

# **Conflict in the Peaceable Kingdom Quaker Identity, Silence and Virtue Ethics**

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This paper offers an outline account of the history of British Quakers regarding conflict, both outside and inside the organization. The espoused theory is to “mend the world” and live in a “peaceable kingdom.” Much effort goes into mending the world, but the Quaker community can only maintain that it is peaceable by conflict aversion, that is turning its mind away from tensions and pretending they do not exist, practising a form of self-deception.<sup>[1]</sup>

Examples of acknowledged and enacted conflict are identified, usually practical matters enacted in collective structures governed by the “behavioural creed” of the “double culture.” Tensions that underlie latent conflict, such as diverse theological belief and questions related to homosexuality, have been marginalised in the liberal belief culture that privatizes personal matters. Ordinary Quakers are fearful of unmanageable conflict arising if these tensions are opened up.

The ambivalence of the Quaker approach to conflict has not received attention within the community, nor outside; the aim of this paper is to offer material to facilitate an overdue self- reflection. I shall begin by outlining characteristic ways of approaching conflict among British Quakers: aversion, privileging relationship unity, and non-articulation. Elements in the community culture that perpetuate these approaches are suggested: identity formation in the double culture and the culture of silence. The use of a virtue ethics model offers a choice

for conservatism or change.

I suggest that the theory in use ("Don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it") invalidates the public aspirations of the group to mend the world, and I question whether this paradoxical situation is inevitable in organizations that aspire to increasing world harmony. Comparisons are made with other organizations in other cultures to explore this question.

Throughout I consider the use of narrative and story in understanding conflict, and conclude that Quakers need to discover, or rediscover, more varied stories about conflict handling to inspire themselves to "do it better."

## **Background**

As a social worker, I helped families deal with conflict within a firm legal framework. Outside work much of my time was spent in Quaker activities where there was no framework for handling conflict but much distress and surprise when conflict occurred.<sup>[2]</sup> On retirement I studied social research methods, and in my degree work this puzzling question about why Quakers handle conflict so badly intrigued me as a larger research project.<sup>[3]</sup> My research continues, though in a less organized and rigorous way. Continuing interaction with others moves my understanding forward, aware that I am a walking personification of the paradox that is the focus of my work. As a Quaker, I support<sup>[4]</sup> peace action in the wider world, but I also belong and comply in Quaker groups that avoid interpersonal conflict. The enforced reflexivity of acting out that paradox is a very useful source of information to me as researcher. I find that my purpose has changed over the years I have been working with this subject. To begin with I aimed to reflect and analyse Quaker practice in conflict handling at an academic level. Having achieved this with the completion of the PhD thesis, I was encouraged to view Quaker conflict as ongoing collaborative action research<sup>[5]</sup> within the Quaker community, using workshops with local groups.

Conflict studies are multidisciplinary, so the following considerations will combine the perspectives of sociology, social psychology and Quaker theology as perceived by members of the community who are not trained theologians. Mainly I will treat the Quakers as an organization rather than a church and include theological matters only where members of the organization think it is relevant.

In conflict handling theory I have worked most extensively with the dual concern model<sup>[6]</sup> used in organizational settings, but find myself most attracted to narrative explanations of conflict.<sup>[7]</sup> Narrative explanations and processes require attention to the cultural context in which conflict occurs, and its influence in the origin of the conflict. If individuals are positioned by discourse, it is necessary to examine the contents of the discourse.<sup>[8]</sup>

Unfortunately, it would be a very rare social group where there is only one discourse. In the twenty-first century individuals are positioned by myriad discourses; disentangling which one is being prioritized is part of the task of narrative mediation and conflict analysis. Here I identify some of the elements of British Quaker culture, but British Quakers are positioned by many other discourses. I am often asked if this is really a Quaker habit or if it is a British habit or a middle-class habit. Sometimes the answer is that it is all three.

## **Data Collection**

Much of my data is drawn from the research conducted for my doctorate in 2005. This included thirty-nine semi-structured interviews.<sup>[9]</sup> I also had input from twenty Quakers who attended a workshop at which I presented the beginnings of my analysis, and who followed up by sending me written reflections over the next six months. Equally significant was “observing participation,”<sup>[10]</sup> which differs from participant observation in that there is continued interaction between the research process and the process within the organization, with both informing the other, using the longitudinal committed, participative experience of the researcher as data.

This observing participation has continued since the formal closure of the research project, although I now observe from different perspectives with different responsibilities.<sup>[11]</sup> I also run workshops on conflict handling with groups of Quakers, asking why it appears to be so difficult and whether other approaches might be useful. I have published and spoken among Quakers; the response and ensuing dialogue adds to my ongoing data collection. Also, discussion of my work with non-Quakers studying conflict runs alongside all this.

## **British Quakers Peace and Conflict**

This paper is based on an ongoing case study of a small religious group in Britain in the

twenty-first century; the main enquiry took place between 2000 and 2005,<sup>[12]</sup> but observing participation continues. There are now 23,000 adult Quakers in Britain<sup>[13]</sup> where the movement started in the 1650s, but these are only about 5 percent of Quakers worldwide.<sup>[14]</sup> Though there are historical links (sometimes formally broken) between Quaker groups, there are also varying cultures and practices and some disagreement between the groups.<sup>[15]</sup> Britain Yearly Meeting, the group studied here, is European and influenced by the history of Europe in the twentieth century.<sup>[16]</sup>

Quakers in Britain are a small group of middle class, well educated, mainly white people over the age of fifty. Many citizens of the UK do not know that they exist or they associate Quakers with old fashioned porridge suppliers with black hats. They now look very much like other people of a leftish or academic persuasion. However, Quakers fondly hope that, as suggested in the *Oxford Book of Christian Thought*, they have a disproportionate influence for their size.<sup>[17]</sup> Their main distinctive characteristic is their form of worship, which involves sitting<sup>[18]</sup> in silence until anyone may be moved to contribute vocally.

