Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base Project

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Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base

Overview

This proposal requests a $500,000 - $750,000 1 / 2-year grant to assemble, on the Web, the field’s cumulative knowledge base on the nature of intractable conflict and strategies for reducing its terrible costs. By presenting the information in layers—one for a general, "lay" audience and a second for experienced practitioners and scholars—we hope to contribute on several levels to diminishing the costs of intractable conflicts.

This is a major state-of-the-field project, analogous to the writing of one of the field’s major texts. However, instead of producing a thick, expensive book that would be accessible only to a few people and libraries, we plan to post our work on the Web—making it easily and freely accessible to disputants, third parties, students, and scholars worldwide. We also plan a series of follow-up activities which will develop ways of incorporating the knowledge base into the field’s teaching, training, research, and theory-building efforts.

The intractable conflicts, upon which the project will focus, are those that lie at the frontier of the field. Here, conflicts surrounding issues such as abortion and the Israeli-Palestinian problem, stubbornly resist resolution, even when the best available techniques are applied. The knowledge base itself is composed of the key ideas that people with conflict resolution expertise think others involved in such difficult or intractable conflicts (first parties, third parties, students, and scholars) should know.

Building directly upon the capabilities being created by the CRInfo project, knowledge base development will start by reviewing the key literature in the field, documenting the various analytical frameworks which are applied to the problem, as well as each framework's assessment of causes, outcomes, and intervention strategies. We will then start assembling a list of "building blocks:" key concepts, processes, relationships, and other ideas that are central to understanding the nature of these conflicts and possible interventions.

Six months into the project, we will have the first of two or three conferences which will bring together leading scholars and practitioners to examine what we have collected, to assess what is missing, and to consider how the material might best be organized and presented. Conference participants will be pushed to examine the similarities and the differences between frameworks, always questioning what is "key," what is "known," and agreed upon, and what is not.

Project staff will follow up on these ideas and put together a working system in advance of a second round of conferences to be held in year two. At this time, participants will "fine tune"

1 Should additional funds beyond $500,000 initially discussed be available, we have included information about $250,000 in additional "optional items" that would enhance the project beyond the $500,000 "core" budget."
the system and start planning how it can be applied and used to improve teaching, training, intervention, and theory-building. In addition to finalizing the system based on comments obtained at the second set of conferences, participants will begin moving forward on as many application ideas as possible.

Thus far, we have recruited a distinguished team of 24 scholars and practitioners, and have a long list of names of other people who are likely to be interested in participating as well. A core group of these people will form a Governing Board which will guide the project's overall direction, and the entire group will be involved (in various capacities) in contributing substantive information for the knowledge base. The project will be co-directed by Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess, at the University of Colorado Conflict Research Consortium. They will work with a team of graduate students, programmers, editors, and clerical assistants to actually build the system and put it online.
Intractability and the Frontier of the Field

"Intractability" is a controversial concept, which means different things to different people. As we see it, intractable conflicts are those that lie at the frontier of the field – the conflicts that stubbornly seem to elude resolution, even when the best available techniques are applied. Examples include abortion, homosexual rights, and race relations in the United States; and the Israeli-Palestinian problem, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir abroad. Usually such conflicts involve irreducible, high-stakes, win-lose issues which fall outside of the "zone of possible agreement" and never seem ripe for resolution. From time to time, short-term dispute episodes will be settled – for example, a law can be passed providing greater or diminished access to abortions, or an agreement can be reached regarding the terms of a cease-fire on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But the underlying issues – the morality of abortion or the terms of Israeli-Palestinian co-existence – continue, only to flare up again and again.

The causes of intractability are varied. Some intractable conflicts involve irreconcilable moral differences about right and wrong, good and evil. Most abortion foes will not negotiate about an act they consider equivalent to murder; similarly, most homosexual rights advocates will not negotiate about their rights to equal treatment under the law. Rather, they will continue to fight for what they know is right, even if they know that, over the short term, they cannot win. What is important is that they are engaged in a noble crusade.

Sometimes intractable conflicts involve high-stakes distributional issues over "who gets what." People are unlikely to abandon continuing struggles over land, water, employment opportunities, and wealth, in general. And, when there isn't enough to "go around," these fights are likely to be especially bitter and destructive. Intractability may also involve "pecking order conflicts," with their intense competition for the positions of social status and privilege. While people with higher status tend to win the distributional conflicts, more often than not, status conflicts go beyond distributional conflicts – they involve subjective assessments of an individual's or a group's "goodness" or "social worth."

All of these issues are combined in the identity conflicts which divide the many different ethnic, religious, class, and national groups which are at the center of so many of the world’s tragic and deadly trouble spots. Identity conflicts involve conflicts over social status and privilege and the distribution of scarce resources, along with a moral component, since each group tends to believe in its own moral superiority. These are long-term conflicts, many of which have reinforced themselves for tens, hundreds, and even thousands of years. The sheer complexity of these problems also contributes to intractability. There are so many issues and parties that it is often not logistically possible to do all that is required to reconcile competing interests, even when such reconciliation is theoretically possible.

While destructive, intractable confrontations may dominate the headlines in good economic times, it is in bad times that they pose the greatest threat to the social fabric. In good times, the
expanding "pie" limits the severity of distributional conflicts. In hard times, however, when the size of the "pie" may actually be shrinking, relatively easy, positive-sum, win-win interactions are transformed into much more dangerous, negative-sum, win-lose confrontations. In these cases, conflicts over the assignment of blame and the distribution of sacrifice dramatically reinforce and intensify long-standing differences.

Even though intractable conflicts may not be amenable to final, near-term resolution, they are not hopeless. The parties, with or without the help of intermediaries, can make their interactions less destructive and more constructive. Even when conflicts cannot be resolved, parties can learn to live together with less distrust, overt hostility, and violence. They can learn to work with people on the other side, and come to understand the reason for their differences, even if those differences do not go away. Our field knows a lot about how this can be done, but we need to learn more, and we need to get our knowledge to the people who need it.

**Project Purpose**

Therefore, the project's central purpose is to assemble, on the Web, the field’s cumulative knowledge base on the nature of intractable conflict and strategies for reducing its terrible costs. By presenting the information in layers – one for a general, "lay" audience (informal intermediaries, disputants, students, and journalists, among others) and a second for experienced practitioners and scholars, we hope to contribute on several levels to diminishing the costs of conflicts.

**Incorporation of Multiple Approaches**

Rather than attempting to craft a single, consensus approach to dealing with intractable conflicts, we want to develop and incorporate into the knowledge base a full range of competing and complementary approaches. (In the paragraphs that follow, we call these “theoretical frameworks.”) Examples include the human needs approach, principled negotiation, conflict transformation, security regimes, co-existence approaches, and non-violent confrontation. All of these approaches or frameworks have useful ideas about ways to approach intractable conflicts more constructively. (Some participants may disagree with our characterization of these conflicts as "intractable" or even with our use of the word "intractable" to describe the project. That’s okay. We want to include those points of view as well.) The project is structured in a way that will allow us to fully incorporate alternative views on how best to handle what might also be called "frontier-of-the-field" conflicts.

**Knowledge Base**

Like "intractability," the term "knowledge base" means different things to different people. As we use it, the term represents the cumulative body of knowledge generated by those working in the broadly-defined conflict-resolution field. It includes elements drawn from alternative dispute resolution processes, as well as key insights from the more traditional fields such as law, politics, and diplomacy.

