NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND DANGER UNDER THE GUN: CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING ON PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL TEAMS

Patrick G. Coy

ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty years, Peace Brigades International (PBI) has pioneered a model of international non-violent accompaniment to protect the human rights of those threatened by political violence. Relying on small teams of international observers deployed where political violence is rampant (Indonesia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, and elsewhere), PBI attempts to deter violence and open up safer political space for local activists under threat from both state forces and para-state organizations. PBI's international observers are trained in non-violence and equipped with cameras, notebooks, cell phones, extensive diplomatic contacts, and a cross-cutting international advocacy network. The recipient of numerous international awards, PBI has also been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

PBI is deeply committed to decentralized structures and consensus decision making, but using consensus decision making in an international accompaniment team context, marked by danger and fast-braking crises, is far from easy, carrying considerable risks for the participants and their clients.

Based on extensive participant observation research with the larger organization and with two PBI teams in Sri Lanka, this paper analyzes the most salient issues involved in using consensus on PBI teams. Those issues include individual ownership of group decisions, full participation of all members, creative attention to the emotional concerns of members, the dangerous nature of the work and the potentially far-reaching ramifications of the decisions taken by a PBI team. Thick ethnographic descriptions of the teams' struggles and conflicts with using the consensus process are employed in the analysis. I argue that flexible, conscientious and proactive applications of consensus principles makes consensus decision making uniquely suited to many international non-violent accompaniment contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is a human rights and non-violent peace-keeping organization founded in 1981 by Gandhians and Quakers long active in international peace efforts. Operating where political space is violently contested and democratic freedoms are violated, PBI attempts to widen the political space within which human rights and non-violent struggle may be more safely exercised by local activists. Relying on foreign nationals who volunteer their services, the organization has pioneered a model of international non-violent protective accompaniment in national conflicts.

The protective accompaniment technique rests on the idea that the presence of unarmed international escorts alongside local activists is often a deterrent since violence or freedom restrictions directed toward foreign nationals often result in higher political costs for the transgressor than the same actions directed at local citizens. Moreover, PBI's escorts function as international observers. Trained in non-violence, armed with cameras, cell phones, notebooks, foreign passports and a cross-cutting international support and advocacy network, their presence often reduces the level of violence and allows PBI to publicize eyewitness accounts of human rights violations. The organization maintains an Emergency Response Network (ERN) that consists of hundreds of people across the globe who are signed on to electronic mail networks or subscribed to automatic fax sending services. They receive fast-breaking PBI information calling for international support and pressure on behalf of a PBI team or its clients whose rights are being violated. That action takes the form of letters, telexes, faxes and phone calls calling for the correction of the perceived injustice. PBI's work and its support for national human rights organizations is a concrete example of the transnational advocacy networks that were so well analyzed by Keck and Sikkink (1998, 2000), and whose political significance and effectiveness in a globalized world continues to increase (Smith et al., 1997; Ball, 2000, p. 74; Maney, 2001).

Peace Brigades International teams usually enter a region on the invitation of an organization engaged in non-violent struggle. An international non-governmental organization with associative status at the United Nations, PBI adopts a stance of non-partisanship in its work. Typical PBI clients include journalists, trade unionists, human rights workers, indigenous peoples, health workers, refugee communities, religious figures, opposition politicians, and various local civil associations and nongovernmental organizations under threat as a result of their activities.

The protective services provided by Peace Brigades International are quite varied and fluid, depending upon both the nature of the threats faced and the needs of the local population. The most common services include the following: 24 hour accompaniment or "escort" of individual activists in immediate danger from death threats or disappearance; public accompaniment of threatened individual activists when they appear in public or travel to more dangerous locales; an observer "presence" at the offices of a non-governmental or grassroots organization facing harassment from a repressive government or from para-state organizations; and observers who accompany demonstrations, marches, or pickets where police brutality or state violence directed against the demonstrators is likely (Mahony & Eguren, 1997; Mahony, 2000; Coy, 1993; Coy, 1994, 1997; Burrowes, 2000; Eguren, 2001; Weber, 1993).

A Note on Method

This paper is based on extensive participant observation of Peace Brigades International, including at regional, national and international meetings of the group from 1992 through 2001. I also joined two PBI teams in Sri Lanka in the mid-1990s, serving on one for three months and the other for one month. I collected over 400 pages of field notes based on social observations and informal interviewing, and conducted formal, taped interviews with 59 people, including PBI members, Sri Lankans who received PBI accompaniment, diplomats, Sri Lankan government or police officials, and NGO members familiar with PBI's work. Field notes and interviews were transcribed and coded with Hyper-Reseach, a software program for analysis of qualitative data.[1]

With this brief introduction to Peace Brigades International, let us now do the same for consensus decision making, the other focus of this paper.

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

Consensus decision making is a method for social groups to raise and discuss issues, weigh and negotiate alternatives, and reach collective decisions. If that was all there is to the process, however, there would be little to differentiate it from other group decision making processes, like parliamentary procedure or Roberts Rules of Order. Consensus process aims for a collective decision arrived at in such a way that each group member is free to express themselves and feels that their opinions and concerns have been heard and responded to by the group. It therefore puts a priority on the following four dynamics: (1) the active participation of each member in the discussion; (2) using all the available resources of the group; (3) listening; and (4) openness to alternative viewpoints. At the foundation of all of these is the conviction that the viewpoints of each individual in the group are as important as those of any other. This approach in turn is rooted in the belief that each member has the potential to bring significant, even unique, insight to the problem.[2]

Consensus process does not aim for unanimity, nor even for each group member to be totally satisfied with a particular decision. It does aim for complete support. Here there is a recognition that while some group members may still not be convinced that a particular course of action is the best decision, they are willing to agree to it and to support it, presumably at least partly because their own views and those of others have been heard and respected and because they recognize that there is merit in the decision. The phrase "sense of the meeting" is used to denote a consensus in the Quaker tradition; it also does not indicate uniformity of opinion. The Book of Discipline for the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting explains that the phrase indicates instead that there is "substantial unity" of opinion that this is the right course of action at this time (Sheeran, 1983, p. 48). The extent of unity reflected in the "sense of the meeting" may vary according to the significance of the issue, the size of the meeting, the amount of time available to make and implement the decision, and other factors (Gentry, 1982, pp. 234–235).

If one or more individuals can not agree to a proposal in the consensus process, those dissenters may choose to "stand aside," thereby allowing the group to take the decision. Those who stand aside may request that their dissent be formally noted in the minutes. If a member is strongly opposed, consensus is "blocked" and the group does not implement the proposal. A number of things may then happen. If there are time constraints, the proposal may be with-

drawn and most groups would then revert to the status quo. Otherwise, a subgroup may be appointed to try and resolve the strong concerns and incorporate them in a new proposal, or, more simply, a "cooling off" period may be used before the group revisits the discussion at a later date.

Advantages of the consensus process are said to be many. Its advocates argue that it produces intelligent decisions by incorporating the best thinking of everyone, while also mitigating adversarial attitudes where individual egos are tied to win/lose proposals (Susskind, 1999; Coover, Deacon et al., 1981, p. 53). Research supports at least some of these claims.

Watson et al. (1991) found that over time, groups using consensus significantly increased their problem solving skills and overwhelmingly produced better results than the best individuals in the group. Mushaben's (1989, p. 290) analysis of the West German peace movement of the 1980s showed that the use of consensus processes by small work groups convened to address the movement's most cententious issues served to hold the coalition together. In one study, groups that were instructed in and used consensus decision making produced qualitatively better decisions, made better use of both the average and best resources of their group members, and generated more ideas than groups using majority-rule processes (Nemiroff & King, 1975). On the other hand, they also did what critics of consensus have long maintained is one of its major drawbacks: they used 50% more time to reach their decisions. Not surprisingly, the often lengthy time needed to achieve consensus has hampered the work of PBI and its teams in the field (Mahony, 2000, pp. 158–160; Moser-Puangsuwan & Weber, 2000, pp. 325–327).

Some researchers argue that the consensus process does a poor job of handling group conflict, sweeping it aside in what is seen as a press to gain agreements. Based on an in-depth qualitative study of the 1970s and 1980s anti-nuclear movement and its primary alliances (Clamshell, Abalone & Livermore), Epstein (1991, pp. 268–272) concludes that the consensus processes employed in those movements served to suppress and avoid conflict, at least partly in an aim to transcend it. She suggests that consensus processes may not be able to adequately deal with the levels of conflict inevitably present in diverse, multi-ethnic social change movements. Moreover, there is some research to support the view that people may tend to enter small group consensus processes biased against conflict and toward agreement, thereby allowing other group members to manipulate support for their views by threatening conflict (Gastil, 1993, p. 53). Gentry (1982, p. 235) suggests that research on the Quaker experience with consensus process underscores the importance of having conflict management techniques built into the group's structure in order for consensus to work best. That same research also identifies four other conditions that promote successful use of consensus: members are bound together by shared ideology;

leadership is sensitive and responsive; members understand and value the process; and criteria for internal ranking of members are consistent with the goals of the group and its values.

A common claim that is at least partly borne out by some research is that consensus provides a strong safeguard against an unequal distribution of power within the group and has the potential to democratize decision making and redress power imbalances (CRC, 1981; Lakey, 1987, p. 89; Brown, 1989; Iannello, 1992, p. 63; Gastil, 1993, p. 53). In this respect, some who adopt consensus due to its presumed compatibility with feminist processes claim that consensus can be both "restorative and radicalizing" by healing the wounds of marginalization and by empowering individuals to challenge social systems that have traditionally silenced them (Starhawk, 1987, p. 186). Many social movement organizations that critique status quo vertical power relations, including PBI, have embraced consensus decision making as an organizational expression of the re-ordered horizontal social relations that they hope to accomplish on a wider scale.[3] An organization's ideological identity provides a framework of meaning for evaluating and choosing to use different resources and strategies (Coy & Woehrle, 1996; Downey, 1986, p. 360), including decision making processes. Some are rejected because they seem incompatible with other organizational goals, while still others are embraced as an expression of those same goals. Such is the case with PBI and consensus decision making.