Quakers have always been known for their wish for peace. In the 1650s, when they began, England was in religious and political ferment, and Cromwell's republican army included many stalwart Quakers. However, twenty years later Quakers wished to distance themselves from any political view in their expectation of the coming of the religious kingdom. Their letter to Charles II in 1660<sup>[19]</sup> explained this world view but was not actually a statement to Quakers enjoining pacifism. Through the next three centuries Quakers became increasingly associated with movements for peace, but assessments of this association vary somewhat. B. D. Phillips portrays Quakers as smug, untested and slightly imperialist at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>[20]</sup> A reawakening commitment to pacifism, which preceded and was tested in the 1914-18 war, is described by T. C. Kennedy in *British Quakerism, 1860-1920*.<sup>[21]</sup> Historian M. Ceadel demonstrates that this commitment to pacifism under conscription was by no means monolithic; only a third of eligible men adopted this position.<sup>[22]</sup> But after 1945 the dominant cultural narrative was that the renunciation of all military participation was required of Quakers as part of membership. Half a century later, free from conscription, the attitude has changed again. Many Quakers feel uncertain whether they could honestly describe themselves as authentically pacifist; they do not know the answers to questions about what alternatives there could have been in World War II.<sup>[23]</sup>

However, there is no doubt that they wish to work for peace, both in preventing the occasions of war and healing its wounds. According to Ceadel, they are “pacifists,” not pacifists, working towards creating institutions of peace and supporting international organizations rather than defining their individual stance.<sup>[24]</sup>

Their concern now is devoted to improving the wider world in which Quakers live. A leading Quaker in America in the seventeenth century, William Penn is often quoted as saying,

True Godliness don't turn men out of the world but enables them to live better in it and excites their endeavours to mend it.<sup>[25]</sup>

In 2006 Quakers Brian Phillips and John Lampen published *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on British Quaker Work in the World Today* to show what a small scale, idealistic, and religious group can offer the world today.<sup>[26]</sup> In 2008, when selecting future priorities, the Yearly Meeting affirmed: “We are a peace church with a particular history and authority borne by 350 years of upholding our peace testimony. We endorse wholeheartedly the work that Quaker Peace and Social Witness has done on peace education and in pre- and post-conflict situations. We would like the same resource to continue.”<sup>[27]</sup>

Note the reference to “particular history and authority”: Quakers think they are called to peacemaking in the wider world. This is clear in the authoritative resources of the organization, in the responses in the interviews, and in observation of Quaker collective life. This constitutes part of the espoused theory of the organization.<sup>[28]</sup> However, my research found that Quakers were not good at handling conflict and creating peace in their own congregations, and that they found this surprising and distressing. They expected that with all the talk of peace the experience in both small and large Quaker groupings would be peaceful. Remarks such as “They ought to do better, given what they say” were common. Questions that arose from this observation were: Are all Quakers quiet and peaceful? Do quiet and peaceful people choose to be Quakers, or does becoming a Quaker make you quiet and peaceful? I thought the answers might be found in the culture rather than in individual personality,<sup>[29]</sup> that perhaps being a Quaker makes you act quietly and peacefully in that context. Early in my research I met a Quaker who was heavily involved in local politics as a councillor. He told me that he quite enjoyed the rough and tumble of public life, the verbal

fight in the council chamber and the exchange of rudeness in the local newspaper. But he found hostile though quiet exchanges among Quakers very upsetting; he expected that Quakers would not behave like that and was deeply disappointed, and also inhibited from joining in.

This expectation of a peaceful Quaker community is sometimes expressed by reference to the biblical “peaceable kingdom” (Isa. 11:6-9). Several versions of this image were depicted by the American Quaker artist Edward Hicks, who painted stylized rural scenes in which the lion and the lamb lie down together. A copy of one of these pictures is hung in the entrance hall of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, a focus of learning for British Quakers. The image is sometimes taken to represent the Quaker community, if not as it is, then as it should be. In her seminars on Quaker theology, J. Scott suggests that animals acting in this unnatural way are meant to symbolize the transformation that takes place when the kingdom [of God] exists.<sup>[30]</sup> The animals in their wild state represent the faults found in humanity, and these faults have to be tamed if people are to live together peacefully. Recurring references to this image, joined with the belief of the early Quakers that the kingdom is already come<sup>[31]</sup> encourage later Quakers to believe this tamed way is how they can and should behave, without a reminder that the natural instincts have to be acknowledged before they can be tamed.

## **Examples of Conflict among Quakers**

What is meant by conflict, or by conflict in a Quaker setting? In my research project conversations I tried not to offer leading definitions, though if pushed would rely on Carolyn Schrock Schenk’s “differences with tension.”<sup>[32]</sup> Often my interviewees would say something like “I don’t know quite what you mean by conflict, but I’ve written a list of several points here in my notebook which I would like to talk about.” They had their own implicit definitions ready. For many of them this was a chance to reflect on their experience, which they welcomed and which offered some element of counselling catharsis. The stories they told were about events that were public in the community life and usually took place in the formal structures of the meeting, dealt with by authorized subgroups of elders and overseers or in business meetings. The speakers themselves were anxious to retain their own anonymity and to stress their position as concerned observers rather than protagonists.