In the past, knowledge base projects have been confined to survey texts, with their broad overviews of the "state of the field." At one level, this project can be seen as a continuation of that tradition. The big difference is that this project has, from the beginning, been designed for
the Internet, with its vastly less expensive and more powerful information storage and retrieval capabilities. The core elements of this project are totally beyond the reach of conventional book publication.

The proposed project also builds directly upon capabilities being created by CRInfo, our other major collaborative Web-based information project (see http://www.crinfo.org). In a sense, we are proposing a demonstration project which will show how CRInfo technology can be used to facilitate knowledge base-oriented education, training, research, and theory-building projects on a variety of topics.

While the project will draw from the latest scholarship in the field, it differs from most traditional scholarship in its extent. It will go far beyond developing a few incremental additions to the field's knowledge, but rather will chart all of the key practical and theoretical insights which leading scholars and practitioners have developed for preventing and/or dealing with intractable conflicts. Once we have done that, we will be in a much stronger position to develop new theoretical ideas, research agendas, and practical approaches to investigate, based on the cumulative knowledge of this rapidly-growing and changing field.

At the same time, however, the knowledge base will not attempt to include everything that everybody ever wrote on intractable conflicts. That would yield unproductive “information overload.” Rather, our goal is to focus upon a much smaller body of information, consisting of the key insights generated from the various frameworks covered by the project. The information will be organized in a way that will enable users to examine each framework individually, or they can compare the similarities and differences among the frameworks and the gaps between them.

The Need to Deal with Complexity

The knowledge base design is consistent with a very broad and complex view of the field – one that goes far beyond the basic negotiation and mediation skills taught in the field’s now common, 40-hour training programs. We see the increasing realization of the field's complexity as paralleling the learning process which has characterized the "war" on cancer. Here, one of the sources of early hope and false optimism was the mistaken belief that cancer was a single pathology which would be amenable to a single cure. Unfortunately, cancer has turned out to be far more complex. We now know that it is a broad class of difficult pathological dynamics, which require a broad range of treatments, often tailored to the specific genetic makeup of the patient. Still, treatment is not entirely idiosyncratic; there are commonalities and interventions that are widely applicable across cases.

In a similar way, intractable conflict can be thought of as a broad class of pathological processes, each requiring specific treatments tailored to the immediate conflict problem and the characteristics of contending parties. It is also clear that, for personal, cultural, and situational reasons, different people will favor different treatments for similar problems. But, like cancer, there are commonalities and intervention strategies that make sense in a variety of situations. The challenge is to provide people with the information that they need to make more informed choices regarding the best approach to their particular situation.
Strategies for dealing with destructive, intractable conflict can also be compared to strategies for dealing with environmental problems. Like environmental problems, large-scale conflict is a community-wide problem that can only be successfully addressed by a community-wide effort involving contributions from grassroots citizens, leaders, and everyone in between. Conflict experts have no magic solution that somehow relieves the larger community of the need to do something. Just as efforts to deal with the environmental problems require grass-roots contributions, conflict problems require that everyone do what they can to help. Here, each person's contribution is determined by his or her skills and training, personal commitment, available resources, and role within society. Just as grassroots education is recognized as critical to solving environmental problems, it is also critical to addressing problems of destructive conflict.

This complex image of conflict is, of course, problematic. It means that it is impossible to train more than a few people to be "general practitioners," capable of intervening in a broad range of conflict situations. The only way around this problem is to use the same strategy employed by other complex human activities – specialization. What is needed, therefore, is a large number of different training programs designed for people in a large number of different, and highly specialized, conflict roles. Of particular importance are programs which augment the conflict skills of "part-timers" – people for whom conflict management is just one of their many roles and responsibilities. We see the role of the Knowledge Base Project as providing an enormously valuable reference source, capable of supporting these specialized training efforts.

The Advantages of the Online Knowledge Base Approach

Online knowledge bases have several advantages over traditional, state-of-the-field texts. First, the information is instantly and freely available worldwide (and we plan to seek translation funding for the project). Providing access to the same information in book form would produce a volume so expensive and hard-to-obtain that the vast majority of potential users would simply not have access. This will be even more true in the years ahead, as the shift to an Internet-based information system continues. Electronic publishing also eliminates publisher's page limits that commonly force authors to leave out a great deal of useful information. Where conventional books, once published, can't be changed, the proposed online knowledge base can be continually updated. With hyperlinks and its connection to CRInfo, the knowledge base will be fully and instantly integrated into a much larger web of reference materials.

Despite its size, the hypertext structure of the knowledge base will make it readable in an unlimited number of ways. Users will be able to pursue their interests without having to struggle through a "one size fits all" book format. This would be done through powerful searching and browsing features, as well as a series of online books and constituency gateways based upon the field’s principal theoretical frameworks and designated user groups.

Dismal Theorem of the Internet

One of the other advantages of the project is that it will help defeat what Guy Burgess has called "the Dismal Theorem of the Internet." Perhaps the biggest problem with the Internet is that it is the best vanity publishing system imaginable. For only a few dollars, anyone can put an article up on the Web and, with a little luck, the search engines will feature that work as prominently as
articles from the most prestigious research universities. This is why it is so easy to find information on any conceivable topic on the Web. This also means that people no longer have to go through the trouble of wading through traditional, print-based information sources, which are time-consuming, expensive, and often harder to find and use. Since people tend to be over-committed, many are relying more and more on the Web as their primary research tool. This raises the specter of the "Dismal Theorem of the Internet" – easy-to-get, bad information from the Web will drive out hard-to-get, good information from books and journals. If this turns out to be true, then the Internet will lead to a reduction, rather than an expansion, in the level of human knowledge. The challenge, of course, is for universities, businesses, the media, philanthropic foundations, and government to disprove the Dismal Theorem by making sure that easy-to-get, engrossing, and high-quality information finds its way to prominence on the Web. That, too, is a goal of this project.

Additional information about our theoretical approach is contained in two papers found in Appendices 1 and 2 – "Theoretical Foundations," from the 1999/2000 Conflict Research Consortium Annual Report, and "Technological Change, Social Conflict, and the Dismal Theorem of the Internet," by Guy Burgess, which was adapted from a Partisan Review Knowledge and Information Symposium and journal.

Project Constituents and Knowledge Base Gateways

The knowledge base will be developed on two levels. The first level would provide information for general audiences – people who are not specialists in the field, but who are disputants themselves, or who deal with intractable conflict as part of their other responsibilities (informal intermediaries and the media, for example). While these people don’t have time to become experts (nor will this website make them so), almost anyone involved in an intractable conflict could benefit from information that helps them better understand and deal with the difficult situations they face. If people learn how complex these problems are, and develop some ideas about how people in different roles approach such problems, they will be in a much stronger position to understand how they can work in their own context to improve the situation. Teachers, for example, could design a new unit that helps students frame the conflict in a different way (or examine different frames for the same situation). Church members could develop a dialogue or reconciliation program within their own church, or contribute to a reconstruction effort in a war-torn society. Although they will not have the expertise to formally intervene in such conflicts, people who read the materials and do the exercises presented on the website should be in a much better position to address their own conflicts more constructively – at least in their own lives.