PREFIGURATIVE POLITICS AND CONSENSUS WITHIN PBI

There are two primary strains of activism that have informed and influenced PBI in the organizational choices it has made regarding structure and process. The first is the new left of the 1960s and the second is the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). From the Quakers, PBI adapted consensus decision making processes, and also patterned their early training programs for prospective volunteers on the Quaker-based "Alternatives to Violence" training program for prisoners (Siedle-Khan interview).

The new left movements of the 1960s created a distinctive cultural milieu and a host of innovations in organizational structure; the influence of both reach into the present and influence today's movements. There is much about the period and its lasting legacy for contemporary social movements that we need not cover here.[4] What primarily concerns us is that dimension of the period that has to do with how social movement organizations (SMOs) order their internal affairs, structure their organizations, and make the decisions that impact the work they do and the lives of their members.

In this regard, Morgan (1991, p. 5) has characterized the period as "the West's pro-democracy movement," while Breines (1989, p. 65) writes that "participatory visions and experiments were the fuel that fired the movement's grass roots." The new left grew out of a rejection of centralized and dehumanizing institutions. One of its goals was to avoid duplicating what it saw as the hierarchical and manipulative relationships characteristic of society, and even of the old left that it was superseding (Breines, 1989, p. 421). PBI embraces this approach. Not only is the organization concerned not to duplicate mainstream society's way of ordering relationships, but many PBI members see "established" social movement organizations and other "alternative" groups as oppressive as well. They are as keen not to duplicate the structures and patterns of older groups such as the War Resisters International (WRI) or the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) as they are of mainstream groups.[5]

The more time one spends in and around PBI the more clearly one sees the passion its members bring to the non-violent protection of human rights. What is less obvious is that that passion for human rights in the political sphere is nearly matched by an enthusiasm to create a different and more egalitarian kind of international social movement organization (Mahony, 2000, pp. 158–160; Moser-Puangsuwan & Weber, 2000, pp. 325–327). PBI members are animated by the notion that they are devising something new and useful for the global movement for justice in two different, but related arenas: non-violent technique and organizational process and structure.Many within the organization characterize PBI's work of the last twenty years as being about the development and refinement of what they see as the innovative non-violent technique of international accompaniment.[6] There is a palpable sense within the organization that it has been creating international accompaniment as it went along, responding as best it could to requests for help from oppressed groups, using international observers in different contexts, making mistakes, and hopefully learning from them (Clark, 2002). Indeed, the mandate of the early teams in Guatemala was vague and there were no clear goals until the team literally stumbled upon developing the international accompaniment technique in its work with family members of the disappeared (Cole interview). Thus, PBI members frequently refer, for example, to "our experiment in non-violence."[7]

A similar sense of organizational self exists within the organization vis-à-vis issues of structural processes and decision making. The 1998 General Assembly of the organization, meeting in Sweden, stated it plainly in the Mission Statement adopted there: "PBI's identity is built upon non-hierarchical structures and consensual processes." As with its innovation in non-violent technique, PBI members also construct a notion of organizational

identity that places the organization on the cusp of progressive group process and structure among social movement organizations.[8] And like the new left before them who looked askance at the bureaucratic organizational forms and the politically compromised ideologies of the old left, PBI members know what they are rejecting and what they hope not to recreate. Consider these reflections from two former international secretaries of PBI, Mary Link, and Tim Wallis.

> We are trying something that is very difficult to accomplish. We are trying to work always by consensus in an international organization that is perpetually short of money. And in terms of the structure of the organization, we have consciously chosen not to choose any of the structures already available to us from other organizations. We are trying to construct something completely different as we go along . . . I have even heard it said that we should be open to an overhaul of our structure every three years! I'll bet they don't do that in the War Resisters International or the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, do they? (Mary Link, field notes).

> We have more decentralization compared to any other international organization. I don't know as much about IFOR as I do of WRI. But I don't believe that IFOR tries to operate by consensus at the international level, or has as much of a grass roots structure as PBI does. We're still breaking ground and very much committed to the grass roots democracy consensus process, and trying to use our non-violent ideals in our structure. And at the same time finding a structure that can work, that can actually make decisions, that doesn't take so long to decide on any project that the conflict is over by the time we take a decision (laughing) (Wallis interview).

Consensus is a core value of PBI. It is mandated and used on every level of the organization, from teams in the field to the project committees that oversee them, from national chapters to the many committees they generate, and from the General Assembly to the International Council that acts on the Assembly's behalf. The organization has even developed an elaborate set of procedures for making international committee decisions by consensus via electronic mail.

On the one hand, consensus functions in a mechanical sense. It is the oil that greases PBI's wheels, keeping the group rolling through the depressingly deep organizational valleys that face all SMOs, and up and over the exciting and dramatic high points of PBI's non-violent accompaniment work. Consensus also has substantial symbolic significance in the organization; it is seen as a sign pointing toward a better, more just and egalitarian way of ordering social and political relations. Within PBI, consensus decision making is not simply instrumental; it is not just one among many possible ways to accomplish organizational tasks and goals. It is understood, rather, as concretely expressive, even "prefigurative" of the sort of social world the organization and its members are working to bring about.[9] Here the group is a microcosm of the ideal society. Such a world respects and honors the opinions, human rights, and

political activities of every member of a group or society. For many in PBI, it is important to "model" that ideal and relying upon consensus processes is seen as a central way to do so. Despite frustratingly long and sometimes paralyzing consensus decision making experiences on every level of the organization, despite the fact that some members leave soured and embittered by the process, the organization embraces consensus and cannot let it go. To do so would be to abandon something definitive of the group's collective identity, a rare occurrence in a social conflict situation (Woerhle & Coy, 2000; Coy & Woehrle, 1996), as the following incident demonstrates.

TRUST AND CONSENSUS

While I was serving on a Sri Lanka team, the Project Coordinator arrived on the island for a periodic evaluation, including meetings with the team's contacts to address its recent work and chart future directions. One meeting was with senior staff of Quaker Peace and Service (QPS) who were frustrated with what they perceived to be inefficiency and unreliability in the decision making of the PBI Sri Lanka team, especially as it related to the PBI program in Batticaloa in the war-torn eastern region of the island where QPS performed similar work. Quaker Peace and Service's frustration was rooted in a number of factors: local attitudes and perceptions about QPS could be negatively impacted; QPS's own work was sometimes made more complicated as a result; genuine local needs were not being met. QPS had made little secret of their frustrations, which was a bit of a sore point with the team that I joined.[10] QPS staffer Penny Robbins described their central concerns in an interview.

> You see, the two or three (PBI) people who were based in Batti couldn't make decisions . . . . They would always have to get everybody together in Colombo to make decisions of things like whether they could work with the (governmental) Human Rights Task Force, or whether they could escort government people . . . it just seemed that they were forever having to come back to Colombo so everybody could make a decision and they could get consensus. And I mean, it's a day's journey out of the way, and very expensive, and then nobody is there (in Batti) (Robbins interview).

The QPS staff asked to meet with the SLP coordinator alone, minus any PBI team members. The coordinator insisted on having current PBI team members present, saying that interorganizational critiques are best delivered face-to-face with the principals involved, and that to cut the PBI team out of the discussions would seriously violate PBI process. At the meeting, the QPS staff critiqued what they saw as PBI's over-reliance on consensus, and the ways they felt it was harming PBI's work in the Batticaloa war zone, where decisions

needed to be taken promptly, on the spot, without extensive consultation. When the PBI members' acknowledgment of the problems did not appease their QPS critics, they emphasized that consensus is a central aspect of PBI's understanding of itself, and that it is part of PBI's experiment in non-violence: "an international team both living and working together by consensus." In order to bring the discussion to a close, the PBI members simply told QPS that "consensus is not negotiable for PBI."

A multi-layered analysis of the Batticaloa example reveals the importance of trust in the consensus tradition, the competing values that are built into it, and some obstacles that a social movement organization like PBI faces in using consensus in the field. Central to most approaches to consensus is a commitment that every member of the group must agree to and own a decision. In practical terms, this could easily lead to organizational paralysis, as QPS judged was the case for PBI in Batticaloa. But in its reaction to traditional hierarchical models of decision making, consensus process also favors decisions being taken at the lowest organizational level possible, where implementation and ownership of the decisions are most critical. Obviously, a competitive tension between these two values could easily develop within a SMO. However, when this tension is successfully negotiated within a consensual organization it is usually via yet a third consensus value: trust. Without trust between a group's members, consensus processes often collapse or descend into inefficiency, and the tension between ownership and decentralization may increase. Later in this paper I analyze an occasion when a different Sri Lanka team I also served on successfully negotiated this tension through formal exercises that built trust. But this was not true for this team and its work in Batticaloa.

PBI was in a new environment in Batticaloa, having to protect clients not only from government forces but also from the rebels, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE), who controlled large parts of the region. Accompaniment there took on new and different forms, increasing the risks for the project, which expanded the need for entire team ownership of the Batticaloa decisions. The PBI team was hesitant and careful in what were relatively uncharted waters.

Much of this could have been overcome if there were trustful relations among the team and between the team and the off-island project committee that supervised the team's work. But thanks to a series of controversial personnel-related incidents, trust was eroded to the point that the team had stopped even doing the mandatory personnel evaluations of each other's work. This overall lack of trust was further compounded in Batticaloa because one team member stationed in Batticaloa was not highly regarded and had made poor decisions there that compromised PBI's credibility and its commitment to non-partisanship (e.g. having drinks with the local army commander in a public place). Moreover,

the lack of trust within the team was further exacerbated by the tension then present between the team and the supervisory project committee and its chairperson. The committee felt that the team had gone beyond its mandate and authority in Batticaloa, and so the committee was now exercising heightened degrees of oversight over the team. This multi-layered lack of trust meant that Batticaloa-related decisions carried added weight and the team responded by taking yet more time and care in making decisions, further compounding the problems.

In what follows, this paper will continue analyzing the consensus decision making of two PBI teams in Sri Lanka that I served with and observed in the mid-1990s. Attention is given to the consensus principles of individual ownership of group decisions, full participation of all members, and attending to the emotional as well as the intellectual content of members' contributions. These consensus themes are analyzed with reference to the following PBI-related factors: length of service on teams, team turnover, and the relatively dangerous nature of PBI field work. Via an extended and thick analysis of an intense team conflict over identity issues and reasonable risks to take while in the field, I argue that this team's judicious and skilled use of classic consensus processes was largely responsible for the successful resolution of the conflict.