The reasons for conflict most often cited concerned practical matters, such as changes to the

premises or employment of staff. These are things where there has to be one decision; there can only be one figure on a contract of employment for the meeting house warden, only one building plan for the development of the meeting house or church. Different views have to turn into one view. These practical matters were the triggers for conflicts, but they were then often followed by prolonged wrangling about whether the process being used was properly Quaker. The issue was often not fully explored, but the feelings of animosity continued in the dispute about the process. The continuing quarrel would focus on whether the decision had been taken properly, according to correct Quaker procedures. This was the pattern both in small local disputes where it was expressed in terms of someone not being a “proper Quaker” or “Quakerly,”<sup>[33]</sup> but also in larger national disputes. Of the twenty-seven coherent conflict stories told to me, only one was about a personal clash between two people, which was resolved by letter writing and prayer and not known to the other members of the group. Conflict took place in the collective form and was usually *about* the collective form, rather than the exploration of different views on issues of justice, right and wrong, or even feasibility or practicality. A good example of this was the decision to sell the premises of the Quaker International Centre in 2004. One of my informants was on the body making this decision. When it had been made, not to his preference, he and others wrote letters doubting the way the meeting had been conducted. Later an enquiry was held into the substance of these doubts,<sup>[34]</sup> making a long process even longer.

Quakers make collective decisions using their unique business method,<sup>[35]</sup> which is based on the beliefs that the group can discern the will of God or “that which is pleasing to God,” and that the group can do this better than the individual. The aim of the process is to find and express the “sense of the meeting” with which all present can unite.<sup>[36]</sup> No votes are taken. Within Britain Yearly Meeting, individuals should only make spoken contributions when they feel led (by God). Others present “uphold” the meeting, and the clerks, who serve the meeting in silent worship, occasionally suggest improvements to the offered minute or record. The discipline of the meeting encourages only speaking once, not responding to other speakers.

The “Quaker business method” is a setting in which conflict can become recognized, occur, or be resolved, but it is not a method of conflict resolution in itself. Other conflict resolution techniques or processes may be used before or after a particular Quaker business method. An example of this was the process among British Quakers before the sessions of Britain

Yearly Meeting in York, 2009, when the meeting considered the question whether Quakers who wished to would be able to carry out same sex marriages. The topic was considered in various groupings over two years and there was known to be disagreement. Early in the Yearly Meeting conference an introduction was given describing how far the consideration had got. Next day there was a session of personal contributions, followed by small special interest groups focusing on different aspects of the matter (legal, biblical, administrative, etc.), and later “forums” with wider focus. Some who attended all these reported that there was little friction, though there were clear statements of different views, and people’s views were noticeably changing from day to day.<sup>[37]</sup> The discernment session with the whole group using the Quaker business method to find a decision came after four days and was united, though minutes of the meeting acknowledge a few dissenting voices. The varied preparation sessions had aired the matter thoroughly, giving many a chance to listen and be heard. These sessions helped the Quakers be ready to use the discipline of restraint and self-forgetting in the final session. The preparation sessions were part of a “threshing”<sup>[38]</sup> process; the last two sessions were discernment. The range of the preparation sessions was regarded as innovatory.

## **Quaker Perceptions of Conflict**

Conflict is perceived among Quakers as negative and needing to be got out of the way, whether by avoidance or swift resolution. Sometimes other negative experiences, such as lack of support in the meeting at the time of a relationship breakup have been categorised as conflict because they too are negative differences with tension. But this negativity is not specific to Quakers; academics and others also find it difficult to understand when I say that I study conflict— sometimes conflict handling—but not conflict management or resolution. The pressure to move swiftly to resolution without examining the experience and feelings that cause a conflict, and in so doing restore the image of the peaceable kingdom, is very insistent. Among the grassroots Quakers the less conflict the better. One interviewee said

I grew up believing that conflict is bad because Quakers are peace loving people and we don’t have it, and if you’re angry or you have a row there is something wrong. I still do this, avoid conflict. I think I’ll always put the smoothness of the relationship first before dealing with the conflict, and the tendency is to suffer further conflict rather than bring it out into the open.



There are few voices calling for thorough and rigorous engagement in conflict processes to achieve clearness and let go of the conflict. They are found in Fine and Macbeth's *Playing with Fire* and Fisher's *Spirited Living*.<sup>[39]</sup> The preparation outline for the Yearly Meeting Gathering 2009 also suggested attention to conflict handling. The following exchange, which I heard recently, illustrates the situation very well. One committee member prefaced a remark with "In order to avoid conflict ..." to which the Quaker nonviolence trainer genially interrupted, perhaps slightly with tongue in cheek, saying, "We don't avoid conflict, we do it better."<sup>[40]</sup> But these are the voices of professionals whose main work is addressing conflict outside the Quaker group. Within Quaker groups, the assumption is usually that avoiding conflict is the best course of action, an assumption that is likely to prevail unquestioned. The possible creativity of conflict is rarely acknowledged.

### **Tensions about diversity**

The negative perception of conflict among Quakers causes them to frequently circumvent or dodge issues of diversity that carry conflict potential. The Quakers I interviewed offered examples of public conflicts about practicalities, which they felt sure could be called "conflict." They were able to express their concern as long as they had little or no personal involvement; their position was usually that of an observer only reluctantly acting because of a role responsibility. There is no doubt there are other differences and tensions among British Quakers, but these seem to be dealt with in different ways, without being recognized as overt conflict.

Shortly after completing my thesis I was invited to speak to the Manchester Quaker Peace Group about my findings and presented my claim that Quakers do not talk about their conflicts. A Quaker from Ireland (both organizationally and culturally different from Britain Yearly Meeting) told me that Quakers are different in Ireland—she expected there would be lively discussion about two topics at their coming yearly meeting, namely theology and homosexuality. Indeed both these issues engendered "forthright exchanges," as reported in the record afterwards.<sup>[41]</sup> Irish Quakers seemed to be able to grasp the nettle of difference and conflict.

These two issues, diversity of theological belief<sup>[42]</sup> and questions related to homosexuality, hardly featured in the responses to my questions in 2002 but seem increasingly to have come center stage in Britain Yearly Meeting by 2008, but without acknowledged conflict.