A second, more advanced level would be for people who are willing to make a major effort to improve their understanding of the complexities of intractable conflict processes – the experts and those who would like to become experts. By bringing proponents of the different theoretical frameworks together with leading practitioners, we will all be pushed to critically examine what we believe, think, and do. While this happens to a small extent at professional meetings, people
seldom take the time at those meetings to really delve into theory and practice questions to the extent which this project will require. By working together over two years' time – mostly at a distance, but punctuated by face-to-face meetings – this project should be able to foster new theoretical insights and approaches to practice that would not otherwise be developed. Thus, one of the project’s payoffs for the professionals in the field will be its ability to force us to assess what we know and can agree upon. This, in turn, will help us see what we don't know, don't agree on, and need to research further. This advanced aspect of the project will also provide us with an unparalleled reference and teaching tool which should contribute significantly to a broad range of college courses, advanced training seminars, and research projects.

In the sections which follow, we will provide an overview of how the project’s single, underlying knowledge base can be used to fuel a variety of gateways (entry points with associated "reading guides"), each designed to meet the needs of a specific constituency group.

**General Audience Gateways**

Some of the knowledge base gateways will be tailored to the needs of general audiences – everyday citizens who need advice but lack the time for in-depth study. Some of these gateways will highlight relatively simple, "do-it-yourself" steps that can be taken to better deal with specific conflict situations. In other cases, the system will identify "do-it-yourself-but-with-training" steps, which non-experts can take after spending a modest amount of time mastering new skills. In still other cases, the gateways will highlight "call-an-expert" measures, which require the services of conflict resolution professionals. These sections will also provide a general consumer guide, designed to help users more successfully obtain such services.

While we can’t provide a completely different set of materials for all possible general audiences, we can do some customization. For example, we will illustrate each of the knowledge base's key ideas using a variety of cases, including an interpersonal (family and/or workplace) conflict, an identity group/environmental conflict, and an intergroup/international conflict. We are hoping that most readers will be able to relate to at least one of these case illustrations.

The intergroup/international scenario will involve the risk of large-scale violence and civil or international war, a situation which is unfortunately very common in these situations world-wide. That will contrast with the identity group/environmental conflict, which will take place within the context of generally-accepted moral, legal, and political norms which limit the use of violence as a dispute resolution mechanism. This context will be mirrored in the family and workplace illustrations as well. The scenarios and material will also be written in such a way that they will be useful to both the first-party disputants and the third-party intermediaries. In some cases this may require writing different materials; in other cases, the same materials will be usable for both audience groups.

These scenarios, as well as different combinations of building blocks, will be highlighted in specialized gateways, which are modeled in concept (though not structure) on the CRInfo specialized gateways, which are working very well to get that system "out" and utilized by multiple constituency groups.
Like the Knowledge Base Project, CRInfo starts with an underlying database containing a very broad range of information – more than any single individual could possibly be interested in. CRInfo has then created a series of gateways tailored to the interests of specific constituency groups (See Appendix 3). These gateways, which are often presented with the constituency group’s own look and feel, highlight aspects of the system of greatest interest to each group. While CRInfo focuses upon resource catalogs and bibliographic citations, the proposed knowledge base will be much more complex, containing full-text summaries of each building block and theoretical framework. Since these gateways will be targeted toward many of CRInfo’s constituency groups, we will be able to use CRInfo channels to make people aware of the availability of this additional new resource.

We could, for example, build a gateway into the knowledge base for NGOs working on international/ethnic conflicts, that would utilize that case illustration and would stress the components of the knowledge base that most relate to that type of conflict. A gateway for environmental activist organizations would likewise use the environmental case example and a slightly different set of building blocks. Still different gateways might be built for the Environmental/Public Policy section of the Association of Conflict Resolution, and other groups of environmental intervenors. The number of specialized gateways to be built will ultimately depend on the amount of money available and the amount of customization that appears to be necessary – and possible – once we look at the specific building-blocks we have.

**Education and Training**

The project’s second major constituency includes people involved in formal education and training programs. Here, we will provide support for trainers and teachers as well as students and training program participants. For teachers and trainers, we will provide a module for creating syllabi and class readers based on the knowledge base materials. Also available will be a set of online reading guides corresponding to each of the project’s principal frameworks and constituency groups. These guides will lead users through subsets of the materials in different orders, depending on users’ backgrounds, interests, and needs. They will draw, in part, on the materials described above in the General Audience section, but will also utilize the more "advanced materials" described below in the Research and Theory Building section.

We expect interest in the project from programs in law and the social sciences, as well as programs focused more specifically on dispute resolution, including both university and professional training programs. In addition to providing supplementary materials for students to use when they are in face-to-face programs, the knowledge base will also be valuable as a source of continuing, follow-up information and materials. Once students know that the system is available, they can return to it when they encounter new problems, after they have completed their studies or training. Finally, while our primary goal is not the development of online training programs, we do expect to do some work in this area, and we want to encourage others to develop online training projects affiliated with the knowledge base.
Research and Theory Building

The project’s final constituency group, researchers and theory builders, represents a principal source of ideas to be included in the knowledge base. As we see it (and the makeup of the project team reflects this), researchers and theory builders include both academic scholars and reflective practitioners. We also recognize, of course, that many of the ideas reported by these experts have cultural origins dating back hundreds or even thousands of years.

A big part of the project (including most of its advanced materials) is designed to facilitate the efforts of people who are seeking to advance the knowledge base. By making the existing knowledge base vastly more accessible, we expect to increase the efficiency of knowledge building efforts via the reduction in the amount of time people need to spend mastering past insights. We also expect to reduce the number of times that people will be tempted to engage in duplicative projects that do little more than try to "reinvent the wheel."

Based upon the project’s overall mapping of the field, we plan to make a deliberate effort to identify and promote work in areas where new research and theory building is clearly needed. By bringing together leading scholars with differing viewpoints, we will all be pushed to consider the strengths and weaknesses of our own and others' views—rather than largely ignoring them and forging ahead, as many of us do now. In addition, we may issue "calls for papers" which would be published by the project (if they were good enough) to fill in gaps on the project website. We will also promote sessions at professional conferences and articles in the field’s journals that will address these gaps.

Of particular interest will be the identification of generally-accepted building blocks which have never really been rigorously tested to see if they do, in fact, work as expected. The resulting list of research needs, to be posted by the project, will hopefully influence some research and dissertation topics. The project will also include networking components designed to promote collaborative work among people who would not otherwise have been aware of their similar interests, or who would not have attempted to work together. Still, we expect the biggest impact of the Knowledge Base Project to develop once the knowledge base is completed and widely disseminated. It is at this point that we will have laid the ground work for a much stronger approach to research and practice in the field.

Knowledge Base Structure

Overview of Knowledge Base Design

Although the problem is complex, our approach is fundamentally very simple. We want to systematically collect and widely disseminate the key ideas that people with conflict resolution expertise think others involved in difficult or intractable conflicts (first parties, third parties, students, and scholars) should know.

Although we may refine our organizational scheme in response to other participants’ ideas, our initial plan is to divide the knowledge base into two major components—building blocks and
frameworks. Building blocks are the fundamental concepts (such as interests, rights, or justice), processes (mediation, dialogue, active listening), and theoretical propositions (for example, needs-based conflicts are not amenable to interest-based negotiation unless they are reframed in terms of interests). These building blocks then will be put together in different ways to form the major theoretical and practical approaches, or “frameworks.”

We want to focus on general knowledge, the kind that applies to many different situations, not site-specific information. However, we will focus on many different types and levels of conflict, and many different approaches or "frameworks" for thinking about and dealing with these conflicts.

