
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Description of the Field

Peace and conflict resolution is an interdisciplinary academic field that analyzes the causes of war and systemic oppression, and explores processes by which conflict and change can be managed so as to maximize justice while minimizing violence. It encompasses the study of economic, political, and social systems at the local, national, and global levels, and examines ideology, culture, and technology as they relate to conflict and change. In different settings, this field of study is known variously as "peace and conflict studies," "peace and security studies," "peace and world order studies," "justice and reconciliation studies," and so on. What distinguishes this field from others; however, is a concern with the modalities of peace and the methods of peacemaking.

Career-related activities within this field include policy research, legislative lobbying, public education, petitioning and protest action, community service, and intercultural diplomacy.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

Entry level positions in the peace and conflict field are diversified and often highly competitive. Salary levels range from low 20's to mid 30's at entry level depending on the size of the organizational budget, number of staff, and qualifications. The functional titles will include analyst, program associate/assistant, education coordinator, research assistant, public relations liaison and regional monitor.

This field has no direct or specified career path. Acquiring essential skills in the peace and conflict resolution field can be initiated through involvement and concern with the social issues affecting most communities. An understanding and knowledge of history and how it applies to a conflict situation as well as strong cross-cultural interaction skills are valuable assets in this field.

Demand

The unprecedented changes in the world community have not prevented conflict from continuing unabated. Thus, the demand for new, more effective means to resolve conflicts between nations and peoples increases the opportunities in the field. Many of the mediation skills can be acquired in a domestic setting and then transferred to the international arena, and many volunteer opportunities can lead to full-time employment opportunities.

As an interdisciplinary field conflict resolution positions can be found in a variety of organizations not traditionally thought of as "Peace Groups." For example, development organizations like CARE and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are increasingly recognizing the important linkage between development and conflict resolution. The creation of the World Bank's Post-Conflict Unit and the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service demonstrate that governmental and multilateral organizations are also recognizing the importance of this growing field. However, paid professional positions in this field are difficult to obtain unless the candidate has related experience and relevant education.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

A strong commitment to social issues and interest in international relations are necessary to build a career in conflict resolution. Educational background should emphasize research and analytical methods. The shared sense of a common purpose being pursued for a socially conscious cause will sometimes create a less than structured environment where flexibility is a required characteristic. Foreign languages can assist a job search in this field due to its international nature. Teaching and training skills acquired through education or work also are applicable.

The enthusiastic involvement with public interest organizations as an intern and/or volunteer will help to develop a network important in receiving an offer for a professional job. Overseas field experience, especially in a developing country, and experience in a multicultural section of a local community or city is highly recommended.

A graduate level degree is almost essential to progress in the field because of the functional expertise it demonstrates. The methods utilized in evaluating and analyzing conflict and in resolving such situations or potential situations are often learned through a combination of experience and higher education.

Sample Group of Employers

- Alliance for International Conflict Resolution - www.aicpr.org
- American-Mideast Education & Training Services - www.amideast.org
- American Civil Liberties Union - www.aclu.org
- American Friends Service Committee - www.afsc.org
- Amnesty International - www.amnestyusa.org
- Carter Center - www.cartercenter.org
- CARE, Inc. - www.care.org
- Carnegie Council on Ethics & International Affairs - www.cceia.org
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - www.ceip.org
- Catholic Relief Services - www.crs.org
- Center for War/Peace Studies - www.cwps.org
- Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service - www.fmcs.gov/internet
- The Fund for Peace - www.fundforpeace.org
- International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) - www.incore.ulst.ac.uk
- The Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution - www.iimcr.org
- Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy - www.imtd.org
- Institute for Policy Studies - www.ips-dc.org
- Institute for World Affairs - www.iwa.org
- International Alert - www.international-alert.org
- International Crisis Group - www.intl-crisis-group.org
- Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice - <http://peace.sandiego.edu>
- National Peace Foundation - www.nationalpeace.org
- Mercy Corps - www.mercycorps.org
- Non-Violence International - www.nonviolenceinternational.net
- Peace Brigades International - www.peacebrigades.org
- Peace Makers Trust - www.peacemakers.ca
- Peace Vox - www.peacevox.com
- Search for Common Ground - www.sfcg.org
- TransAfrica - www.transafricaforum.org
- US Institute of Peace - www.usip.org
- The United Nations – www.un.org
- The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation - www.hewlett.org
- Woodrow Wilson International Center - www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm
- World Policy Institute - www.worldpolicy.org

Future Challenges of the Profession

Practical experience, theoretical insight, and regional expertise each has its value, but the combination of knowledge from each of these groups will be necessary to impact today's complex and volatile world (U.S. Institute of Peace). The inability to gather adequate resources from the world community to resolve conflict situations will continue to frustrate the hope for a defining commitment to a new world order.

The self-determination movement and the recognition based on democracy and the rule of law that comes with it cannot succeed without international development initiatives. This link between development assistance and conflict resolution implies an increase in opportunities with development organizations. Sustainable development combined with democracy and the rule of law in struggling countries will only flourish with cooperation in the international arena to improve economic relationships.

Funding is always a major challenge for any internationally focused organization. This is especially true in the field of international conflict resolution as organizations struggle to obtain funds from governmental organizations, membership dues and charitable foundations. Furthermore, many organizations have difficulty reconciling the funder's/donor's/contributer's desire for tangible results with the intangible nature of their projects. Quantifying the results of projects which hope to reduce future conflict by focusing on communication, dialogue and inner-change can be especially difficult. Therefore, innovative fundraising ideas and a commitment to procuring new revenue sources are useful skills that can make a candidate more attractive.

Resources for Additional Information

Associations

- Association for Conflict Resolution - www.acresolution.org
- American Political Science Association Conflict Processes Section - www.apsanet.org
- American Sociological Association Peace, War & Social Conflict Section - www.peacewarconflict.org
- Peace and Justice Studies Association - www.peacejusticestudies.org
- International Peace Research Association - <http://soc.kuleuven.be/pol/ipra>
- National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution – www.apecemaker.net

Internet Resources

- IGC PeaceNet - www.igc.org
- Peaceweb - www.apecemaker.net

Publications

- *Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Third World and US Volunteer Opportunities*, by Jennifer S. Willsea, Meagan Reule, Food First Books, 2003.
- *Becoming a Mediator: An Insider's Guide to Exploring Careers in Mediation*, by Peter Lovenheim, Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- *Peace & World Security Studies: A Curriculum Guide*, Edited by Michael T. Klare, Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1994.