At the Yearly Meeting in 2008, discussions about both theological diversity and the acceptance of homosexuality occurred within the agenda. There was recognition that these were tender areas but there was no discussion of differing views.<sup>[43]</sup> National Quaker conferences have also tackled related matters in 2008.<sup>[44]</sup> Public reports have emphasised how positive these have been, but individual Quakers are making it known that there are people who still find the tensions very uncomfortable.<sup>[45]</sup> The tensions can be handled by the leading thinkers<sup>[46]</sup> nationally, but the followers locally find it more difficult. In my local Area Meeting, one person pleaded to be able to discuss different theological understandings, but this proved too threatening for others to join him. One response was that if they talked about their differences and discovered the extent of their disagreement, the whole society would break down. However, four years later in 2010 this collective discussion of theological differences was achieved in this group to the satisfaction of those who attended (not all were represented).

The introduction to *Quaker Faith and Practice* describes Quaker unity in collective decision making:

Friends find unity in the depth of the silence, when the worshippers are truly gathered and deeply centred on the things of the spirit. We struggle with differences in our meetings for church affairs and here, too, as we consider what action to take over issues that confront us, we know the experience of unity in conviction and purpose. It is a unity which is not to be found in optional attitudes but in discovering the place in which we can stand together.<sup>[47]</sup>

Informal discussion of difference is also a struggle. Best, describing the current state of the Quaker community, says

We are scared of talking to each other for fear of what we might find out about what other people believe. We are scared of saying what we believe for fear of offending other people.<sup>[48]</sup>

The content of theological difference has changed over time. In the 1970s the main difference was between “Christ centred” and “Universalist” approaches. C. Plüss gives an account of this factioned debate, which was officially resolved just at the end of her research

and reflected in *Quaker Faith and Practice*.<sup>[49]</sup> Since then, Buddhist Quakers, Jewish Quakers and the occasional Muslim or Hindu Quaker have emerged. But the theological factions are now the ontological realists and the social constructionists, alternatively framed as those who believe in a real supernatural God as opposed to the internalized sum of our human values, or more succinctly theists and non-theists.<sup>[50]</sup> The fact that many Quakers cannot handle conflict constructively prevents them from communicating about such theological differences in a friendly way. Help has been offered by a project started at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre that organised a series of courses (Rooted in Christianity, Open to New Light) to enable Friends to explore the challenges and opportunities of spiritual diversity. This has resulted in a publication of the same name, which is selling well.<sup>[51]</sup>

It is perhaps an added difficulty that opposing views sometimes form into factions, combining more than one issue. For instance, some Quakers opposed offering marriage to same-sex partners based on their Christian beliefs, thus uniting two viewpoints unpopular among Quakers and attracting double response.

## Characteristics of Conflict-Handling among Quakers

I propose three consistent characteristics or marks of Quaker conflict-handling.

- **Aversion:** British Quakers are well aware of the option of conflict avoidance,<sup>[52]</sup> which they ruefully acknowledge as their default mode, often called "sweeping under the carpet." However, after my research conversations I found I wanted to give this practice a more forceful name. I found that, far from simply avoiding conflict, Quakers often do not recognize or acknowledge that conflict, or its seeds, exists. They can see the carpet but not the pile of dirt. If they do see it, they do not want to explore it, to poke it about, to find out where it came from. A colicitor interviewee contrasted the exploratory thoroughness he experienced in disputes in the family courts with the way Quakers just "walk around" a burgeoning or flourishing dispute. So I opted for the phrase "conflict aversion rather than "conflict avoidance," indicating a turning away of the eyes and the mind with a connotation of flight distaste.
- **Privileging relationship unity:** The second characteristic of Quaker conflict-handling

is the way in which disputants understand that the tension between justice and relationship will be weighted in favour of preservation of the relationship. The desired relationship between Quakers is assumed to be unity, and that unity is to be found in the process of seeking it rather than in an outcome where everyone agrees. *Quaker Faith and Practice* says, “The unity of the meeting lies more in the unity of the search than in the decision which is reached” (2.89). There is no voting in Quaker corporate decision making; the aim is to find the united way forward or the “will of God.” So from the start of decision making, everyone is aiming at unity rather than exploration of difference, and it is more important that all should remain ostensibly involved than that the reasons for differences should be discovered. It could be argued that this shows little real respect for the other and implies there is no value or truth in a different point of view. This concern for unity built into the Quaker decision making method influences all sorts of other communications.

- **Non articulation—no speaking out:** The third characteristic is the way in which Quakers will not talk about or express to their opponents their differing views and their feelings. This includes a range of behaviors from not admitting things to themselves, to denial, non-expression of emotions (especially anger), passive/aggressive behaviour, leaving things unsaid, talking about conflict to others but not to the adversary, only viewing things positively, and asking for silence to avoid confrontation. Some Quakers are aware of this and dislike it, but the culture constrains them nevertheless.

Besides these three strategies of reaction there is also a typical preference for a reduced display of emotions. Morgan has railed passionately against the sacrifice of justice to individuals on the altar of anodyne unity as shown in the previous characteristic.<sup>[53]</sup> She developed a model to analyse Quaker conflict that identifies vehemence as counter-productive, however honest the contribution. Restraint is a much more successful tactic if the aim is to be heard. Emotional expressiveness is not “Quakerly” and generates resistance.

Despite expressed commitment to the cause of peace nearly all of my interviewees were hesitant and lacking in confidence about tackling conflicts in their own communities. They were keen to avoid appearing as authority figures in a society believed to be based on equality.

# Theory in use

Argyris and Schön use “theories of action” as a framework for the analysis of organizations.<sup>[54]</sup> Theories of action consist of “espoused theories” and “theories in use.” Roughly, espoused theories are the publicly declared aims of the organization, and theories in use are notional maps that guide day to day behavior in practice, but which may not be fully acknowledged.