**Pragmatic Problem-Solving Orientation**

Although theoretically-based, the project will still take a pragmatic, problem solving approach. We will start by reviewing the major theories of intractable conflict presented in leading books and articles, to determine what expert scholars and practitioners consider to be the primary causes or sources of intractability. (In other words, we will examine the problems that cause conflicts to become intractable.) We will then examine the problems that occur as a result of intractable conflicts (e.g., escalation, distrust, dehumanization, violence) and the strategies for avoiding or reducing such problems (in other words, solutions–such as mediation, dialogue, or problem-solving workshops).

We also expect to supplement this literature-based approach by directly contacting practitioners who, while they may not have had time to write down their insights, do have a reputation for working to advance this aspect of the field. In some cases, these practitioners are involved as formal participants in the project. In other cases, their expertise may be gleaned from interviews, in which we ask them to reflect on the primary causes of the intractable conflicts they have worked with, the outcomes of those conflicts (and particular conflict processes), and the methods they have used to try to improve the situation, if not resolve the conflict itself.

In recruiting participants to the project, and in selecting analyses of intractable conflicts to review, we will take a broad, interdisciplinary look at the problem – one that compares many different approaches and many different cases. We hope to end up with a reasonably comprehensive list of critical concepts (e.g., positions, interests, human needs, identity, injustice, power, “zone of possible agreement,” BATNA, coalitions, enemy images, stalemates, frames, and positive-, zero-, and negative-sum “games”). Also included will be conflict dynamics (like conciliation, polarization, escalation, coercion, cooperation, competition, defiance, submission, and withdrawal) as well as management and resolution processes (e.g., assessment, reframing, distributive and integrative bargaining, facilitation, mediation, arbitration, dialogue, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, reconciliation, fact-finding). Note that these process building blocks tend to

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2 There is, of course, also a need for information which is unique to specific conflict situations, for example, the legal history of Supreme Court abortion rulings, a detailed chronology of negotiations stemming from the Oslo Accords, a list of the stakeholders involved in the Kyoto global warming treaty negotiations, or the technical arguments regarding the impact that logging restrictions may have on spotted owl protection efforts. While this kind of information is clearly very important, it is excluded from the knowledge base because it is too particular. We will, however, provide information about techniques people can use to gather this kind of conflict-specific knowledge.
be composed of large numbers of sub-building blocks, all of which would be included in the system as well.

As each building block is identified, we will begin to identify sources of in-depth information on the topic. This information will be used to create the building block’s knowledge base entry (this is explained more below). Similarly, the various steps in the problem/solution analyses will serve as a foundation for the framework-based reading guides, which will guide users through a sub-set of the readings in a useful order, based on their particular interests and perspectives. (How this will be done is described more below.)

**Building Blocks**

Knowledge base pages created for each building block will consist of the items listed below. A mockup of how this will all fit together on the page is provided in Appendix 4.

- **Succinct General Audience Write-ups**
  
  First, we want to write succinct, jargon-free statements of each idea, suitable for our general, non-expert audiences. (Where such write-ups already exist we will seek to include them.) Each of these descriptions will include an overview of the basic concept and an exploration of the setting(s) in which each building block is applicable (see Appendix 5 for additional examples of what these general audience write-ups might look like).

- **In-depth References and Summaries (Print and Web)**
  
  The Knowledge Base entry for each building block will also contain several references to print- and Web-based sources of additional, in-depth information, along with a longer bibliography of additional references. While some of these key references will be original source materials, our primary focus will be exemplary explanations of each idea, new or old, which include summaries of any principal points of debate, as well as refinements or extensions on the original idea. Rather than citing entire books or articles, we will include specific page numbers to help people find the relevant information quickly.

  Whenever possible, our focus will be upon easily-accessible materials, with the goal of having as much information as possible available in full-text online form. For print-based information, we will look for documents which are readily obtainable and affordable (i.e. in-print books and widely circulated journals). Where appropriate, we will include links to online sources (such as Amazon.com) through which the documents might be obtained. In cases where printed documents provide essential information which is not widely available, we will seek ways to make the information available online or through photocopies. (This may involve asking users to help pay for copyright clearances, document scanning, copying, and/or mailing.) To help users decide which printed documents are worth obtaining, we will include substantial abstracts/summaries wherever possible (see Appendix 6 for initial examples of what such summaries might look like).

- **Fictional Illustrations**
In order to provide a common set of illustrations which carry through the entire project, we will employ a series of at least three fictional, but realistic, illustrations. In some ways, we view this as preferable to the use of real-world examples, because fictional stories can be carefully crafted to avoid confounding information and questionable interpretations. Thus by using fiction, one avoids the inevitable arguments over whether or not a high-profile conflict is being interpreted correctly (see Appendix 7 for the introductory sections from several possible illustrations).

- **Real World Examples**
  We will also try to provide real-world examples based upon formal (academic) or informal (journalistic) case studies (or case study segments) that are particularly instructive. While we will use both print- and Web-based examples, we will focus (as we did for the references discussed above) upon easy-to-obtain materials (a few examples of what these examples might look like are found in Appendix 8). As a bonus, it is expected that this catalog of case study information will also provide users with numerous research opportunities.

- **Audio / Video Clips**
  Where available, audio and video clips will be included to supplement the print and Web-based summaries and illustrations. Given the preference of many people for television over reading, this is something that we will want to pursue more vigorously in the future as the quality of Web video improves.

- **Links to Related Building Blocks**
  Also included in each entry will be links to related concept and technique building blocks.

- **List of Frameworks Which Utilize this Building Block**
  Since most building blocks are applicable to multiple frameworks (discussed below) we will include links to applicable framework sections.

- **Teaching and Learning Materials**
  Still another group of links will provide information about print- and Web-based learning materials (including exercises and role-plays), which can be used to help people master key building block ideas (especially those oriented around intervention techniques). Online discussion opportunities will also be available, to allow people to explore the system with other users.

**Frameworks**

Like any other kind of building block, our knowledge base building blocks have to be organized into some sort of structure before they can be of much value. Without such organization, it is likely that people will find the wrong building blocks or misapply the blocks that they do find. This is why the Knowledge Base Project intends to devote a substantial fraction of its resources to the development of the framework side of the knowledge base. Rather than becoming mired in a debate over which framework is "right" or "best," the project will support multiple frameworks by providing alternative ways of organizing the building blocks into cohesive strategies for conflict analysis and management. At the same time, we hope that this intense
examination of alternative frameworks will allow theorists from each framework to learn from the others, thereby improving their own approach.

As indicated above, our basic mechanism for identifying building blocks starts with a systematic review of existing analyses of the intractable conflict problem. Since these analyses embody the authors’ frameworks for organizing the building blocks, they will provide an excellent place to start. Our first task, therefore, will be to systematically construct a catalog of the different ways in which the field’s insights are being organized. We will then combine similar frameworks in ways which bring together complementary insights. We expect that this process will also identify a series of alternative and, to some significant degree, competitive frameworks.

