CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Description of the Field
Peace and conflict resolution studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that draws from anthropology, sociology, political science, law, and other disciplines in analyzing the causes of war and systemic oppression, and exploring processes by which conflict and change can be channeled to maximize justice while minimizing violence. It encompasses the study of economic, political, and social systems at the local, national, and international 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 other similar variations. What distinguishes this field from others, however, is a concern with the modalities of peace and the methods of peacemaking (Michael T. Klare, Peace and World Security Studies).

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

Career Paths and Entry Salaries
Entry level positions in the peace and conflict resolution field are diversified and often highly competitive. Salary levels range from the mid $20,000s to mid $30,000s at the entry level depending on the size of the organizational budget, staff size, and qualifications. Functional titles include, but are not limited to: 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 the field.

Demand
The unprecedented changes in the world community have not prevented conflict from continuing unabated. There are therefore many opportunities for peace and conflict resolution professionals, as the demand for innovative and more effective means to resolve conflicts between nations and people grows. Many applied conflict resolution skills can be acquired in a domestic setting and then transferred to the international arena (with a knowledge of important cultural and environmental differences), and many volunteer opportunities can lead to full-time employment.

As an interdisciplinary field, conflict resolution positions can be found in a variety of organizations not traditionally viewed as peace-advocating institutions. For example, development organizations like CARE and CRS (Catholic Relief Services) are increasingly recognizing the important interconnections between development and conflict resolution. The creation of the World Bank’s Post-Conflict Unit and the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service shows 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 one has relevant experience and the corresponding education and training.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field
A strong commitment to social issues and an interest in international relations are necessary to build a career in international conflict resolution. One’s 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; aspiring peace and conflict resolution professionals must be flexible. Due to the international nature of the field, foreign language proficiency will make one more competitive. In addition, teaching and training skills acquired through education or work can also be considered.

The enthusiastic involvement with public interest organizations as an intern and/or volunteer will help to develop a network, which is important in receiving an offer for a professional job. Overseas field experience, especially in a developing country, as well as 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 provides. 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.amnesty.org
- Carter Center - www.cartercenter.org
- CARE, Inc. - www.care.org
- Carnegie Council on Ethics & International Affairs - www.cceia.org
- Catholic Relief Services - www.crs.org
- Center for War/Peace Studies - www.cwps.org
- The Fund for Peace - www.fundforpeace.org
- INCORE - www.incore.ulst.ac.uk
- The Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution - www.cemproc.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.crisisgroup.org
- Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice – http://www.sandiego.edu/peacestudies/institutes/ipj/
- National Democratic Institute – www.ndi.org
- National Peace Foundation – www.nationalpeace.org
- Mercy Corps - www.mercycorps.org
- Non-Violence International - www.nonviolenceinternational.net
Future Challenges of the Profession

Practical experience, theoretical insight, and regional expertise all have value, but it is the combination of the knowledge from these three aspects of the field that will be necessary in order to impact today's complex and volatile world (US Institute of Peace). The inability to gather adequate resources from the global community to resolve conflict situations will continue to frustrate the hope for a defining commitment to a new world order.

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/donor/contributor’s desire for tangible results with the intangible nature of their projects. Quantifying the results of projects which aim to reduce future conflict by focusing on communication, dialogue, and change from within can be especially difficult. Therefore, innovative fundraising ideas and a commitment to procuring new revenue sources will be useful for those looking to address the future challenges of the field.

Resources for Additional Information

Associations

- Association for Conflict Resolution – www.acresolution.org/
- American Political Science Association Conflict Processes Section - www.apsanet.org
- Peace and Justice Studies Association - www.peacejusticestudies.org
- National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution - www.apeacemaker.net

Internet Resources

- Institute for Global Communications, PeaceNet - www.igc.org/index.html
- A Peace Maker - www.apeacemaker.net

Publications