The “theory in use” underlies the difficulties I had in trying to collect data. The combination of aversion, privileging relationship unity, and non-articulation produced a tacit injunction that worked against the research enquiry. After the collaborative workshop, I had hoped that people would share their reflections on their own experience of conflict with me, but they found it difficult to put themselves in the picture they were describing, and even more difficult to describe what happened inside them. Their need for anonymity and confidentiality was strong, but many of them did not even want to hear their own thoughts.<sup>[55]</sup> One person thought she was willing to reflect on a conflict in her meeting but found,

It also makes me feel very uncomfortable to write so critically because though my head tells me to get a grip on this, for goodness sake, my “gut” hints that I am a very bad Quaker for saying such nasty things. ... Oh dear!

Four years later, someone who attended the workshop, but despite lively interest never undertook the personal reflection, wrote to me:

With hindsight, I realize that the reason why I just couldn’t respond, even to apologise—was that I was caught up myself in a very difficult Meeting conflict. I couldn’t even begin to explain it at the time, although the narrative is very clear to me now and all the more painful since I like to think of myself as a person who can at least name conflicts as they arise!

The characteristics of aversion, relationship unity, and not speaking out, together with the difficulty of reflection, prompted me to express the British Quaker “theory in use” about conflict as “don’t ask, don’t tell, don’t even think about it.” Another way to say it is “avert your eyes and mind, don’t talk to each other, especially if you disagree, and pretend to yourself that differences do not exist.”

While preparing this paper, I was amazed to see a letter in the weekly journal *The Friend*, which commends this pattern. The writer said,

Like our varied attitudes to homosexuality, our attitude to a belief in God can be accommodated by a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, which will then allow the Society to remain united and do what it does best: that is to serve mankind [sic].<sup>[56]</sup>

This view encourages self-deception, lays the group open to the charge of hypocrisy, and fosters the image of nonexistent conflict, which was once described to me as a “fundamental lie.”<sup>[57]</sup> It works in the opposite direction from the truth, honesty, and integrity to which Quakers are committed. "Advices and Queries"<sup>[58]</sup> asks in paragraph 37, “Are you honest and truthful in all you say and do? Do you maintain strict integrity in business transactions and in your dealings with individuals and organisations?” And in paragraph 11, “Be honest with yourself. What unpalatable truths might you be evading?”

## **Threads in British Quaker Culture that Perpetuate these Characteristics**

Is it possible to define a British Quaker culture? Certainly the edges of such a concept are fuzzy. There is no longer a neat heterotopic boundary that marks the difference between the Quaker world and the surrounding world,<sup>[59]</sup> such as what was once known as the “Quaker hedge.”<sup>[60]</sup> However there are central activities and attitudes within the community that are undoubtedly noticeable threads in the weave of the culture. These can be discovered by reading papers and journals used by Quakers and by continuing “observing participation” in Quaker activities. In the formal research project, there were fifty-nine contributors across the range of Quakers. I was particularly interested to hear how they talked about being “Quakerly” or “unQuakerly.” These vernacular expressions were particularly helpful to me in understanding the theory in use in the organization. I also looked for community narratives about Quaker conflict and had great difficulty in finding any. I concluded that there are three threads in the British Quaker culture that help to perpetuate the way conflict is handled.

## Quaker identity

Quaker identity is both a social construction and a personal construction, neither of which is coterminous with the accepted and recognized gradations of membership and nonmembership. It is subjective and may be connected with different aspects of Quaker life, such as religious group activity, historical or theological traditions, or work in the world. Each person may identify with different aspects at different times; however, there seemed little doubt among my informants that they knew what they expected from other Quakers especially when it was missing.<sup>[61]</sup>

One useful way of looking at identity is to use Kelly's identity corollaries from personal construct psychology.<sup>[62]</sup> He proposed two ways in which identity is formed, focusing on commonality and sociality. First, using commonality, the experience of identity focuses on the common shared experience in a collective, having a common experience, and more importantly interpreting it with a common meaning. The shared meaning creates the identity, the knowledge that one belongs in this group. For Quakers these are the activities they do when they are all together in "Quaker time" when they can be seen to be being a Quaker.<sup>[63]</sup>

Secondly, alongside commonality runs sociality, which focuses on individual differences, the attributes and experiences that make each person different from the other. Sociality--recognition of the differences between people--is essential for the formation of relationships between people. The ability to interact using sympathy and empathy creates the texture of relationship. Developed sociality enables empathy, sometimes described as the ability to walk in someone else's shoes, which is often prescribed as a necessary step in conflict resolution.

However, these two identity focuses exist in tension. The person who wishes to be part of the collective, inside the heterotopic boundary, may find herself pulled in the other direction by the wish to assert herself as an individual. There is a strong pull to autonomy among Quakers.<sup>[64]</sup> No self-respecting Quaker will do what he is told just because he was told to do it. It is as if the heterotopic boundary surrounds a force field with two forces, togetherness and autonomy. Part of the Quaker identity is a desire for a special state of otherness, for individual life imbued with spiritual meaning, but with a place within the community. The following metaphor about spiritual desire seemed apposite:

Just as in the cosmos, the planets, stars, and galaxies are simultaneously held together and kept apart by gravity, so also mimesis keeps human beings together and apart assuring at one and the same time the cohesion of the social fabric and the relative autonomy of the members that make it up. In physics it is the force of attraction, gravity, that holds bodies together in space. They would be pitilessly hurled against each other into a final fusion if gravity did not also preserve their autonomy, and hence their existence, through motion.<sup>[65]</sup>

In community life, the two forces of commonality and sociality hold individuals together and apart. Dandelion's analysis of Quaker community as a "double culture" fits in here.<sup>[66]</sup> He describes a behavioral creed that constrains how Quakers behave when they are carrying out their traditional activities of worship and decision making together ("onstage" in Goffman's terms<sup>[67]</sup>) and contrasts this with a liberal culture permitting diversity in individual belief and personal behaviours that take place outside Quaker time, in relative privacy (offstage in Goffman's terms). My current analysis concurs that "realised conflict" takes place in communal time, however incompetently handled, whereas "nascent conflict" or tension is uneasily held within the marginalised individual and private domain.