LENGTH OF SERVICE AND TEAM TURNOVER

Small group dynamics are marked by interactional processes (Brown, 1988) where the individual and the group impact each other. While the changes the individual goes through by joining a group may appear more obvious and potentially significant, the group must also undergo change as it accommodates the new member. All SMOs must determine how to handle turnover insofar as people become interested in social issues, join an organization working on their interests, and many eventually become less active and leave. The fixed and relatively brief terms of service on PBI teams compounds this common organizational problem. In the mid-1990s, PBI's Sri Lanka teams generally required four to six month commitments; most PBI teams now require a minimum of one year terms. But with an average team size of 6–12 people serving staggered terms so that not everyone is arriving or leaving at once, there is frequent turnover.

As team members leave they are replaced by new recruits even while some of the longer-term members remain throughout the turnovers. Impatience on the part of long term members with having to orient the new members and go over familiar and "settled" debates regarding ideology, values, and organizing strategies are far from uncommon in the SMO world (Whittier, 1995, p. 192).

This problem is particularly acute on PBI teams because team members work closely side by side and a considerable amount of the knowledge and skills is picked up through orientation sessions and on-the-job training. Each new team member who is part of the steady stream of shorter term members needs to be oriented to the mechanics of the office, the computer system, the filing system, the maintenance of the house, etc. They must be oriented to the neighborhood, the city and the public transportation system, and introduced to PBI contacts. They must also be oriented to this particular team's use of consensus, a model that may be a hodgepodge of North American, European, Australian, or South American approaches, and that also contains techniques or processes that may be idiosyncratic to this particular team.

The orientation actually serves a multifunctional role within the group. Not only does it help the new member acquire skills and information needed to accomplish group goals and tasks, but it also helps the new member through the identity transition (Brown, 1988, p. 24) that is always a part of joining a new group of this sort. The orientation process is further complicated by the disorientation and emotional turmoil of the "culture shock" (Oberg, 1960) that many new PBI team members experience (from living and working in an unfamiliar country). If done properly, this orientation takes time out of already busy schedules, made even more so by the recent departure of the team member the new one is replacing. Consequently, as we see in the following comment from a SLP team member, the orientation process is not always given the attention it deserves.

> I must say that it has been quite a stretch here the last month or two. Because Brandon and I have gotten so used to each other and have so much experience between us, working on getting the new team members up to speed has been a real trial! I'm afraid that I haven't been as forthcoming with positive criticism as I should be. Oh well. Here's to trying harder in that area.[11]

The first team that I joined put very little energy into orientation, although it was not because they were too busy to do so. The team underwent quite a lot of conflict in the period immediately preceding my arrival. One of the unwelcome fruits of this period was that team members were "burned out" on issues having to do with internal team dynamics. Members were willing to work as escorts and provide accompaniment, they were willing to network in the diplomatic and NGO communities, and they were willing to do the office and clerical support work necessary to keep a peace team operating. But they were far from eager to have meetings regarding team relations, or to spend non-work related time with each other, or to embrace tasks associated with building team dynamics (like orientation of new members). There is some evidence to suggest that burnout on team relations is a problem that confronts PBI's teams across projects. Consider these comments from a veteran of the Guatemala team.

> Sometimes it is so bad that the escort work is actually a reprieve. It is more relaxing to go out to the countryside with a leader of the popular movement and accompany him. You bet I am going when I get the chance! We will travel hard, sleep on the floor, eat only homemade tortillas and beans for three days . . . . It gets so that is more relaxing than being at home at the team house (field notes).

On the Sri Lanka team, burnout from trying to maintain good team relations and orienting new members negatively impacted team decision making. The most obvious impact was a lack of efficiency as team meetings then had to be devoted to the relatively mundane informational queries of new team members. A more profound effect on decision making was the fact that the already substantial "learning curve" required of new members became even more so. As the following quote from Terri demonstrates, when new team members are deprived of introductory knowledge and information, they lack the confidence needed to become full and early participants in team decisions. This can easily result in handicapping the consensus process in so far as it relies on the full participation of all members.

> The team was such a mess when I first arrived. I received very little orientation. Well, maybe I should say I received a little help from this one (team member) and a little help from that one. I just had to figure things out on my own, so it took me a long time to feel comfortable and to contribute (field notes).

Another factor regarding the effects of turnover is that the intense living and working situation on PBI teams engenders close emotional relationships amongst the members. When former team members meet again at national or international PBI events, this closeness is immediately obvious. The friendships formed on teams often reflect the intensity of the experience of living and working in a PBI house on what is sometimes referred to within the organization as "the front lines of human rights protection." Social impact theory specifies those group factors which most impact members. "Immediacy," or the relative closeness of group members in space and time, is among the most significant group factors impacting individual members (Hogg & Abrams, 1988, pp. 99, 121–122). The departure of team members, which of course means their physically moving out of the team's house and office, invariably takes an emotional toll on the remaining team members, often profoundly impacting those who were close to the departing member. When team membership changes, those who are left respond in a variety of ways. Some withdraw on the personal level while "going along" on the organizational level with decisions they don't really agree with; still others reach out to other team members, including through issue-support. In any case the team's relational dynamics are altered in ways that are often reflected in the group's decision making processes.

Even in relatively stable groups the emphasis on unanimity, ownership, and achieving agreement that marks consensus process results in a significant amount of repetition (Mansbridge, 1980, pp. 166–167). But when membership instability and turnover are combined with consensus process, as they often have been on PBI teams, the combination can be quite frustrating. Some team members find it problematic to revisit discussions about lifestyle-related issues and the meaning of core PBI concepts such as non-partisanship, discretion, and non-violence. The formal and informal discussions that team members find stimulating and cohesion-producing, and that can form such a big part of the team's life and work, become a casualty to frequent turnover of team members. Overall, I found that when members reflect on the effects of turnover and decision making it is common for their comments to be punctuated with a palpable weariness.[12] Two comments I heard repeatedly voiced within the organization is that "we are forever reinventing the wheel," and "we are always going over old ground."

This weariness sometimes effects meeting behavior in negative ways. Some team members withdraw from familiar discussions, others overtly obstruct them, and some simply trivialize them with comments about their perceived redundancy. Yet any of these responses can derail good consensus process. These comments from a Sri Lanka team member exemplify this.

> We spend so much of our time in meetings as it is. When new team members come in, we have to go over issues that we might have just spent a whole meeting on … I mean, I know it is important for them, but I get so tired of it. Sometimes I just keep quiet, so we can bloody get on with it (field notes).

While some team members may find the transitions and the revisiting of familiar policy issues simply wearisome, there is another side to this phenomenon. It can be a generator of conflict in a team, as evidenced in this comment regarding a recurring debate on the SLP team: whether to shop in western-style supermarkets, or only in the open markets "with the people."

> There is constant debate because each new volunteer brings a new perspective to this and people with strong views leave and others come on … It is often left to the individual to decide what they feel is best and because what an individual feels might be best is not what another individual feels is best, there's conflict there. If I go and shop at a supermarket and buy some imported goods when I know another PBI team member feels that you should only buy things that are on sale at the local market, then that's already a conflict there, the same as if he only buys things [at the market], it works both ways (Harris interview).

As team members come and go, the power dynamics within a team also invariably shift, especially since the relative amount of personal experience an individual has on a team is often a source of considerable power within PBI teams. It is not unusual for as many as half of the members of a given team

to be relatively recent arrivals, a dynamic that compromises participation since new members are often tentative in their decision making, and often defer to the veterans.[13] Transitional periods are sometimes exploited by remaining team members in a bid to have positions they personally supported but could not get consensus on in earlier teams now become team policy. Decisions reached only a few weeks ago are suddenly revisited; issues on which consensus was not obtained only last month, and which the group dropped, now reappear on the agenda. This phenomenon happened often enough that one departing SL team member (who also had her eye on decisions the team was likely to revisit once she left) wrote a memo proposing a new policy whereby the team would be barred from revisiting or changing a decision for a certain length of time after having made it. While she served to highlight a structural problem, her recommendation was not adopted, at least partly because it was seen as disempowering to the current team, hamstringing them to decisions they may see as poor or disagreeable. It could also have profound and negative safety ramifications.

All of this can be frustrating for the Project Committee members who oversee the work of the team, and who often serve for longer periods of time than do team members. The coordinator of the Sri Lanka Project used a mental health metaphor to describe her experience with the frequent turnover of volunteers and its effect on team decision making.

> It makes me feel like I am dealing with a collective schizophrenic. I just finish responding to some contentious decision with the team, and then the team changes, and we are on to the next. Except sometimes it is the same issue, only this time the team's position is the opposite of what it was only weeks before! (field notes).

There are many examples of remaining team members exploiting personnel transitions to manipulate team decision making, including the following rather serious one. When a SL team member was allowed to return to the team for a second year of service after very poor evaluations from his first year, the conditions included a series of more frequent peer evaluations of his work. The evaluations did not occur. Some team members claim that his supporters managed to obstruct the evaluations until his primary critics were scheduled to leave, whereupon the new team gave him a delayed, but positive, evaluation, allowing him to complete his second year.

Frequent turnover may dramatically effect team work loads, individual initiatives, and the consensus process. Utilizing a rather commonplace psychological coping mechanism, soon-to-be departing team members often go through a withdrawal stage where they disengage from the work and above all from their investment in team decisions and the processes used to achieve them. While their body is still present, their mind and spirit may be already on the

plane home. Many members interpret this as an issue of decision ownership: they know that they will not be there to implement the decisions. In any event, the contributions to consensus process by team members near the end of what is called their "service agreement" can easily become half-hearted and shallow. That kind of participation in consensus is like throwing a handful of sand on a well-oiled gear: it will continue to turn, but not as efficiently and it will not produce as much power.[14]

Rare is the PBI member who is not aware of and troubled by the substantial discrepancies between their personal situation and those they came to accompany. Not only are the risks the PBI volunteers face of a lesser magnitude while on site, but one day soon they will leave their associates behind, return home and face none of those risks at all. Many veteran team members talk of having to work through guilt feelings about their departure. For some, like this SLP team member, it may negatively impact both the process of participating in decision making and the content of the contribution.

> Toward the end I found it increasingly hard to sit through the meetings, to contribute to the discussions. I felt badly about leaving, I don't know, I was really struggling with being able to pick up and leave. I felt a lot of conflict about it, and I think when you are in that kind of emotional state, you don't always think well (field notes).

