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Book Review

Peace jobs: a student's guide to starting a career working for peace by David J. Smith, a volume in the series: Peace Education, editors Laura Finley & Robin Cooper, Information Age Publishing, 2016, 183 pp., US \$45.99 (paperback), US \$85.99 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-68123-330-7

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David J. Smith, who is well known in peace education for his work as a consultant and educator and his former roles at the US Institute of Peace, wrote *Peace Jobs* to answer a question students frequently ask him: How can I get a job working for peace? That anyone can do peace work in almost any occupation is a central claim of this book, which brings a career guidance lens to the emergent broad scope of peace education. Smith frames the book in terms of the pressures that students today face to treat college as career training and devalue liberal arts education: they will end college with high educational loan debts, and the job market is tight. The study of peace bridges the gap, Smith suggests, by inviting students to discover a sense of purpose as they prepare for careers of the future.

Millennial generation students are Smith's target audience. He cites polling research showing their commitment to social change. *Peace Jobs* shows this generation concrete career options. The ten chapters introduce a broad scope of occupations and advise students how to prepare for them before and during college. While "direct-action" peace professions such as humanitarian aid and diplomacy are few and hard to get, Smith suggests that "indirect action jobs" are

nearly limitless. He describes three factors shaping the future of peace work: the mainstreaming of peace and conflict knowledge into all occupational fields, the application of creativity to addressing structural violence and preventing destructive conflict, and the “soft skills” skills associated with a liberal arts education, such as leadership, communication, and problem solving. Chapters in *Peace Jobs* are devoted to careers in diplomacy, human rights, law, nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations including both humanitarian and military careers, peace teaching, social justice, environmental activism, health work, community work, faith-based approaches, the arts and sciences, technology, and the media. The appendices include a list of 86 peace jobs, a glossary of terms, a list of online resources, and recommendations for further reading.

Each chapter begins with a fictionalized story of a student facing questions about peace work and career preparation, then follows up with practical guidance. Readers are introduced to key concepts, such as peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping, as well as organizations engaged in these activities. Contexts for peace work include diverse current issues and movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, reproductive justice, sexual assault, LGBTQ rights, HIV/AIDS, and bullying in schools and workplaces. Famed figures such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Albert Einstein are strategically depicted as youths, not much older than the reader. Boxes and figures integrate research findings and fundamental concepts into the text. Each chapter also includes true-life profiles of young people in peace occupations, and ends with reflection questions about the profiles as well as steps the reader can take to further explore the chapter’s topics. Each chapter has an extensive reference list with a variety of sources—scholarly, news, organizational, and governmental—many of them very current.

My critiques of *Peace Jobs* concern how it will work for its intended readers. At \$45.99, the price is stiff for students. The abundant text boxes and figures, while valuable, visually confuse the chapters. Further, in its drive to mainstream peace skills, the book holds back on critical engagement with the ways that well meant work can fuel indirect violence.

Nevertheless, in many respects, *Peace Jobs* is a book that peace educators have been waiting for. It captures the front edge of the field in its inclusive attention to differences of gender, sexuality, class, and race, and in its unpacking of peacebuilding as an expansive framework for education and career planning. The book will be of value to guidance counselors, career centers, academic advisors and mentors, peace teachers, and faculties planning the development or enhancement of programs of study. Smith helpfully includes a table from his

2014 book *Peacebuilding in Community Colleges* on infusing and integrating peace studies across the curriculum, which suggests a broad institutional context for the career advisement that *Peace Job* offers. The book is unique in breadth; other available peace education-related job guides in book form (e.g. *Mediation Career Guide* by Forrest S. Mossen) are narrowly specialized. There are several online job lists, but they lack the contextualization and breadth of Smith's book and are not all regularly updated.

Because *Peace Jobs* is directed toward student readers, instructors might find it valuable as a course text. The high price makes me hesitant to recommend it as a supplemental text, although it would fit especially well with Houston Wood's *Invitation to Peace Studies* (2016), with which it has much in common: up-to-date research, broad incorporation of diverse movements and identities, and a broad range of occupational contexts in which peace can be practiced. However, because Smith introduces key theoretical concepts throughout the texts, and each chapter proposes resources for exploration beyond the text, instructors could conceivably assign *Peace Jobs* as the core text--a possibility that raises questions about how academic programs envision introductory courses and whether they can make room in the curriculum for a course that centralizes careers.

The expansive framework that Smith's book identifies for incorporating career guidance into peace education programs makes all the more important that programs engage students with critical analysis of the systemic and on-the-ground realities of occupational domains. Smith touches on some areas of critique—for instance, the conflation of militarism with peacebuilding, and the disruptions that humanitarian efforts can impose on target populations. Whatever the occupational field where students aim to work for peace, they need a strong grasp of structural and cultural violence, including the impacts of neoliberal policies and neocolonial practices, and the potentials and limitations of human rights approaches, as well as self-reflective skills as allies and advocates. Programs need to be alert to the limitations of volunteerism as an occupational entry for lower-income students, and to the ways that their promotion of service opportunities frame those experiences as adventures that will make privileged participants feel good about themselves, to the neglect of their potential detrimental impacts on the communities served.