Identity also includes personal constructions about power, how someone locates themselves in the Quaker discourse. Among Quakers, power is possibly even more of a "no go area" than conflict. "Power is not in our vocabulary," said an informant. Leadership is in the vocabulary (usually as something not expected or found) and only commended if modified as in the term "servant leadership."<sup>[68]</sup> The lion in the peaceable kingdom, if he has power, does not use it. There are no formal leaders among Quakers, only temporary roles of responsible service. One of the testimonies or guiding principles is that of equality, often expressed as "that of God in everyone," which is erroneously taken to mean that everyone is equal all the time and in all situations and nobody must be hurt. The formalization of responsibility, such as the creation of the new trustee body in 2007, seems to exacerbate the paranoia of ordinary Quakers that power will concentrate in a small group and the individual will lose influence (or control).

## **Silence**

Silence is both a means and an end in the exercise of collective Quaker worship, the



essential distinctive activity of the organization. It is also integral in collective decision making processes. The aim is “silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength.”<sup>[69]</sup> How often is it “an intensified pause, a vitalised hush, a creative quiet, an actual moment of mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God”? Or how often is it admitted to be “sheer emptiness, absence of words or noise or music. It may be an occasion for slumber, or it may be a dead form.”<sup>[70]</sup>

The hope for creative quiet has an effect on the whole of Quaker life. It is unQuakerly to be loud, verbal or immoderate, let alone angry, in Quaker time together. Silence is a respectable default position. Small gatherings will start with a “few minutes quiet,” reminding participants of the culture. If a conflict is thought to be approaching, anyone can ask for a few minutes of silence, which usually effectively dampens the flames. Silence can be like a comfort blanket that affirms identity, and confirms that one knows the way to behave. Unlike Judaism, Quakerism has no tradition that commends the use of exposition and argument.<sup>[71]</sup> In Best’s prize winning essay on the future of Quakerism, he says,

The emphasis on silent worship means that we don’t often express our faith or articulate it. It means we don’t know who, or what, or even how the person next to us is worshipping.<sup>[72]</sup>

Dandelion describes the negative workings of a culture of silence with an outline of six stages.<sup>[73]</sup> The first three stages show internal processes and individual religious experience. The last three, where social interaction is hypothesized, refer to silence as defence (so thoughts are never vocalised), followed by silence as consequence when there is no reaction. Dandelion presents this as a chronological sequence that takes place in the worshipping group. It could, however, be a more circular process in which the elements influence and perpetuate each other. These negative experiences of silence are the sort of thing Chuck Fager regularly describes as passive aggressive behaviour.<sup>[74]</sup> The use of silence permeates the Quaker culture, and can develop into absence or withdrawal, which are also used as weapons.

## **Virtue Ethics—What Kind of a Quaker Am I?**

A third thread of the Quaker culture is the desire to “mend the world,” to apply faith in practical action, often applying the Quaker testimonies to peace, equality, simplicity, truth

and care for creation that have evolved over past centuries.<sup>[75]</sup> This is an aspect of Quaker life that was especially emphasized to me when I interviewed the “Edge Quakers.” Their approach did not always fit comfortably with the behavioural creed and centralized form, but they identified strongly with “mending the world.”

Scully studied Quaker attitudes to moral dilemmas arising from developments in genetics and found that a virtue ethics model is often used by Quakers in moral decision making.<sup>[76]</sup> Other religious groups may use the deontological model (“Do this because God says so”) or the utilitarian model (“Do this because it contributes to the greatest good for the greatest number”). Neither of these is likely to appeal to a group that prides itself on being a dissenting minority full of free autonomous individuals. Moral decisions are often taken to be about acts that can be objectively perceived and evaluated by others. In contrast, virtue ethics places the emphasis on the agent or actor, rather than the act, and her attitude or consistent disposition. Virtue ethics asks what kind of a person should I be? This can require a reflexive element of self examination, which is often lacking (or buried in silence) among Quakers.<sup>[77]</sup> What kind of a person should I be may be considered a self indulgent question, but what kind of a person should a good Quaker be or what should a Quaker do is often discussed.

Answers to the question what kind of person should a good Quaker be are often drawn from examples of Quaker virtue in the past that the community narratives accepted and sometimes embellished.<sup>[78]</sup> Quakers live by narratives from the past and exhort themselves to copy famous individuals such as Elizabeth Fry. These narratives are selective, focusing on the broad sweep of the virtuous story and only rarely including more difficult aspects of the example’s personality.<sup>[79]</sup> They form part of the espoused theory, the public story of the hopes and aspirations of the community. The “theory in use,” which conceals current stories under the need for confidentiality, prevents examination of recent or ongoing actions and issues. It is more comfortable to focus on a historic agent portraying virtue than to evaluate the virtue component in current actions. John McConnell explains how, with the adoption of the Quaker narrative (or delusion), “peace becomes a prized quality of self—something we possess—an adjunct of the ego.”<sup>[80]</sup>

## **Quaker Culture and Community Narratives**

At a conference in 2007, Scully and others worked out a model combining virtue ethics and community narratives that allowed more possibility for change and development.<sup>[81]</sup> This model proposed that a shared community narrative may lead to shared principles that the individual then integrates into personal dispositions that guide individual choices of action. In this case the narrative selected was the image of the peaceable kingdom; the principles were the Quaker testimonies; the dispositions or virtues were personal commitment to the testimonies, which were then put into practice with particular actions. This model connects the collective and the individual and allows focus on the virtuous disposition of the agent and also on his acts. It encourages the self-examination, which “don’t even think about it” prevents. In making such self-examination, the individual can of course query the collective insight and ask, Is this the community narrative I should choose? and further, Where does my experience fit into this community narrative?