All is not negative when it comes to team turnover. The new blood that is regularly infused into PBI teams can also play positive, constructive roles, including in decision making. The fresh interests and energies that new team members bring with them reinvigorate a team in multiple ways. There are many examples where destructive power dynamics or poor consensus decision making patterns within a team were altered in constructive ways by the arrival of a new member. I found that this is especially salient for consensus in the PBI context, where team members live and work together in a house that does double duty as the team office. New members "see" things differently. While they may not always be forceful about it given their rookie status (Brown, 1988, pp. 19–23, 42–46), they are often prone to question entrenched patterns or practices that veterans largely take for granted, or even see as normative. This can happen regarding behavior in the field while accompanying, on policy decisions, or within team relations.

For example, Rob was a long term (2 year) member of a Sri Lanka team on which I served. He had appropriated the newest team notebook computer, monopolizing its use almost to the exclusion of other team members. One of Rob's assigned tasks was maintenance of the team's computer filing system and since he had set up the system of team records on the newer and faster computer, there was something natural, to a degree, about his frequent use of it. While not happy about it, veteran team members chose not to confront Rob,

partly because they had confronted him on a number of other issues and had learned that he handled confrontations poorly, tending to respond with either an explosive kind of defensiveness or withdrawal. Either made life and work in the house painfully difficult for the other team members, enough so they simply accommodated themselves to the computer problem by making do with using the old one. But when Nick joined the team and judged the computer use pattern as inefficient and unfair, he promptly raised the issue at a team meeting. Nick laid out the problem to Rob and the team and suggested a number of possible solutions. To the surprise of the veteran team members, Rob was receptive and the problem was resolved amiably with no ill-effects on team relations. Informal interviews with veteran team members indicated that they felt it went so well with Rob because he perceived Nick and his motivations differently than he would have theirs if they had taken the initiative.[15]

INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP OF GROUP DECISIONS

One common advantage claimed for the consensus process is the high degree of individual ownership of group decisions that an egalitarian and patient weighing of individual concerns by the group is intended to accomplish (Kaner, Lind et al., 1996). Consensus process is weighted toward incorporating members' objections and concerns by adapting proposals in order to fashion a decision to which all can agree. By so doing, individual support for the decision is enhanced because members feel heard, and have had their concerns responded to (Susskind, 1999). While an individual may still not think a particular decision is the best possible one, such a process may convince them that it is the best decision to which the group can agree, and that it is therefore worthy of their unqualified support. A healthy consensus process requires active participation, mutual dialogue, and open searches for common ground, all activities that can bolster group solidarity and individual satisfaction. This may produce increased member identification and commitment to the group. Individual disenchantment with group decisions is minimized and overall morale is increased (Barkan, 1979, p. 29). Some theorists claim that the defining element in the consensus process is the strong personal commitment of each member to carrying out the decision of the group, even if they disagree with it (Zaleznik & Moment, 1964, p. 142). Many in PBI recognize that individual ownership of decisions and policies may come with a price tag. Helen Stevenson, an Australian member of PBI's Sri Lanka team, described her own accommodation to this issue by casting it in ideological terms, naming it a "way of life" issue and implying that a PBI team member must simply accept a certain amount of inefficiency in order to achieve individual ownership.

STEVENSON: I've devised a finance system for the team that we've finally got to work. They must have had finance systems in the past that worked. What happened to them? Why didn't they continue? I suspect that a part of the problem has been record keeping problems. I think that some of the work that we've done in the last few months will help to overcome that by just setting up the computer menu so that new people know what they have to do. But then again, I expect that in a year's time, 18 months, this menu will be completely defunct, no one will have bothered to keep it up to date, and the whole thing will have to be gone through again. I would be really surprised if that doesn't happen.

COY: Does that bother you?

STEVENSON: No, not really. I agree it's inefficient, but it's also part of having the people living and working here owning what they do. I would rather we be inefficient and amateurish and actually owned what we did than that we were totally professional and distant and just doing a 9 to 5 job. I mean, it's a whole way of life. To be an effective volunteer I think you have to live the work and that involves a lot of commitment[16] (Stevenson interview).

THE CONTEXT OF DANGER

Perhaps the most important factor making ownership of decisions so critical on PBI teams is the relative degree of danger facing the teams. When decision ramifications have the potential for high impact on individuals, the need for ownership becomes acute (Mansbridge, 1980, pp. 253–254; Kaner, Lind et al., 1996, p. 217). Thus non-violent direct action groups contemplating illegal acts or civil disobedience have traditionally used consensus processes in small affinity groups because of the high costs the decisions could incur for each individual.[17] On PBI teams, the need for ownership of decisions is enhanced due to the stakes involved. For example, a team's decision to provide accompaniment to a threatened local group could have costly consequences for PBI team members, ranging from harassment to detention, from torture to deportation, and from serious injury to death. Team decisions may also harbor dangerous ramifications for the continued viability and usefulness of the specific PBI project, and even for the image and credibility of the organization itself (Coy, 2001, pp. 594–599; Mahony & Eguren, 1997). My research indicates that most in the organization are aware of this interactive relationship; there is in fact a substantial discourse about it. The two teams that I observed were sensitive to the issue, and often took extra time and employed specific discussion techniques to facilitate individual member's processing of concerns associated with team decisions.

The close living and working situations of PBI teams, coupled with the interdependent nature of teamwork, further highlights the interaction of danger with the need for individual ownership of team decisions. The elemental group dynamic that Lewin (1948) termed "interdependence of fate" (which might be more meaningfully phrased as simply "being in the same boat") is clearly

operative in the following comments from a former director of training for PBI in North America.

> On a team, consensus is important because if someone does not support a decision you still need teamwork to carry it out. And each person is at equal risk to carry it out. For example, if we decide to accompany indigenous leaders up into a remote village for a meeting and then escort them back three days later, and we think it is dangerous but worth doing, the whole team shares that risk, because the whole team could suffer if anything goes wrong. Like if someone gets hurt or kicked out of the country, the whole team is affected in some way. Naturally the point person feels it most (Skinner interview).

The context within which PBI team work is carried out also complements the consensus principles of taking stock before deciding, probing the not easily-expressed intuitions and hunches of hesitant members, and making sure everyone is in agreement before deciding and implementing. There is in fact a strong organizational ethos around being a "team," part of which is connected to the dangerous nature of the field work. Project Committees, which oversee the work of the teams, encourage team-building exercises, nights out together, and periodic team retreats. I termed it "team confidence." We saw in the example from Batticaloa how the lack of team confidence and trust in each other can negatively effect consensus decision making. But it is also important because of the nature of a team's work. As a PBI trainer put it at a training, "When the chips are down, you have to know that the whole team is on board and will be there for you." For a member of the Colombia team, achieving group unity on issues and decisions is important because one's teammates can "save you." Therefore the team helps its members to slow down and "wait for everyone." Without it, the dangers associated with accompaniment could lead to what she called a "paralyzing" fear.

> We try to minimize its (fear) effects. That is why PBI projects and the whole organization revolves around work in groups. Both life and work are built around the group, and group members are what save you or help you when you need it. It's the group that gives you strength and energy, sometimes also it's the group that make things go slower to wait for everyone (PBI, 1996).

The small size of PBI teams also interacts in a complementary fashion with the context of potential danger and the need for individual ownership of decisions. The kind of decision making outlined above would almost certainly be much more difficult if the teams were larger than the 6–12 members that is common. The largely deleterious effects large group size has on consensus process is well documented in the literature (Susskind, 1999; Kanter & Louis, Zurcher, 1973; Downey, 1986; Epstein, 1991; Barkan, 1979). Moreover, the demanding character of peace team work might interact with a larger team size such that a team could be easily handicapped into indecision or end up only

superficially addressing the hesitancies and hunches of individual members regarding danger potentialities.

PROCESS OVER PRODUCT AND MAKING ROOM FOR EMOTIONS

Consensus is process-oriented more so than product-oriented. While outcomes in the form of decisions are valued and aimed-for, an even higher priority is put on the process used to achieve decisions. Here the means are as important as the ends, and one of those means is to pay attention to emotions and feelings of group members. Various discussion techniques have been devised so that feelings are drawn out, expressed, highlighted, and responded to.[18] Emotion therefore plays a large role in the life of a small group that uses consensus decision making (Mansbridge, 1973, pp. 358–361). If a member is not comfortable with a proposal or even with the tenor of a discussion, consensus process values the creation of "safe spaces" to air and respond to feelings.[19]

One of the teams that I observed and served on demonstrated a level of sophistication in using consensus processes that allowed them to directly meet members' emotional needs. And when that occurs, it often has indirect benefits for meeting the larger objectives of the group at the same time, as was the case here. It is important to describe and analyze these events in an ethnographically thick manner because much of the research on small group consensus views consensus as an outcome, as a product of group deliberation instead of as a group process itself. What has seldom been studied is how consensus, as a decision making process, impacts the individual members and the group, thereby also influencing the tenor and the direction of the group (Gastil, 1993, p. 62). Nowhere is that more true of consensus process than in the area of emotion-expression and sharing of fears.

In what follows I will describe and analyze the procedures fashioned by the PBI Sri Lanka team to surface and process members' feelings and fears, create unity, and accomplish group tasks. At the time, the long term team was accompanying courageous Sri Lankans serving as local monitors of the Parliamentary elections, a particularly violent and bloody campaign marked by scores of political murders and assassinations, to say nothing of widespread mob violence (Coy, 1994). When a group of PBI short termers arrived to help out during the election period itself, conflicts immediately broke out on the team. At issue were a set of controversial "Guidelines for Dealing with Elections Violence." These guidelines were drafted by the long term team largely in advance of the arrival of most of the short termers, and the emotional context of their drafting is relevant to understanding what followed.

The long term team at the time was young; none of its members was older than 28, and they were keenly aware of their relative youthfulness. Each of the four members made frequent reference to their youth and inexperience in team meetings and during informal discussions. Moreover, each of them cast the issue in largely pejorative ways. The following comment from Lee was typical.

> We know we are a young team. Boy, do we ever know it (laughing)! I think our awareness of it actually immobilizes us at times; it is hard to make decisions because we are so afraid of making the wrong decision and it having serious consequences, either for us, or our clients, or both. I call it our team neurosis (field notes).

