments.

Celebrate and Acknowledge the Hard work: Debrief

The last hour of the gathering is best assigned to group reflection. One way to do this is to have a ‘check-out’ or talking circle. Seated in a circle, the participants take turns sharing how they are

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feeling at the moment. The facilitator may summarize and invite people to refer again to the papers with their qualities on them – and to take them home and post them somewhere they are in easy view. Note: The above may be done with each regional group first. Then, if all are in agreement, we will come together to celebrate and vision.

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[i] Term coined by Dr. Sean Byrne and Dr. Jessica Senehi, autumn, 2007. This is a combination of the terms, practitioner and academic – a combination to be sought by the student in Peace and Conflict studies at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Manitoba, Canada.

[ii] A personal visit to Lviv, Ukraine in autumn, 2002 provided the shocking realization that the radio in my rented flat could only be turned down, not off. This radio was hard-wired, as were those in other flats, into the Soviet-style building housing the apartment. A return visit in January, 2003 found the state-sponsored radios no longer in commission.

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