After initial development by the staff, these frameworks will then be subjected to critical review and refinement at the project’s first brainstorming conference (described in the Work Plan section, below). Ultimately, we expect this process to produce series of frameworks which will correspond closely to the field’s major schools of thought (e.g., interest-based negotiation approaches, human needs approaches, transformative approaches, security approaches, nonviolent direct action, etc.). We also hope to create one or more new, hybrid or “meta- frameworks” highlighting commonalities that are now usually overlooked. Finally, we will produce a guide to the various frameworks which will help users select those frameworks that best address their needs. This guide will address questions such as: Are some frameworks more relevant to particular kinds of conflicts? Do they reflect different outcome goals? Are they designed for use in different settings? By different people? How and why would users choose one framework over another?

As these frameworks are constructed, we will begin using them to craft a series of constituent gateways to the knowledge base. These gateways will be constructed in a flexible manner, which will allow the framework working groups to make repeated adjustments as the project proceeds. While a variety of increasingly sophisticated, framework-based interfaces and gateways are possible, they will all be based upon a core system which will be constructed using an annotated, table-of-contents metaphor.

Framework working groups will begin by creating an annotated chapter outline for their framework’s reading guide. Each chapter will be on key concepts, ideas, or problems – much like the chapters in a book they would write on intractable conflicts from their own point of view. Starting with this list of chapter titles, the working groups will then develop a list of topics to be covered in each chapter (or section), and prepare annotations briefly introducing each topic, from their framework’s perspective. This list of topics will be arranged in a logical order, perhaps combined or separated, ending up with a list of chapter sections, again with annotations. (Sub-subsections and sub-sub-sections will also be possible.)

Next, the various sections and sub-sections will be assigned links to one or more specific building blocks, many of which, we hope, will have already been written or found (and notes will be made of new building blocks that were needed if they did not yet exist). The combination of the outline (i.e., reading guide) and the building blocks will, when complete, yield a set of book-
length, online manuscripts, with somewhat different, but overlapping content, which will be continually and automatically updated as new information is added to the system.

We expect, for example, to have a framework guide for the human needs approach, another for transformative approaches, and a third for interest-based bargaining. Like the building block ideas, these framework outlines will be developed at two levels. The first will offer a step-by-step guide to intractable conflict problems suitable for general audiences. The second will offer more advanced tools for experts and advanced students, as they try to develop a detailed understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach (Appendix 8 offers a simplified mockup of part of one of these annotated framework chapter outlines).

By setting the building block links so that they only pull up examples and illustrations related to a specific type of conflict, it will also be possible to shift from a general, one-size-fits-all gateway and reading guide to one that is much more narrowly-focused upon the interests of a specific group of constituents. Similarly, it will be possible to create, for specific constituent organizations, gateways that have the "look and feel" of the organization’s own website.

Users with personal expertise in the field will also be able to use the system to create customized gateways to the knowledge base. The simplest of these will be a series of search and browse tools, which will allow users to go directly to any information in the knowledge base that matches their search criteria. There will be a simple search interface, through which users can find things by simply typing in a word or phrase. Also supported will be more complex and powerful searches based upon knowledge base keywords, the general audience building block summaries, annotations, or bibliographic citations. These will be comparable to CRInfo’s simple Catalog and Robot Search systems (see http://www.crinfo.org/v2_first_search.cfm and http://www.crinfo.org/v2_robot_search.cfm).

Also available will be the ability to browse knowledge base resources by information type, conflict type, building block keyword, or framework outline terms (or chapter sections). We envision a series of nested keywords comparable to CRInfo’s Power Catalog Search (http://www.crinfo.org/v2_powersearch.cfm).

We also plan to make the framework construction system used by the working groups publicly available. This will allow users to create their own outlines, annotations, and building block links. We think that this is likely to be especially useful to people who run college courses and training programs. They can use it to create their own course syllabi, class readers, or training program modules.
Enabling Computer Technology

Key to the feasibility of the project is its use of a computer system similar to the one developed for the CRInfo system. The numerous tie-ins that we are planning between the Knowledge Base Project and CRInfo will eliminate the need for the Knowledge Base Project to duplicate CRInfo capabilities. We will also be able to strengthen CRInfo by adding many of the knowledge base resources to CRInfo’s resource catalogs. (These tie-ins are not unique to this project; the same basic capabilities are now widely available to the field as a whole.)

At this stage, the design of the computing software and hardware needed to construct and maintain the knowledge base is still subject to change. Nevertheless, based upon our CRInfo experience, we have an initial design for the system which, at the very least, demonstrates the feasibility of the project. The system itself will follow the basic plan illustrated in Figure 1 (next page).

Content Files
The core of the system – the knowledge itself – will be embodied in a series of several thousand content files portrayed on the right side of the figure. These content files will consist either of written text, stored in HTML format, or (in some cases) audio and video files. The first major group of content files will be the general audience, building-block write-ups. The next, and much more numerous, group of files contains information about reference materials pertaining to each building block. In the figure, you will note two groups of these files, one for Web-based information and a second for print-based information. The next two groups of content files contain the fictional and real-world examples, while the last group contains the framework section annotations, rather than the building blocks.

Database / Index
All of these building blocks will be linked together in a relational database, which will index the thousands of content files and presentation pages. (In the figure, these indexing links are indicated with thin dotted lines.) By indexing the files in a database, we will be able pull up and display the content files in a variety of ways, depending on the needs and interests of the user. This provides much more flexibility for designers and users than is possible if the system is constructed with a "static" template.

Each of the content files will be coded by the type of information and two major groups of keywords, one for the building-block topics and a second for the framework table of contents sections. The system will also allow us to insert codes indicating how the various building blocks and framework sections should be organized. And this is just the beginning. We will employ many other indexing techniques, such as full-text indexes of all of the content in the content pages and websites referred to by the system. This will permit both the project and our users to craft and execute extremely powerful search commands.
User Interfaces
The above elements set the stage for the user-side of the system, portrayed in the upper left-hand corner of the figure. Users will be able to enter the system from any computer connected to the Web. (If there is sufficient interest, we can also make a version of the system available on CD-ROM, for those who live in areas without good Internet access.)

The opening page will explain briefly what the system is and how it can be used (and links will be given to more detailed information on both of these topics). Two choices will then be available, a "do-it-yourself" option and a "guided-use" option. With the "do-it-yourself" option, users will receive only minimal direction. They may either browse or search the system’s building blocks using keywords (as described above in the framework section). In the "guided-use" option, users will be given more direction. They will be introduced to the different frameworks and user-gateways and, after reading something about each of them, they will be allowed to choose which framework or gateway they want to investigate first. Then they will be directed through the building blocks, chapter by chapter, using the framework's table of contents.

The building block pages will be constructed on demand by Cold Fusion or some similar program. This program will query the database to find out what content files correspond to the topic(s) requested by the user. Once it finds all the relevant files, it will display them (or in some instances, links to them) in the format defined by the framework gateway.

Thus, if a user selects the conflict transformation framework, users would be directed through a series of building blocks that define transformation and various transformative approaches to intractable conflicts. Each building block displayed would contain a short general use write-up, links to "advanced materials," fictional and real-world examples, training materials, and other building blocks and relevant frameworks (see mockup in Appendix 4). All of these suggested links would be assembled by the database, put in a format unique to the transformative framework's gateway, and displayed for the user.

The advantage of using dynamic pages is that anytime a resource is added to the knowledge base, or a change is made in a text file that appears in multiple places, it will automatically update any page in the system on which that information might appear. Overall, we envision over a thousand pages of new content, (which would be comparable to a new state-of-the-field book). In addition, we will include extensive links to additional information in existing print and Web-based source materials.