As I got to know the long term team better, I discovered that this negative sense of themselves was rooted primarily in three things: their age, some potentially serious mistakes and misjudgments they had recently made while doing accompaniment, and the low work load of the team in the past few months, resulting in their having had fewer occasions to "learn on the job" than is the norm for most PBI team members. As Lee indicated in the above comment, the team's response to this state of affairs was to be overly cautious, even "neurotic" in their caution. The guidelines they drafted reflected this caution.

Shortly before some of the team was to split off and go into the field, there was a meeting of the entire team to go over assignments, pass out field materials, do political analysis, and coordinate logistics. Early in the morning meeting, Wesley, one of the long term members and a drafter of the guidelines, went over them point by point. When he read No. 4, "If the situation turns violent and uncontrollable, leave the area," Nancy, a short term member, objected. An intense, but strangely sensitive discussion ensued.

Some questioned why a PBI escort would leave in the face of violence. "Is that not what we are here for," one asked, "to prevent violence if we can, and then to document it and respond to it?" Agnes, one of the long termers, acknowledged this, but she also insisted that the long term team felt there are some occasions when the most responsible thing for an observer to do is to simply leave.

> In a riot situation, where the police and the crowd are all out of control and people are being killed, maybe it is best just to leave the area. Staying there only to photograph it, you are actually accomplishing very little even while risking quite a lot. That still does not bring back to life those who are killed.

In explanation, Wesley and Lee recounted a violent incident they witnessed earlier while accompanying organizers for the Movement for Free and Fair Elections to Kalutara on the final day of nominations for the parliamentary elections. Upon arrival, they discovered that the planned activities of those they were escorting were delayed. They also found Kalutara dominated by raucous

groups of people representing opposing political parties. The PBI observers left those they were accompanying and went to investigate all the activity in front of the government building. Bricks, rocks, and bottles were hurled back and forth between the groups, and the crowd occasionally surged to press its way into the building where the nominations were being signed and filed. Apparently many in the crowd had been drinking. At one point a candidate's car left the government compound, stopped amid the crowd, and a man got out with a machine gun, ran into the crowd, and began firing above their heads, before retreating to the car and leaving. More fighting ensued, whereupon the police fired multiple rounds of tear gas into the crowd. Other police waded into the crowd and began indiscriminately clubbing people with batons and rifle butts. Many people fell to the ground, their heads split open, others dragged themselves away as best they could. And still the police continued to beat the demonstrators. Like many others in the crowd, Wesley, and to a lesser extent Lee, were partially trapped because of a high wall that the police were moving the demonstrators towards. People all around them continued to fall under the onslaught, and they both felt their presence as international observers carried no meaning whatsoever for the police.[20]

Although they both escaped injury, they were profoundly affected by this experience. Wesley told me he was "emotionally scarred" by it.[21] And as Lee put it:

> Before Kalutara I had never seen people attack others with the obvious intent to seriously hurt them ... I guess I always knew people were capable of that, but I had never seen it, and I guess I did not want to believe it. Now it was all around me, and I could do nothing to stop it. The police were so focused on what they were doing, they seemed oblivious to us. They just kept swinging ...

At the meeting of long and short termers, Wesley and Lee explained that the proposed guidelines were partly the fruit of the mistakes they made at Kalutara, leaving the local organizers they were accompanying, and putting themselves in an unnecessarily risky situation.[22] They emphasized that the election-related violence can occur in very unruly, fast-moving situations. A phrase they used, and which was sprinkled through the team reports on the Kalutara incident, was "no martyrs please."[23] They said that the guidelines were an effort to learn from their mistakes, including their overeagerness, and to pass on those lessons.

A few short termers acknowledged the good work that went into the guidelines and said that they were generally useful and wise, except for this one. One questioned the process that was used to produce them, noting that the problematic guideline did not reflect the discussions of the expanded team during the last few days. Most who spoke did so with clear sensitivity to the still highly emotional reactions the two long termers had to the incident. Some thanked Wesley and Lee for their work on the guidelines and for being willing

to share their feelings so openly. Nearly everyone prefaced or concluded their opinion-stating about the guideline by saying that it ultimately has to be an individual decision about where and how much risk to take.

It was clear that there were more emotions and feelings to deal with; the group was not yet ready to reach a consensus on the guidelines and risk-taking. Yet the morning meeting had now run overtime and there were more tasks scheduled for the rest of the day. The only time available was at 10 p.m. Due to the heavy schedule, the 10 p.m. evening meeting was made optional and a small group was assigned to come up with an agenda.

When the morning meeting finally closed, the group took time to evaluate the process. Taken together, the evaluative comments demonstrated the group's desire to honor good consensus process, to be respectful of others, and above all to create safe spaces for feelings to be shared. For example, Bruce had just arrived a couple of days before the meeting and had not said very much so far even though he had earlier served on the same team as three of the other short termers.

> This whole team never really had a chance to meet all together before this morning. Being one of the later arrivals, I wanted to be careful about what I said and advocated, especially in the first meetings. I did not want to come on too strongly, but I can see from the way people are treating each other that we should all feel free to speak our minds from the beginning, with confidence that it will be respected and responded to in a genuine manner (field notes).

Through the course of the day my informal conversations with three short termers revealed that they strongly disagreed with the guideline. But it was clear from a comparison of their meeting comments and their informal comments that they were trying to be careful of the feelings of Wesley and Lee, and also to respect whatever personal decisions regarding the risks the long termers were willing to undertake while escorting. In two instances I was able to confirm this impression by asking the short termers to help me account for the differences I saw in their public vs. private positions. They said they were confronting a dilemma: wanting to support Lee and Wesley's need to publicly process their feelings regarding their experience with violence, yet not wanting to have those personal reactions codified for the larger group to follow.

Nancy was a short termer whose opposition to the guideline ran especially deep. She questioned whether people who embrace a guideline like the one discussed should even be on a PBI team.

> I couldn't believe it when I read it. I really couldn't. I thought, This is not PBI; this is not who we are. I think that if that is the way you expect to behave in the field, to leave a violent situation where you are functioning as an escort, then you really ought to question whether you are in the right place. I mean, maybe you should not be on a team after all." (field notes)

As it turned out, Nancy was part of the small group that planned the 10 p.m. evening meeting. Despite nearly non-stop meetings and tasks lasting throughout the day for everyone, nearly the entire 15 member team showed up for the optional 10 p.m. meeting. The group began with some small group exercises designed to surface the thoughts and beliefs of individuals regarding the nature of non-violence. Not surprisingly, some of the small groups were unable to arrive at a consensus on the meaning of non-violence because of differences over spiritual vs. non-spiritual approaches. The discussion in the large group was then turned toward the controversial guideline.

Bruce opened by trying to demonstrate empathy with Wes's experience in Kalutara by describing accompaniment situations he had where he was "as scared as I have ever been in my life." He then went on to give a long description of the importance for him of "being grounded" in order to respond non-violently to violent situations. Wesley's response indicated his high level of emotional involvement in the issue: "Being grounded is not enough for me, or for PBI. What good does being grounded do you or do PBI when you end up cracked over the head with a baton?"

Bruce replied by saying that being grounded was something that you had to accomplish beforehand and that it would serve you and the organization well in situations of violence. He said that each individual accomplishes it in their own way; for him, meditation is key. He suggested that if a team member was grounded in themselves through something like meditation, and if their goals and motives were clear and pure, they would think clearly and confidently in moments of stress and high risk.

When Bruce finished, more team members shared similar perspectives, but they were rooted in their own experiences and traditions. Two members also said that they felt these risks were at the heart of PBI's work and that the important thing was for each team member to be prepared for them. They concluded that that was why they could not support a blanket guideline to leave in the face of violence. Nancy picked up on the importance of spiritual grounding saying that "meditation can create that grounding, although you can establish it in many other ways as well."

Wes reacted to all of this discussion about spiritual grounding by contrasting his motivations from those of others in the group.

I don't have anything against the spiritual approach, but I am essentially a political person. I may be different from some of the rest of you. I don't know. But I do know I am here for the long haul. No, actually I am not just here for the long haul, I am in the struggle for justice for the long haul, and that struggle just happened to place me here, in Sri Lanka, for this period of time. I am here for expressly political reasons, and I am no martyr. One can't be a martyr and be in these struggles for the long haul. I think taking the long view

and not staking everything, including your life, on one event is the better approach. I am here for solidarity reasons, to stand with people who are engaged in the same issues that I work on elsewhere, besides just here in Sri Lanka. And I can't help them or the wider movement for justice when I am dead.

The entire exchange was marked by high emotion as the group was confronting – both individually, and as a team – the meaning of their work in Sri Lanka, and its potential for life-threatening injury. When Wesley concluded, the proverbial pin could be heard dropping from any corner of the room. As others gave the emotional impact of his words a chance to settle in, and weighed their responses, there was a long silence. But unlike most long silences in a group setting, this one seemed comfortable.

Wesley then revealed that he was personally conflicted over the guideline: "I held my nose while writing it," he said. A few people assured Wesley that they respected his approach and each reiterated that it had to be up to the individual to decide if and when to leave a violent incident. The group seemed to sense the vulnerability that was implicit in Wesley's explicit sharing of his fears and feelings, and they responded in kind.

Slowly, others began to talk about their own experiences of taking risks in the field, expressed their feelings, and drew lessons for the group. Most began by thanking Wesley for sharing his feelings, or by saying how helpful it was for them to understand where he was coming from. Still others picked up on themes that Wesley had introduced, thereby affirming him, while at the same time they arrived at conclusions quite different from his.

Such was the case with Theresa, the oldest member of the group, who came to serve on the team after her retirement as a social worker, and who was now back for her second long term placement. She said she liked what Wesley had said about being in the struggle for justice for the long haul because "I have always thought of myself as a long haul person." But she also remarked that she did not think that meant that "you cut corners in your work, or that you don't take serious risks. It means," she said, "that you take a longer view of the goals and objectives of your work."

Bruce then gave a lengthy description of a violent attack by the police on trade union demonstrators in the Free Trade Zone who he and four other team members were accompanying. He emphasized the importance of team unity and trust and the confidence that gave him and the others to respond and react as the incident escalated.

