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Positive and Negative Peace Concepts in Young American Adults

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Poster Presentation 1

**POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PEACE CONCEPTS
IN YOUNG AMERICAN ADULTS**

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Recent history of the United States includes numerous examples of periods of tension and conflict followed by a temporary calm. The end of the Cold War by no means marked the end of hostilities among nations, including the U.S. What concepts of peace do young American adults of this pseudo-peaceful twenty-first century hold?

Galtung, a pioneering peace researcher, argued that there are two possible ways one can conceptualize peace. One way would be to think of peace as merely the absence of violence, termed "negative peace." The alternate approach is in recognizing it as a state of equilibrium maintained by proactive prevention of potential conflicts. Galtung described this as "peace by peaceful means," and specifically termed it as "positive peace." Given these two types, it would be reasonable to assume that the idea of positive peace would be prevalent in members of a nation that enjoys a leadership status within the world community.

Research has confirmed that during development the understanding of war consistently precedes any substantial understanding of peace. It is only during late adolescence that thoughts of positive peace become evident. Unfortunately, little or no studies have dealt with young adults' conceptualization of peace. In our study, we intend to rectify this gap in developmental literature. The survey administered encompasses various aspects of positive and negative peace. Respondents were men and women from Illinois Wesleyan University and Wellesley College.