Knowledge Entry
Since this will be a Web-based system, it will be possible for project participants anywhere on the Internet to enter information into the system. This part of the system is portrayed in the lower left corner of the figure, with the Information Entry Pages. This part of the system will be created using a series of Cold Fusion-based pages, that will allow several different types of information to be entered into the system. Project collaborators will be able to use the system to add building blocks, references, case examples, and learning materials for inclusion. We will also be able to import information from existing sources such as, for example, annotated bibliographies.
The project’s research staff will be able to use the system to enter the general audience write-ups for building blocks. The clerical staff will be able to make sure that bibliographic citations are properly entered, while our editors will go over the materials to make sure they are readable and that they comply with project style guidelines. The research staff will also make sure all content files are coded according to the keyword and the framework table of contents entry to which they apply.

**Work Plan**

The budget and work plan presented here envisions a two-year project which would produce significant deliverables at the end of this initial period. The project would also lay the groundwork for a longer-term, continuing effort which would: 1) continually maintain and update the knowledge base and its website, 2) encourage and provide a supporting structure for future research and theory-building, based on the material assembled during the first two years of the project, and 3) provide a similar supporting structure for efforts to further develop the Web and the knowledge base as an instructional tool to be used in conjunction with face-to-face education and training programs, as well as by the general public for self study.

The work plan and budget for the first two years of the Knowledge Base Project (see Table 1) is divided into two, not-quite-equal segments. The first segment focuses on building the knowledge base, while the second concentrates upon the development of strategies for using the knowledge base for education, training, research, and theory building. There is, however, a great deal of overlap between these segments. Knowledge base construction will be driven by an increasingly sophisticated image of the many ways in which the system might be used. Conversely, the development of strategies for using the knowledge base will advance as project participants develop a more sophisticated image of the system’s capabilities. The difference between the two segments is, therefore, primarily one of emphasis. The sections which follow describe our initial image of the overall work plan.

**Start Up – Months 1-5**

The project’s first task will be to solicit advice from project participants on the original work plan as outlined in this proposal. (Thus far, participants have only had an opportunity to react to a detailed letter of invitation (see Appendix 9).) Based upon their advice, we will then make appropriate refinements to the overall project design. Using standard literature search techniques and consultations with project participants, the project staff will then assemble initial lists of both building blocks and framework outline terms. In this initial work, we expect to rely heavily upon a systematic review of major works addressing the intractable conflict problem (many of which have been written by project participants). It is important that this literature review proceed as quickly as possible, since these lists will define the codes that are used to organize knowledge base information as it is assembled.

As building blocks are identified, the staff will also start to draft the a first set of prototype content files (following consultations with participants regarding style and presentation issues). The final priority for the project’s first five months will be the creation of the project’s basic
computer system. Utilizing our CRInfo experience, we will construct a system with enough flexibility to permit continuing refinements to be made as the project proceeds.

"Building the Knowledge Base" Brainstorming Conference – Month 6
All of the above efforts are designed to provide a productive starting point for discussion at the project’s first brainstorming conference (to be held about six months into the project). We intend to start the conference with a demonstration of basic capabilities of the prototype knowledge base system that we will have constructed. Then we will engage in a series of brainstorming discussions, in which the conference’s approximately 40 participants will meet in small groups to think about what knowledge should be included in the system, how it should be organized, and how the resulting system might best be used to further the goals of education, training, research, and theory building. Here, conference sessions will focus upon the identification of building blocks, the exploration of frameworks, and the suggestions of sources of information which the project might tap.

Knowledge Base Construction – Months 7-14
Our goal is to come out of the conference with clear directions for the project staff to follow during the next eight months – the most intense period of knowledge base construction. We also expect the conference to result in the organization of several participant task groups responsible for the construction of the specific knowledge base segments including, especially, the framework gateways and the more complex and difficult building blocks. Honoraria and mini-grants would be available to support this work, in which about 30% of the participants have already indicated an interest in participating. (Others are likely to volunteer later – we are not counting the replies that said something like, "This looks great – sign me up!") The goal of this phase is to produce, at about 14 months into the project, an initial working system, which while not yet complete, will contain a substantial portion of the system’s initial core content.

"Using the System" Brainstorming Conference(s) – Month 15
At this time, we are planning to have two “using-the-system“ conferences: one on education and training and the second on research and theory building. (Depending upon participant preferences, we may decide to combine these two conferences into one.) In preparation for these conferences, we will ask the participants to first give the new, prototype system a try. We want them to come to the conference with a clear image of how the system works and what its potential might be. We will then discuss, again in small group brainstorming sessions, detailed plans for 1) using the system to address the needs of the project’s constituents, and 2) publicizing the availability of the system to constituency groups. Again, we will start with and build upon the basic ideas embodied in this proposal.

Finishing the Initial System / Planning for Phase II – Months 16-24
In this phase of the project, we will work to: 1) implement conference suggestions for improving the content and structure of the knowledge base, 2) finish the initial loading of information into the knowledge base, 3) develop the various user gateways in accordance with conference suggestions, 4) increase contacts with constituency groups as part of our effort to publicize the availability of the system, and 5) identify priorities to be pursued under a follow-up grant. In
addition to the staff’s contribution to this effort, we will again be organizing (with supporting honoraria and mini-grants) participant working groups to help us pursue these tasks.

Thus, at the end of a two-year period, we will have an extremely capable and broadly accessible system for accessing the field's knowledge base. We will also have a series of specific proposals regarding what might best be done during a follow-up grant. In short, we expect to have gone a long way toward developing and implementing a new way of generating, organizing, and disseminating the field’s knowledge about the causes, results, and possible responses to intractable conflicts.

**Evaluation**

As we said at the beginning of the proposal, "this project's central purpose is to assemble, on the Web, the field’s cumulative knowledge base on the nature of intractable conflict and strategies for reducing its terrible costs. By presenting the information in layers—one for a general, "lay" audience (informal intermediaries, disputants, students, and journalists, among others) and a second for experienced practitioners and scholars, we hope to contribute on several levels to diminishing the costs of these conflicts."

This statement suggests a variety of approaches for evaluating this project. The first is fairly straightforward: were we able to assemble a fairly complete set of information about intractable conflicts on the Web and present that information in ways that various constituency groups can understand and use? To determine this, we will:

- Assess how much material is on the system at the end of the grant period.
- Interview the participants and others to determine how well this material reflects the various frameworks of the field.
- Interview a small set of users (people for whom we constructed specialized gateways, for example) to determine if the information is presented in a way that members of their constituency group finds useful.
- We will also interview the participants as the project proceeds and again near the end to see how this project affected their work and what follow-on projects they think are worth pursuing.

After the system has been online for a while (which will be several months or even a year after the end of the first grant period) we will want to do a further assessment of the site and its impact. We can do this by

- Interviewing more users to determine if the information is useful and if it is presented in a useful way.
- Reviewing the electronic feedback we get from users (the site will encourage users to write us with their comments.)
- Looking at the statistics we get regarding usage levels. We should be able to get fairly detailed statistics, not only about numbers of users, but also what kind of users they are and what they are looking at.
Based upon the response we received from Melanie Greenberg and Terry Amsler regarding our initial letter of inquiry about the project, we went ahead and sent out a prospectus to a number of colleagues describing the project and inviting them to participate (see Appendix 9). In the two weeks since the invitation went out, we’ve received 24 responses—all of whom have agreed to participate. And, this is just an initial list. There are a few people that we haven’t heard from (no one has declined) and there are many more people that we are sure could make important contributions. Still, we have decided to wait until we are through the proposal phase before inviting additional colleagues to participate. We are really excited about the response that we received and we are confident that we will be to assemble the first-rate team that the project design envisions. Listed below are our confirmed project participants along with their institutional affiliation. Short biographies are found in Appendix 10.