I called back to the house and talked to the backup team. They said, 'Just remember, we are here for you.' That was important for me to hear at that time. In a situation where the police were firing their weapons over us and the crowd, I confronted five men armed with

clubs, and all I had was my camera (laughing). I am not sure it was the wisest thing I have ever done. It was a situation where I went with the spirit of the moment . . . It might have had more to do with stupidity than with bravery, but it worked.

He also described the decisions the team made by consensus ahead of time, of deciding to keep each other within view, to always know where the closest phones were, to have a meeting place afterwards, and so on. Bruce said that this advance planning, which he characterized as "mining the collective wisdom and common sense, really, of the group," was critical to give him confidence, and that it was also "like a glue" that held the team members together. Two other members of that earlier team who were also present in the Free Trade Zone that day also affirmed, in their own ways, this theme of unity being a source of strength and confidence for them that day.

Somebody else remarked, "it sounds like you had a really good team then." Bruce responded,

We fought like cats and dogs! (lots of laughter breaks out) A raise for the dhoby (the domestic washer of household linens) took a week of discussions and lots of hard feelings, over both the process and content of the decision (more laughter and nods of affirmation all around). But when it came to the question of what are we doing here, how do we conduct ourselves in the face of real or potential violence, we were solid as a rock. We had absolute trust in each other then.

Agnes, a long term member, expanded on the importance of trustful relations for accompaniment work by saying it was helpful to her to have prior relationships with those for whom she was putting herself at risk. The more she knew them and worked with them, the more risks she was willing to take.

The fact that we are going out early before election day and are getting to know our contacts and the monitoring teams we are accompanying helps me a lot. I guess I am willing to risk more on behalf of people or clients that I know and trust than pure strangers. Maybe this isn't right, but that is how I feel.

Two people then commented on an "instinct for survival" that they felt comes into play when threatened; one concluded that this discussion, coupled with instinct, ought to be enough of a guideline in this matter. Lee, who was also at Kalutara and was one of the drafters of the overall guidelines, had not said much of anything yet. He now told the group that "survival instincts" may not be all that is required for sound decisions in the field.

The instinct to survive was overridden by something else at Kalutara. I am not sure what else, but the fact is we ran toward the gunfire. And when you enter a situation of that much violence, where people are being wantonly attacked, it affects you on a very deep level. I was sick for days afterward. (here he begins choking up) The support of the rest of the team was absolutely critical to me to get through it and to process my emotions. And I am still doing that.

Wesley added:

I never saw people get their heads split open before. I never saw blood run down people's faces so freely before. I never saw people smashed in the head by 2 × 4s and rocks before. And that was before the police waded in indiscriminately with their batons. Based on that experience, I think PBI should stay as long as seems practical, get some photos, and then leave to make a report and disseminate the information. We can't do anything once it has reached the stage of open, indiscriminate violence and bloodletting.

Agnes began to build a consensus by highlighting for the group a theme that a couple of others had already raised. She contextualized the discussion, drawing behavioral distinctions for team members based on the source of the violence and the perceived effectiveness of international observers. Essentially, she said that if the violence was coming from the police, PBI members ought to stay, as most seemed to believe they can have a moderating effect on police violence. If, however, it is coming from an unruly mob, or is occurring between competing factions of demonstrators, then PBI members should leave due to the perceived unliklihood of their effectiveness as international observers. Many in the group affirmed this with short comments or approving nods.[24]

Nicki then addressed Wesley directly. As others had done, she began by affirming Wesley and acknowledging his feelings. She also reiterated the emerging consensus of the rest of the group that, in the end, each team member has to make their own decision.

I think it is good that you are in touch with why you are here and what you are willing and not willing to do. I should think that will help you in the field, and the fact that you can say it so freely here can only help the rest of us to find our own limits and boundaries as well, which I think each of us has to do. And if we can do that before we head out for the field, we will be so much more prepared.

Finally, after 11:30 p.m., the group began to fade. Short, universally unanimous evaluation comments were made about the meeting's usefulness. Someone suggested that it would be good to follow this up by scheduling another session the next day when people could openly name and talk about their feelings and fears before the team split up mostly into pairs and went to their various assignments. This was readily embraced and another small group was assigned the task of developing a structure for that sharing. Wesley thanked the group and said he was glad the group had taken the time for this late night session. He remarked that he "felt a lot better," and "trusted that people now understand where I was coming from in drafting the guideline."

As the group broke up, Nancy approached Lee to see if he wanted to talk further about his experience at Kalutara, as he had not said much in the discussion, but had indicated that he still had a lot of processing to do. PBI members

spend a lot of time debriefing and processing their meetings; despite the late hour, this meeting was no different. My walk home to the hotel with a group of team members was dominated by individual evaluations of the meeting, as was the shared breakfast the next morning.

Through extensive ethnographic studies of consensus processes in New England town meetings and in alternative new left organizations, Jane Mansbridge found that one of the benefits of consensus is that it helps members to listen carefully to both the emotional tone, and to the intellectual content of what other group members are saying (1980, p. 165). The process the PBI team used in the three meetings described above (including the meeting the following day to share fears about the work) reflects these findings. In the first morning meeting, theoretical concerns about the appropriateness of the guidelines were initially expressed and responded to. In the process, the emotions that fueled Wesley's drafting and the long term team's approval of the guideline were also surfaced. Similarly, the emotional concerns the guideline spawned in other members were also shared and addressed.

But as important as the listening for emotional tone and intellectual content may have been, I found there was more going on here. The group was not simply reacting. It was proactively and patiently creating a space for the safe sharing of the deep emotions and fears that frequently travel with work on a PBI team. By focusing the morning meeting not on making decisions but on the sharing of personal struggles and fears, the team was manifesting and extending the consensus principle to fully hear each member, and to be heard. Moreover, the tendency of many group members to acknowledge and affirm the feelings of others, especially those of Wesley, *before* sharing their own feelings and stating their own perspectives, is particularly indicative of this. A mosaic of motivations for serving on a PBI team were put forward by the members and stood in relation to the risks they were willing to take. The uncommon degree of group and individual patience that marked the series of meetings at a time when there was in fact so little time, and the thorough airing of feelings and fears within the meetings was a further demonstration of this particular group's useful and conscientious application of consensus processes. Despite being immersed in what one team member wearily referred to as "a long series of unending tasks and urgent deadlines" as the parliamentary election day approached, time was carved out of the collective schedule by the team and precious free time was also voluntarily given up by individuals for lengthy meetings focused on members' emotional responses to team and project policy.

Mansbridge's extensive field research also revealed that consensus processes help surface information that might not otherwise come out, forges commit-

ment, discourages factions, and creates what she calls a "morale-building sense that 'we are all in this together'" (1980, p. 165). The potential for factions to develop on this PBI team was quite high given the existence of a long term team and the introduction of the short termers. The writing and issuance of guidelines for the election monitoring project by the long termers in advance of the short termers' arrival certainly increased that danger. However, by attending to the consensus principles discussed above, the group arrested factional-inducing behavior. More important, they also mitigated the conditions for its development.

The meeting interactions and my informal and formal interviews that followed seemed to indicate that the consensus principles used in these meetings also "forged commitment" in the way Mansbridge claims consensus processes should. Some members spoke about how helpful the meetings were to them personally in developing a sense of belongingness to this particular team. However, this did not come without some costs. For example, Nancy opened the planning meeting for the second morning meeting by saying, "I was feeling fine just a few minutes ago, but now since we started this meeting, a meeting to plan yet another meeting, I could just feel the energy draining right out of me. It is as if someone pulled a plug right out of me." She later told me, however, that the effects of the second morning meeting made the planning effort worth it.

At that meeting, members sat in a circle. Each team member was given just one opportunity to speak, for a few minutes, without any interruptions or responses. Each sharing was followed by a minute of silence. Members were encouraged to simply name or to explain their "greatest fears and deepest hopes" as they went out into a rather dangerous field. Some people shared revealing details of the fearful nightmares or the insightful dreams that they recently had about the work. One member read from an intimate letter he had just written to his partner, affirming her support of his work and making amends. Another poignantly stood the challenges and the affirmations she experienced on this team in the context of the same with her family at home. Another team member wept uncontrollably as he said he feared he would run in the face of violence. Others talked about how much they hoped to learn from the brave Sri Lankan monitors they would soon be accompanying.

After the meeting, one member said that hearing other's fears made it easier for her to deal with her own: "I realized I was not alone in feeling so concerned and thinking about all this stuff." Another said it was "cleansing to name my darkest fears openly in front of my teammates." Still others called the experience "empowering," and claimed that it renewed their commitment to the election project, controversial guideline and all.

These meetings and the processes used in them served to solidify this team in much the same way that Mansfield says consensus process boosts morale and a sense of togetherness. At breakfast the morning after the evening meeting, one team member said that "these discussions helped this temporary team jell." One team member said that it was important to take time to hear people's concerns and especially to address their fears. He felt that without it, isolation within the team could result.

Team members demonstrated in many different ways that this team had profitably used the consensus process to build a sense of togetherness. Members bonded with each other as part of a small group engaged in a demanding collective project using a consensus process of decision making. One member returned home shortly after election day, earlier than anyone else. He left behind a farewell note for the group that captures the intense and satisfying nature of the experience for many on the team.

> I can't believe you won't be in my life tomorrow. You will, however, be in my heart. I don't know who among you I will ever see again, but something inside tells me that, regardless of where we are, if we are making a place for peace in our lives or our world – we will be together (field notes).

CONCLUSION

Consensus decision making relies on general principles and specific procedures and techniques that can be used in a variety of contexts by different kinds of small groups. The specific context within which consensus is used will help determine its relative usefulness for a particular group; it will also make certain consensus principles and processes more or less salient. This paper has analyzed the intersection of consensus, the accompaniment team context, and organizational identity regarding decision making on two Peace Brigades International teams in Sri Lanka.

I showed that the PBI Sri Lanka team context of relatively short terms of service and frequent turnover of team members made the consensus principle of full participation in decisions by all members of the group particularly salient. That same contextual dimension of PBI's Sri Lanka teams was shown to work against and have a largely negative impact on the team's ability to actualize the consensus principle of full participation. Frequent turnover contributes to repetition and inefficiency in discussion and decision making and increases frustration with the consensus process. It also disrupts personal relationships on the teams and changes team dynamics in ways that frequently – although not always – have deleterious effects on the consensus process.