Scully’s model of the formation of moral identity relies on a shared image, but a community can have more than one such image or narrative. Narratives that nourish a community may be dominant, or counter narrative or personal narrative.<sup>[82]</sup> Diana Francis, a distinguished peacebuilder, deplores the fact that Quakers no longer use the faith stories of their Christian forebears, suggesting this weakens the testimonies and turns them into mere “tendencies.”<sup>[83]</sup> Quakers are left with stories of their own collective life, and may act as if the dominant narrative of the peaceable kingdom is the only one about Quaker conflict. However, there is no reason why alternative narratives should not also be told and be allowed to shape the collective life. Scully’s process of four stages need not be seen going in a single line from a single espoused collective image to personal action. It could be circular, where personal narrative feeds into an alternative collective image.

In my research I had looked for community narratives about Quaker conflict and found few that were widely known. Historical episodes were shamefacedly hidden or reinterpreted. More current episodes are hidden under confidentiality, and present tensions alienate sympathy. However, a story reclaimed from American Quaker history is beginning to be well known. It is about two farmers, Richard and Isaac, and a dispute about a dam.<sup>[84]</sup> This uses a biblically-based process for conflict resolution and nests references to other biblical stories within itself. It is not appealing to modern Quakers because some reject the suggestion that there is authority inherent in those stories. Unable to use biblical stories, Quakers have to fall back on stories of early Quakers, but their discovery was the possibility

of direct communication with God. The story of this discovery was infused with biblical and theological meaning. If that aspect is rejected the story is not very inspiring.

In two workshops Quakers have been encouraged to create new stories about conflict and act them out to each other.<sup>[85]</sup> Some of these are very memorable, even if only for the people concerned, and are creating a range of behaviours that can be chosen as models. However, these are small stories that only affect a few people.

## **How Does this Culture of Conflict handling Affect Conflict Transformation?**

The culture of conflict handling, which includes aversion, relationship unity and non articulation, affects conflict transformation within the organization but also its efforts directed towards the outer world. Within the organization, these three characteristics and the unwillingness to examine the self, thus limiting sociality and empathy, make conflict transformation a rarity.<sup>[86]</sup> For conflicts within the Quaker community there are few recognised processes. Despite recommendations in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 4.21, that each geographic area should have a special group to give assistance in the amicable settlement of disputes, such groups were rare or dormant at the time of my research. One Monthly Meeting was in the process of setting up such a group, with some enthusiasm, and allowed me to know about this process. But after some years with little use of their services, they reported:

One of our early conclusions has been that there is something in our ethos which makes us feel we are failing as Quakers if we are seen to be associated with anything that can be called conflict—“what, me?”, and also reluctant to concede that help might be needed--“we have our own ways of managing, thank you.”<sup>[87]</sup>

In 2010 F. Kaal, a member of her local Quaker conflict resolution group, wrote:

We must stop smoothing things over with placatory words and address the underlying upset feelings before the piles of dirt brushed under the carpet get so bad that you can hardly walk across without twisting your ankle!<sup>[88]</sup>

The fact that conflict handling is done badly within the organization invalidates the stance

in the wider world of which Quakers are so proud. Other descriptions of Quakers from outsiders are that they are “prickly” and “always sitting on the fence.” They are not always the examples they hope to be. Because of lack of manoeuvrability in communication, it is very difficult for Quakers to move or develop their practice in engaging in conflict.<sup>[89]</sup> They spend more time in looking at the decision making process than in making decisions. The most passionate concern among Quakers for peace may be enacted outside the Quaker sphere. Kline quotes the example of decision making about the Trident Ploughshares antinuclear weapons action in 1998.<sup>[90]</sup> The lack of unity and slowness of Quaker decision making method prevented any prophetic social witness and mired it in confusion for some years. This may have always been true. Quakers nowadays congratulate themselves on their role in abolishing the slave trade, but in fact it took many years to evolve a stance on this issue and then to put it into practice. Such caution and delay causes impatience and the most passionate take their passion elsewhere.

The inability to grasp the nettles of the marginalised tensions also impedes creativity and forward movement. Conflict theory tells us that conflict can be productive, but Quakers are rarely brave enough to test this out and will not yet reap the benefits described by D.

Tjosvold 23:

Conflict provides an opportunity to form and express our needs, opinions and positions. At the same time we try to understand the perspectives of others and we become less egocentric. Resolving issues leaves people feeling more integrated, adjusted and competent. Through conflict people feel unique and independent as well as connected to others.

Well managed conflict is an investment in the future. People trust each other more, feel more powerful and efficacious, and believe their joint efforts will pay off. Feeling more able and united people are more able to contribute to their groups and organizations. Success in turn strengthens relationships and individuality.<sup>[91]</sup>

## **Comparisons with other religious groups and ethically committed organizations**

How do national or regional cultures influence the cultures of the small organizations within

them? In a collection called *The Quaker Condition*, I hypothesised that Irish Quakers found it easier to grasp the nettle of conflict because the society in which they nest has more religious contentiousness.<sup>[92]</sup> Patrick Grant explores the connection between religion and politics in Ireland in detail.<sup>[93]</sup> But Seamus Heaney presents another thread of Irish culture in his poem “Whatever you say, say nothing.” This depiction of covert, sectarian stereotyping is much more akin to a nonexpressive, nonarticulating tension, even though this one has resulted in many deaths. Cultures and discourses overlap and intertwine, and both individuals and groups have to ask which is positioning them on which occasion. This has always been the case. In describing an American Quaker conflict in 1827, Cavey (2000) emphasised how this was fuelled by contextual factors where the boundaries between personal, economic, political, and religious factors were very blurred.<sup>[94]</sup>

Casual comments from others have suggested to me that the pattern of conflict avoidance is common in groups that aspire to lead the way in increasing human harmony. These are groups or organizations where it is expected that they should be able to do better.