- **Andrea Bartoli** - Director of the International Conflict Resolution Program of Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs and Chair of the Columbia University Conflict Resolution Network
- **Marcia Canton Campbell** - Assistant Professor, Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- **Diana Chigas** - Director of Programs, Conflict Management Group, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- **Peter Coleman** - Assistant Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Director of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Columbia.
- **Morton Deutsch** - E.L. Thorndike Professor and Director Emeritus of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Teachers College, Columbia University.
- **Louise Diamond** - President, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy.
- **Nancy Ferrell** - is a private mediator and trainer.
- **Mark Gerzon** - private facilitator, mediator, trainer, author and key organizer of the Congressional civility retreats.
- **Barbara Gray** - Director, Center for Research in Conflict and Negotiation in the Smeal College of Business Administration, The Pennsylvania State University.
- **Chris Honeyman** - is a private ADR consultant and Principal Investigator of the Theory-to-Practice Project.
- **Sanda Kaufman** - Professor of Planning and Public Administration at the Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University.
- **Louis Kriesberg** - Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Maxwell Professor Emeritus of Social Conflict Studies at Syracuse University.
- **Michelle LeBaron** - is Associate Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia
- **John Paul Lederach** - Professor at Eastern Mennonite University, international peacebuilder and trainer.
• Roy Lewicki - Dean's Distinguished Teaching Professor and Professor of Management and Human Resources at the Max M. Fisher College of Business, The Ohio State University.
• John Marks - President of Search for Common Ground, European Centre for Common Ground, Common Ground Productions.
• John McDonald - Chairman of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy
• Susan Collin Marks - Executive Vice President of Search for Common Ground.
• Bernard Mayer - Partner of CDR Associates.
• Sallyann Roth - Family Therapist, Trainer, and Co-founder of the Public Conversations Project, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
• Richard Salem - Private mediator, President of Conflict Management Initiatives.
• Andrea Strimling - Commissioner, International ADR, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Also a founder of ACRON– the Applied Conflict Resolution Organizations Network.
• Wallace Warfield - Associate Professor at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University.
• Doug Yarn - Executive Director of the Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, and Associate Professor of Law at Georgia State University College of Law

Past Work

CRInfo (http://www.crinfo.org)
CRInfo represents a comprehensive effort to develop online bibliographic catalogs of the field's principal information resources. Initiated in the summer of 1999, (at the suggestion of Steve Toben), CRInfo now involves about 30 organizations in addition to the University of Colorado Conflict Research Consortium which are actively involved in its production and maintenance. In addition to the original participants, many new ones have been added through the "joint gateway" program described briefly above. (See Appendix 3 for a list of current (April 2001) CRInfo joint gateways.) Also, as of April 2001, CRInfo has over 6000 website entries; over 4000 print resources, over 1000 organizations, and several hundred people, events, and programs.

This effort relates to the proposed project in a variety of ways. First, the Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base project will be able to use the material in CRInfo to "jump start" our literature search. Second, as indicated above, much of the programming expertise developed for CRInfo is adaptable to this new project. Third, and also very important, is the organizational skill which the Burgess have developed for managing very large, "virtual" projects. By using that expertise, along with the contacts we have acquired through CRInfo, we should be able to get this system up and running more quickly than we would be able to do otherwise. We should also be able to advertise it and get it utilized by a lot of users very quickly, using CRInfo as one (of several) dissemination systems. CRInfo's core knowledge focus project will also provide helpful insights to the proposed project. In a sense, this is a demonstration project which will show how CRInfo technology is making comprehensive, knowledge-base oriented theory-building, research, teaching, and application possible. (Funding for this kind of project is not included in the CRInfo budget.)
The Encyclopedia of Conflict Resolution
The research underlying the writing of *The Encyclopedia of Conflict Resolution* (Heidi Burgess and Guy Burgess, ABC-CLIO, 1997) has provided the Consortium with a comprehensive collection of materials outlining the field's major insights, at least as of 1997. The exercise of writing this volume also taught the Burgesses a lot about aspects of the field with which we were previously unfamiliar. We learned a great deal about who is doing what, what the major perspectives are, and how they interrelate. This will be a significant aid as we start to design the framework structure of the knowledge base. In addition, we accumulated a fairly good library in the course of writing the encyclopedia. Although it is a few years old now, hence the materials are also a few years' old, we do have a lot of the "classics," that have gone out of print and have a large catalog of essays and information that were too extensive to fit in the encyclopedia, but are still very useful. (We had a very strict page limit, which is one of the reasons why we first became interested in Web publishing—there was just too much important material that we had to leave out.)

The International Online Training Program on Intractable Conflict
The Online Training Program (OTPIC) was constructed for the United States Institute of Peace and represents a first, relatively primitive, effort to produce an online, hyperlinked, textbook (http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace). It features information on over 100 common conflict problems, 200 strategies for dealing with those problems, and 300 examples of how these ideas can be applied. In a sense, these mini-lessons constitute a first try at a building block inventory. (This system was the source of many of the examples which appear in the Appendices.) However, this project was completed when Web capabilities were much more primitive than they are now, and it was done with a budget of $34,000 (and a lot of sweat equity). While it is a good start on the currently proposed project, there is clearly an enormous amount that can be done to improve upon and expand OTPIC. In a sense, the proposed project is designed to combine OTPIC with CRInfo, while also bringing many other leading theorists and practitioners into the project. (OTPIC was done primarily by the Burgesses and their graduate students working alone, so its point of view is slanted in one particular way.)

Intractable Conflict Project
OTPIC was one of the major products of the Consortium's long term Intractable Conflict Project, which began during the Gulf War in 1991. Thus, we have been developing the theoretical approach underlying this proposal for at least the last ten years. Beginning in the early 1990s, the Intractable Conflict Project has held several conferences and published a working paper series examining ways in which intractable conflicts can be more constructively handled. These discussions and papers paved the way for OTPIC, and are providing many of the initial ideas for this project as well.

Stanford Conference on Intractable Conflict
In 1997, Steve Toben asked the Consortium to organize the 1998 Hewlett Theory Center conference and focus the discussions on the topic of intractable conflict. We enjoyed the opportunity to do that, and utilized a virtual, participatory process to design a conference which interested as many people as possible in the intractable conflict "problem," including many who
had not been working in this area before. In preparation for the conference, participants were asked to form working groups to focus in on different aspects of intractability. These groups then prepared a series of short framing essays, setting out key theoretical and practical questions. The discussions then revolved around these essays, and some of us went on to investigate a number of these problems after the conference ended.

We did not, however, get as much follow-up to those discussions as we had hoped, in part because people at that time did not feel particularly comfortable with virtual environments and the online collaboration that we were then proposing. Much, however, has changed since that time, and people are now much more comfortable with the Web and virtual communications. We plan to revisit the questions, and many of the people, who were involved in that conference as we begin this new project. (Many, but not all, of those people are on the current participant list.) The framing papers written for the conference and the notes from the conference will also contribute to the effort. (They can be found at: http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/hewlett/Conf/index.html.)