The potential dangers that face PBI team members, and the fears engendered by those dangers, were shown to interact with and reinforce the consensus goal of individual ownership of group decisions, making it a particularly salient principle. I suggested that organizationally PBI is aware of and responsive to this dynamic interaction and that the small size of the teams facilitates useful organizational responses such as nurturing "team-confidence," slowing down decision making, and allowing a patient probing of individual perspectives.

Two related consensus principles, attending to the emotions of participants and valuing process as much as product, were also addressed. Once again the larger context of peace team work and the perceived dangers associated with that work make this another significant aspect of consensus processes for PBI teams. The peace team context includes the complicated intersection where fear of personal danger, organizational identity, and group decision making meet, often in competing ways. It therefore creates exceptional demands on group decision making methods. By way of a thickly-described example, I showed how a conscientious and proactive application of consensus principles can create the safe emotional spaces that many peace team members need to operate effectively. For most of the members of that team, the consensus process served to increase their sense of belongingness, cultivated individual ownership of controversial group decisions, increased team solidarity, and even helped team members deal with their considerable fears. These findings take on added significance given the special demands placed on the decision making of that team: it was made up of a long term team and short termers, most of whom had never worked together before; and it operated in a fear-filled crises atmosphere produced by rampant election campaign violence and extremely tight scheduling.

Taken as a whole, it is clear from the overall treatment above that the consensus decision making process of PBI has grown not only out of the ideological commitments and historical associations explained at the beginning of this paper, but also out of the demands and strictures imposed by the work itself.[25] There is an organic dynamism at play here. This interactive process has resulted in certain consensus principles and processes becoming especially important for PBI teams. Extrapolating from these findings, it is reasonable to also argue that as the work situations of PBI's teams change, their use of consensus processes will also have to change and adapt to the new contexts. They will then likely emphasize different, suddenly more salient consensus principles than those highlighted in this study. If the teams do not do this, they risk failure in transferring and applying in the field what is not only a highly-held organizational value, but a decision making method that may be uniquely suited to the peculiar demands of international non-violent accompaniment teams.

NOTES

1. The many issues I faced as a participant observer on PBI teams are analyzed in Coy, P. G. (2001). Shared Risks and Research Dilemmas on a Peace Brigades International Team in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 30*(5)(October), pp. 575–606.

2. In the Quaker tradition from which much of the consensus process that is practiced in social movement circles has been adapted, the foundation is ultimately theological, and is most readily seen in the well-known Quaker dictum that there is "that of God in each of us."

3. A sampling of some of these groups and the literature on them include the Clamshell Alliance (Downey, 1986), the Mifflin Street Community Coop (Gastil, 1993), the Abalone Alliance and the Livermore Action Group (Epstein, 1991), and the Movement for a New Society (Coover, Deacon et al., 1981).

4. Especially useful book-length analyses of the period include (Gitlin, 1987; Breines, 1989; Morgan, 1991).

5. A representative distillation of this line of thinking within PBI is put forward in (Fyrkberg, 1992).

6. For examples, see the organization's 1991 Annual Report, issued on its ten year anniversary, and subtitled, "An Experiment in Non-violence." Also see the following by PBI members describing and analyzing the organization's contributions to non-violence (Mahony & Eguren, 1997; Dijkstra, 1986; Coffman, 1986; Sinn, 1992; Wallis, 1993).

7. PBI's highly experimental beginning years were not atypical in the rapidly expanding non-governmental world of the 1980s when NGOs were popping up all over like mushrooms after a fall rain. According to one observer, "While some are run by and employ hardened professionals, others are of the Indiana Jones variety, making up solutions as they go along" (Donini, 1995, p. 428). The special issue of *Third World Quarterly* that Donini's article appears in is devoted to NGOs and global governance.

8. For a comparative analysis of how four social movement organizations constructed their respective organizational identities during the Persian Gulf crisis and war, see (Coy & Woehrle, 1996).

9. Breines (1989) shows that "prefigurative politics" was at the heart of the new left. It includes a rejection of hierarchy, a wariness of centralized organization, the embrace of participatory democracy and consensus, and the attempt to create within the movement social interactions and political forms that prefigured or embodied movement goals.

10. This incident also demonstrates the importance of examining a group's relationships with other groups, collegial or otherwise, for a full understanding of a particular group's internal dynamics. On this point, see (Brown, 1988, p. 17). QPS and PBI's Sri Lanka Project had a long-standing working relationship, which was at times quite close. For more details on this working relationship, and for an analysis of how important interorganizational cooperation can be in accompaniment work, see (Coy, 1997).

11. Personal letter from Andrew Kendle to author, April 15, 1996.

12. It is not just PBI members who indicate weariness with the frequent turnover. I worked with a European diplomat to secure asylum for one of the Sri Lanka team's clients. At the close of our first meeting, when we turned to personal matters about the two of us, she laughingly said, "You must be the 300th PBI volunteer I have met. Well, of course I exaggerate, but sometimes it feels that way to me."

13. That individuals new to a group are tentative or hesitant in their initial participation levels is well established in social psychological research. (For a useful review of the relevant literature, see Brown, 1988, pp. 19–23, 42–46.)

14. While a certain amount of withdrawal from decision making on the part of departing team members is common, some members compensate by throwing themselves into one or two primary projects that they take on in the last weeks of their service, working long and hard hours to complete the task before they go. Some talked about this phenomenon as "leaving their mark" while others saw it more like a parting gift, saying they wanted to "give something back."

15. New members also challenge relatively innocuous team patterns. For example, the wall clock that hung prominently over the dining and living room areas of the PBI house did not work throughout the entire summer I was on the team. The team had apparently grown comfortable with it being perpetually 8:30. During one new volunteer's first week with the team, he "fixed" the clock, and cleared out all manner of old foodstuffs, containers, and spices in the kitchen that the team was no longer "seeing." To the utter amazement and embarrassment of the rest of the team, he fixed the clock by simply purchasing and installing a new set of batteries.

16. Stevenson was prescient in her prediction. Besides the finance system she set up, the team also put a lot of energy into creating and gathering material for a new, in-depth, and fairly comprehensive orientation manual for incoming volunteers. But when I returned to the team a year later, the current team had no knowledge of the manual and I could not even locate it on the team's computer hard drive. Her finance system met a similar fate.

17. The armed forces negotiate the intersection of danger, group decision making, and decision ownership in a manner that is nearly the polar opposite of consensus. The armed forces solution includes strict obedience to authority and an emphasis on temporal efficiency in decision making.

18. The role of emotion in the consensus-based meetings of the Religious Society of Friends, or of the American Friends Service Committee, is particularly complex. Sheeran (1983, pp. 57–59) found that the expression of emotions are "channeled" and moderated in particular ways, and those who do not follow the informal channels find that their expressions of emotion are disregarded and not responded to. Sheeran claims on the one hand that many Friends judge appeals to emotion as inappropriate in meetings, and that this translates into a general reluctance to reveal one's inner feelings to the group. "As a result, the emotional dimensions of topics sometimes do not get the frank attention they deserve . . ." But he also argues that Quakers welcome emotions having a bearing on decisions, provided that they are "deeply felt" and "frankly recognized."

19. Useful listings of examples of "safe spaces" can be found in (Strutzman & Schrock-Shenk, 1995; Kaner, Lind et al., 1996; Coover, Deacon et al., 1981).

20. For a description of this incident written for PBI's newsletter, see (PBI, 1994). The internal team report is found in the team's "Contact Report" dated July 11, 1994.

21. Although other short termers had just arrived in the past couple of days, I had already been with the team for two weeks. This was the fourth time in that two week period that Wesley and Lee described the Kalutara incident in detail and with deep emotion. Their experience there had made a profound impression on them and they were still clearly processing it and coming to terms with its meaning for their work with PBI. Indeed, in a follow up phone interview with Lee two years later, he told me, 'I still

have not processed Kalutara. I don't know if I will ever be able to make sense out of it." This speaks to the need for international accompaniment organizations to have adequate support mechanisms for emotional trauma institutionalized within their teams and projects (Kenny, 2001, pp. 208–209). A helpful description and discussion of how this was handled in the Swedish Peace Monitoring in South Africa (PEMSA) project occurs in (Ewald & Thorn, 1994, pp. 100–101).

22. The risk factor was increased because they had only just arrived in town and had not introduced themselves or the organization to the local police, much less to the police patrolling the demonstration. Whatever enhanced security accrues to international observers is due at least partly to their being known, visible, and their purpose and mandate understood, especially by local government and security officials, none of which had yet been accomplished in Kalutara by PBI.

23. For example, in the wake of the Kalutara incident the long term team fashioned the following agreement about how the overall team ought to conduct itself during the election monitoring accompaniment: "If violence is directed at us or our clients, as quickly as possible under the circumstances, assess the usefulness of our presence both as PBI and with our clients. Pull out right away if the danger is deemed to be too high!! NO MARTYRS PLEASE!! (emphasis in original). From, "Minutes of Sri Lanka Team Meeting, July 12, 1994," p. 2.

24. Although the guideline was never officially changed, every one of my queries to team members over the next week on this issue indicated that they understood Agnes' formulation of the issue to have accurately reflected the sense of the group. While a few team members were bothered by the lack of a formal change to the guidelines, most thought that the emotional intensity of the discussion was sufficient to ensure that the modified understanding would inform the individual decisions of each team member.

25. In this way, PBI is like many other social movement organizations. A useful comparative study of transnational social movement organizations found that their decision making methods and styles tended to correspond with the strategies and tactics used by the organization in its campaigns and programs (Smith, Pagnucco et al., 1994).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Ball, P. (2000). State terror, constitutional traditions, and national human rights movements: A cross-national quantitative comparison. In: J. A Guidry, M. D. Kennedy & M. N. Zald (Eds), *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere* (pp. 54–75). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Barkan, S. E. (1979). Strategic, Tactical and Organizational Dilemmas of the Protest Movement Against Nuclear Power. *Social Problems, 27*(1), 19–35.

Breines, W. (1989). *Community and organization in the new left: 1962–1968: The great refusal.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Brown, R. (1988). *Group processes: Dynamics within and between groups.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Brown, H. M. (1989). Organizing activity in the women's movement: An example of distributed leadership. In: B. Klandermans (Ed.), *Organizing for Change: Social Movement Organizations in Europe and the United States. International Social Movement Research* (Vol. 2, pp. 225–240). Stamford, CT: JAI Press.