Civil Rights Mediation Oral History Project

In 1999, the Consortium teamed up with Dick Salem of Conflict Management Initiatives to undertake the Civil Rights Mediation Oral History Project. This pilot project, which has recently been completed, involved in-depth (6-hour) interviews with seventeen Community Relations Service mediators. The initial idea of this project came from Dick Salem, but the Burgesses were immediately interested in working with him on it because the project posed a very interesting theoretical question. If intractable conflicts really are not mediatable (as we had been saying for quite some time), and if civil rights and other identity conflicts tend to be intractable, then how is it that the Community Relations Service has been effectively mediating such conflicts for over twenty years? The answer to this question, we have found, is complex. Some of it involves terminology. What do you mean by "mediation?" What do you mean by "resolve?" Although we are still contemplating what we learned from those interviews, it appears that they are excellent proof that good things can happen in conflicts that are commonly considered to be intractable, if effective intervention occurs early enough. Often, these disputes are "resolved," if one is satisfied with small-scale resolution (involving particular events, people, and communities). Sometimes this resolution even has lasting impact on those particular people and communities. We will be incorporating the knowledge that came out of those interviews, where applicable, into this effort, and have recruited three of the people we interviewed for that project to be involved in this project as well.

Other Participant Projects and Related Work

- Dr. Andrea Bartoli has been working as a scholar and practitioner of intergroup conflict resolution since the early 1980s. He has experience in conflicts in Mozambique, Algeria, Burundi, Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Colombia, East Timor, Myanmar (Burma), and Iraq. In 2000, he directed the Parliamentarian for Global Action peacemaking seminar in Zambia.
• Dr. Marcia Caton Campbell is a new scholar in the field, who recently wrote a dissertation entitled, "Exploring the Characteristics of Intractable Environmental Disputes," under the direction of Roy J. Lewicki.

• Diana Chigas, from the Cambridge, Massachusetts Conflict Management Group has worked with the negotiating teams of the government and FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador, with Greek and Turkish Cypriot policy leaders and professionals on dialogue and confidence-building, and with the apartheid-era government, ANC and Inkatha on organizing the constitutional negotiation process in South Africa. In her letter of response to us, she indicated that others in CMG are also interested in participating in this project—all of whom have a vast amount of experience in international and intergroup conflicts.

• Dr. Peter Coleman has conducted research on ingroup/outgroup formation, gender discrimination in organizations, the mediation of inter-ethnic conflict, ripeness in intractable conflict, conflict resolution and difference, and the conditions which foster the constructive use of social power. He recently co-edited a book entitled The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice (2000), published by Jossey-Bass, in which he also authored a chapter on intractable conflicts which will be a primary source for initial building-block and framework information.

• Dr. Morton Deutsch is a pioneer in the study of intergroup relations, cooperation-competition, conflict resolution, social conformity, and the social psychology of justice, and has been one of the leading scholars in the field of conflict resolution for three decades. His 1973 book, The Resolution of Conflict, is still one of the best books available on the sources and outcomes of intractability (though he doesn't use that term); it also contains a wealth of information about possible responses that are just as valid now as they were then. Deutsch has numerous other publications since that time that will also be useful, and his personal insight and wit will be a delightful addition to this project.

• As co-founders of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, Dr. Louise Diamond and Ambassador John McDonald bring additional experience on international and intergroup conflicts. In one sense, their "multi-track approach" could be considered a framework in its own right; in another sense, each of the tracks is its own framework. Regardless of which way one looks at it, their very broad view and understanding of the complexity of the problems will bring a valuable perspective into this effort.

• Dr. Nancy Ferrell, Dick Salem, and Dr. Wallace Warfield are the three former Community Relations Service mediators who have agreed to participate in this project. All have a vast amount of experience mediating civil rights conflicts in the United States, and all three have more theoretical insights (and an interest in theory) than is typical for most mediators.

• Dr. Louis Kriesberg has written numerous books and articles on intractable conflicts. He was one of the earliest scholars to use the term "intractable," and has done considerable work investigating just what that term means, when it should and should not be applied, and how intractable conflicts can be transformed so they can be resolved.
• The same can be said for Dr. Bernard Mayer, a partner at CDR Associates, who has a vast amount of practical experience intervening in intractable conflicts, both within and outside of the United States. Mayer just published a book, The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution, A Practitioner's Guide (Jossey-Bass, 2000), which provides a useful introduction to a number of the frameworks we will want to be looking at in this effort.

• Other practitioners with extensive experience and valuable insights are John Marks and Susan Collin Marks, President and Vice President of Search for Common Ground, and Mark Gerzon, who is another author of several books on intractable conflicts (although he didn't call them that). He also was the designer and facilitator of the historic 1997 and 1999 Bipartisan Congressional Retreats, which were designed to seek a greater degree of civility, mutual respect and, when possible, bipartisanship among members of the House of Representatives. The 1999 retreat was held shortly after the Clinton impeachment hearings—a testament to the fact that Gerzon has considerable experience intervening in intractable conflicts!

• A number of other participants (Dr. Barbara Gray, Dr. Sanda Kaufman, and Dr. Roy Lewicki) were drawn from the Inter-University Consortium on the Framing of Intractable Environmental Disputes. (Guy and Heidi Burgess are also participants in this project, which provides interesting insights into how framing contributes to intractability.)

• As principal investigator of the Hewlett-funded Theory to Practice Project, Christopher Honeyman is very interested in and knowledgeable about ways to bring theory and practice together. He is especially concerned about finding ways to get theoretical knowledge to the people who need it most—practitioners and disputants. Since that is what we are doing with this project, his involvement will be a major benefit.

• Dr. Michelle LeBaron is another scholar with extensive intercultural conflict resolution experience, as is Dr. John Paul Lederach. In addition to teaching and writing on approaches to peacebuilding, Lederach brings to the project extensive experience with intractable conflicts in Latin America, Africa, and the U.S. He has pioneered the development of elicitive methods for training and intervention, and is particularly interested in developing ways to manage conflicts with high levels of complexity.

• Sallyann Roth is another practitioner who has considerable theoretical expertise as well as practical experience. As part of the Public Conversations Project, she has developed one of the most successful (in our view, at least) approaches to intractable conflicts.

• Dr. Tim Sisk has been doing research on intergroup conflicts, especially in Africa for a number of years. His current project is a book entitled Beyond Bloody Sundays on peacebuilding in intractable intergroup and international conflicts.

• Another practitioner, Andrea Strimling works with the international office of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. She has worked extensively in Kashmir and South
Africa, among others. Ms. Strimling is also a founder of "ACRON: The Applied Conflict Resolution Organizations Network". ACRON seeks to enhance the effectiveness of international conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities by promoting communication, coordination, and collaboration among applied conflict resolution organizations; by increasing awareness of and funding for the field; and by building bridges to other applied and academic organizations in related fields. Andrea has indicated that other ACRON members are likely to be involved in this project, but we asked her to hold off on recruiting more participants until we knew more about our funding situation.

• Another scholar, Dr. Doug Yarn recently organized a conference of U.S. trainers and mediators who have been working abroad to examine the issues and dilemmas involved in the "importation" of U.S. conflict resolution processes to different cultures. This is an important issue for us to consider in this project, hence we asked Doug to join the effort as well. He, too, indicated that others at the Georgia Consortium on Conflict Resolution are likely to be interested in the project.