Burrowes, R. J. (2000). Cross-border non-violent intervention: A typology. In Y. Moser-Puangsuwan & T. Weber (Eds), *Non-violent Intervention Across Borders: A Recurrent Vision* (pp. 45–69). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Butcher, M. (1994). Interview at Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 12.

Center for Conflict Resolution (1981). *Building united judgement: A handbook for consensus decision making.* Madison: Center for Conflict Resolution.

Clark, D. (2002). Peace Brigades International: Roots and early years. PBI Website. (*http://www.peacebrigades.org/publications.html*).

Coffman, C. (1986). Until They are Returned: Non-violent Struggle in Guatemala. *News from New Society Publishers.*

Cole, E. (1993). Interview at PBI-USA National Gathering, Raft Island, WA, August 30.

Coover, V., Deacon, E. et al. (1981). *Resource manual for a living revolution.* Philadelphia: New Society.

Coy, P. G. (1993). Protective accompaniment: How Peace Brigades International secures political space and human rights non-violently. In: V. K. Kool (Ed.), *Non-violence: Social and Psychological Issues* (pp. 235–245). Latham, MD: University Press of America.

Coy, P. G. (1994). Going Where We Otherwise Would Not Have Gone: Accompaniment and Election Monitoring in Sri Lanka. *Fellowship, 61*(5), 10–12.

Coy, P. G. (1997). Cooperative accompaniment by Peace Brigades International in Sri Lanka. In: J. Smith, R. Pagnucco & C. Chatfield (Eds), *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics: Solidarity Beyond the State* (pp. 81–100). Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Coy, P. G. (2001). Shared Risks and Research Dilemmas on a Peace Brigades International Team in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 30*(5), 575–606.

Coy, P. G., & Woehrle, L. M. (1996). Constructing identity and creating oppositional knowledge: The framing practices of peace movement organizations during the Persian Gulf War. *Sociological Spectrum, 16*(3), 287–327.

Dijkstra, P. (1986). Peace Brigades International. *Gandhi Marg, 8*(7), 391–406.

Donini, A. (1995). The Bureaucracy and the Free Spirits: Stagnation and Innovation in the Relationship between the UN and NGOs. *Third World Quarterly, 16*(3), 421–439.

Downey, G. L. (1986). Ideology and the Clamshell Identity: Organizational Dilemmas in the Anti-Nuclear Power Movement. *Social Problems, 33*(5), 357–373.

Eguren, L. E. (2001). Who should go where? Examples from Peace Brigades International. In: L. Reychler & T. Paffenholz (Eds), *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (pp. 28–34). Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers.

Epstein, B. (1991). *Political protest and cultural revolution: Non-violent direct action in the 1970s and 1980s.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ewald, J., & Thorn, H. (1994). *Peace monitoring in South Africa.* Stockholm: Swedish UN Association.

Fyrkberg, H. (1992). Discussion paper on PBI as a Movement – Not an Organization. Paper dated May, 9, 1992, distributed to the PBI General Assembly, Georgian Bay, Ontario, Canada, June 10–17, 1992.

Gastil, J. (1993). *Democracy in small groups: Participation, decision making and communication.* Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Gentry, M. E. (1982). Consensus as a Form of Decision Making. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 9*(2), 233–244.

Gitlin, T. (1987). *The Sixties: Years of hope and days of rage.* New York: Bantam Books.

Harris, S. (1993). Interview at Dehiwala, Sri Lanka, July 20 and August 10.

Hogg, M. A., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes.* London: Routledge.

Iannello, K. P. (1992). *Decisions without hierarchy: Feminist interventions in organization theory and practice.* New York: Routledge.

Kaner, S., Lind, W. L. et al. (1996). *Facilitator's guide to participatory decision making.* Philadelphia: New Society.

Kanter, R. M., & Zurcher, J. L. (1973). Concluding Statement: Evaluating Alternatives and Alternative Valuing. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 9*(2/3), 381–397.

Keck, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). *Activists beyond borders: Advocacy networks in international politics.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Keck, M., & Sikkink, K. (2000). Historical precursors to modern transnational social movements and networks. In: J. A Guidry, M. D. Kennedy & M. N. Zald (Eds), *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere* (pp. 35–53). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kenny, K. (2001). Human rights monitoring: How to do it and lessons learned. In: L. Reychler & T. Paffenholz (Eds), *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (pp. 199–215). Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers.

Lakey, G. (1987). *Powerful peacemaking: Strategy for a living revolution.* Philadelphia: New Society.

Lewin, K. (1948). *Resolving social conflicts.* New York: Harper and Row.

Mahony, L., & Eguren, L. E. (1997). *Unarmed bodyguards: International accompaniment for the protection of human rights.* West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Mahony, L. (2000). Peace Brigades International: Non-violence in action. In: Y. Moser-Puangsuwan & T. Weber (Eds), *Non-violent Intervention Across Borders: A Recurrent Vision* (pp. 133–161). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Mushaben, J. M. (1989). The struggle within: Conflict, consensus, and decision making among national coordinators and grass-roots organizers in the West German peace movement. In: B. Klandermans (Ed.), *Organizing for Change: Social Movement Organizations in Europe and the United States. International Social Movement Research* (Vol. 2, pp. 267–298). Stamford, CT: JAI Press.

Maney, G. (2001). Rival transnational networks and indigenous rights: The San Blas Kuna in Panama and the Yanomami in Brazil. In: P. G. Coy (Ed.), *Political Opportunities, Social Movements and Democratization, Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change* (Vol. 23, pp. 103–144). Oxford: Elsevier.

Mansbridge, J. (1980). *Beyond adversary democracy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mansbridge, J. J. (1973). Time, Emotion, and Inequality: Three Problems of Participatory Groups. *The Journal of Applied Social Science, 9*(2/3), 351–368.

Moser-Puangsuwan, Y., & Weber, T. (2000). Non-violent humanitarian intervention: A framework for the future. In: Y. Moser-Puangsuwan & T. Weber (Eds), *Non-violent Intervention Across Borders: A Recurrent Vision* (pp. 321–337). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Morgan, E. P. (1991). *The sixties experience: Hard lessons about modern America.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Nemiroff, P. M., & King, D. C. (1975). Group decision making Performance as Influenced by Consensus and Self-Orientation. *Human Relations, 28*(1), 1–21.

Oberg, K. (1960). Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Anthropology, 7,* 177–182.

PBI (1994). Nomination Day Riot in Kalutara. *Peace Brigades International Project Bulletin,* (September).

PBI (1996). Interview with a PBI Volunteer after a Year in Colombia. *Peace Brigades International Project Bulletin,* (February).

Robbins, P. (1994). Interview at Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 29.

Sheeran, M. J. (1983). *Beyond majority rule: Voteless decisions in the Society of Friends.* Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Siedle-Khan, R. (1992). Interview at Syracuse, NY, November 17.

Sinn, H. (1992). Report submitted to the 1992 General Assembly of Peace Brigades International, June 8.

Skinner, Janey. (1992). Interview at PBI General Assembly, Georgian Bay, Ontario, Canada, June 14.

Smith, J., Pagnucco, R., & Romeril, W. (1994). Transnational Social Movement Organizations in the Global Political Arena. *Voluntas, 5*(2), 121–154.

Smith, J, Pagnucco, R., & Chatfield, C. (1997). *Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Starhawk (1987). *Truth or dare: Encounters with authority, power, and mystery.* San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Stevenson, H. (1993). Interview at Colombo, Sri Lanka, September 10.

Strutzman, J., & Schrock-Shenk, C. (Eds) (1995). *Mediation and facilitation training manual.* Akron, PA: Mennonite Conciliation Service.

Susskind, L. (1999). A short guide to consensus building: An alternative to Robert's rules of order for groups, organizations, and ad hoc assemblies that want to operate by consensus. In: L. Susskind, S. McKearnan & J. Thomas-Larmer (Eds), *The Consensus Building Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide To Reaching Agreement* (pp. 3–60). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Valliant, M. (1994). Interview at Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 23.

Wallis, T. (1993). Interview at London, England, October 22.

Wallis, T. (1993). Letter to David Hartsough. In: M. Beer (Ed.), *A Peace Team Reader.* Washington, D.C.: Non-violence International. n.p.

Watson, W. F., Michaelson, L. K. et al. (1991). Member Competence, Group Interaction, and Group Decision Making: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 76*(6), 803–809.

Weber, T. (1993). From Maude Royden's Peace Army to the Gulf Peace Team: An Assessment of Unarmed Interpositionary Peace Forces, *Journal of Peace Research, 30*(1), 45–64.

Weber, T. (1996). *Gandhi's peace army: The Shanti Sena and unarmed peacekeeping.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Whittier, N. (1995). Turning it over: Personnel change in the Colombus, Ohio, women's
        movement, 1969–1984. In: M. Marx Ferree & P. Yancey Martin (Eds), *Feminist
        Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement* (pp. 180–198). Philadelphia, Temple
        University Press.
Woehrle, L. M., & Coy, P. G. (2000). Collective identities and the development of conflict analysis.
        In: P. G. Coy & L. M. Woehrle, (Eds), *Social Conflicts and Collective Identities* (pp. 1–14).
        Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
Zaleznik, A., & Moment, D. (1964). *Dynamics of interpersonal behavior.* New York: Wiley.

COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY AND DECISION MAKING IN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Andrew Whitworth

ABSTRACT

*Decision making processes within environmental social movement organi-
zations are analysed with reference to principles derived from the
communicative rationality of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas can provide
normative grounds for consensual decision making, and analytical tools
by which one can judge existing practices. The radical environmental orga-
nization chosen as an example of such analysis is Earth First!. But insight
is also given into the operations of more hierarchical organizations such
as Friends of the Earth. Organization theory can be used to show how
these two different types of organization legitimate themselves in order to
acquire resources from their environments, and thereby effectively engage
in their chosen activities. These differing needs and structures impact upon
their respective decision making processes in certain ways. Overall, while
FOE is less able to put communicative rationality into practice than radical
groups, the difficulties it faces here can potentially be overcome. Both
organizational forms can therefore be constructively analysed using the
principles of communicative rationality.*