Associations of psychotherapists against war, personal development groups, mediation services, and the current state of the Church of England have been mentioned to me, but not explored in detail. More rigorous data remains to be collected. All these accounts were given in tones of disappointment, no-one knew how to change to a more constructive way forward.

From an outsider’s viewpoint, one religious group does appear to have found a constructive way forward: Mennonites, like Quakers, are a historic peace church with a turbulent history<sup>[95]</sup> and a culture of niceness to each other.<sup>[96]</sup> However, it appears that, as a church, they have deliberately adopted a policy of turning toward conflict in the congregation,<sup>[97]</sup> pledging to use a sequence of conflict-handling techniques linked to events in the Bible. One of these is based on the actions recommended in Matthew 18:15-20, which was once known among Quakers in Pennsylvania<sup>[98]</sup> but is now forgotten in the UK. The Mennonite reliance on the Bible provides a strong foundation. Christian Early, an experienced American Mennonite, responded to this paper in 2008. His response was informative. The current espoused theory of the Mennonite Church is indeed more proactive toward conflict-handling in congregations; nevertheless, he recognises the theory in use within the church as conflict avoidance. He also notes the similarity of churches positioned by a pacifist discourse, and wonders whether all peace churches are like this. This has now

become my research question for the next few years.

## Conclusion

British Quakers are a small liberal religious group, proud of their history in making peace and committed to continuing this. They are tolerant of diversity outside their own group, but deal with diversity within their own group by “celebrating” it. The tensions that this diversity causes are rarely allowed to surface in the collective life, and when they do they are focused on or transferred to a form of collective decision making and action rather than the issues.

Conflict is negatively connoted, always bad, and considered to be that which is engaged in the collective domain. Examples that could be publicly discussed focused on practical issues, such as development of premises and employment practicalities, where only one answer was possible. Other tensions are dealt with in privatized individual life, where the group does not enjoin conformity. Examples of this are tensions connected with differing theological viewpoints and issues connected to homosexuality.

The espoused theory or dominant community narrative enjoins British Quakers to “mend the world” and more subtly suggests that Quakers should live in a world that is already mended—the peaceable kingdom—in which there is no place for authority. This story/fiction can only be maintained by following the injunction of the theory in use “don’t ask, don’t tell, don’t even think about it.” These theories of action are the strongest threads in the Quaker culture about conflict. The result is a lack of stories about Quaker conflict, whether resolved or not.

Quaker identity is shaped by the Quaker culture, based on a tension between being part of the collective and remaining an autonomous individual. This is expressed in Dandelion’s double culture analysis, which describes a stable collective expectation for what happens when Quakers are together, and freedom to be diverse in matters of belief and personal life. Another element shaping the Quaker culture is the emphasis on silence and controlled expression built into the whole collective form. Scully’s virtue ethics model of how Quakers form their identity is useful because it demands reflexivity in the individual to ask What kind of person am I? and Which community narrative is the framework for a singular calling? This offers an opportunity for individual and collective change.

The Mennonite Church in the United States has a turbulent history of division but seems to have taken its inspiration from a new story based on stories from the Bible, which is its authority. As British Quakers appear to be allergic to any authority but “that of God within each of them,” how will they find a common story to inspire them to “do” conflict better? Do all Peace Churches have a commitment to peace in their espoused theory and a theory in use that enjoins conflict avoidance in the life of the church?

1. 1. John McConnell describes this understanding as a delusion. See “Working with Quakers and Buddhists,” in *Patterns and Examples* (York, UK: Sessions, 2005), 44.
2. 2. Jamie Wrench, “Conflict in Meetings,” *The Friend*, 17 February 2006. “It was a big shock when conflict finally burst among us,”
3. 3. Susan Robson, “An Exploration of Conflict Handling among Quakers” (PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2005).
4. 4. I served on the support group for Turning the Tide, a Quaker agency for training in nonviolent social change. I am also a Trustee of the Quaker Peace Studies Trust, which supports the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University. As I have no current academic affiliation the organisers of the conference chose to use this to indicate an academic provenance. My views are my own, not those of the trustees.
5. 5. This encouragement came from Professor Judi Marshall, proponent of collaborative action research.
6. 6. Mara Olekalns, “Communication Processes and Conflict Management,” in *The Psychology of Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations*, by Carsten De Creu and Michele Gelfand (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008) 81-114.
7. 7. Jay Rothman, *Resolving Identity-Based Conflict in Nations, Organizations, and Communities* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1997); J. Winslade, *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000). See also the contribution of Marc Howard Ross, *Cultural Contestation in Nations: Explaining*



*the Role of Culture in Conflict Escalation and Mitigation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

8. 8. John Winslade, "Narrative Mediation: Assisting in the renegotiation of discursive positions," *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*, 2003-2004, 64-75.
9. 9. There were three sets of interviews. First, I selected seven "key informants" known for the length and depth of their Quaker experience; second, I chose twenty-five "grassroots" Quakers who were chosen by local groupings covering the North of the UK; and third, I selected eight "edge Quakers" who were not part of the conscientious core and contributed a different slant.
10. 10. William R. Torbert, *The Power of Balance* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 2001).
11. 11. In addition to the responsibilities above, I have served as 2nd Assistant Clerk to Britain Yearly Meeting and am an active member of my local Quaker meeting in Leeds.
12. 12. Susan Robson, "An Exploration of Conflict Handling among Quakers" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2005).
13. 13. Figure taken from the annual statistical return Tabular Statement as of 31 December 2007, published by Britain Yearly Meeting. It includes 15,000 adult members and 8000 non-member attenders. It does not include young people.
14. 14. See "Introduction from Quaker World Relations Committee," in *Epistles and Testimonies* (London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 2008).
15. 15. Ben Pink-Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 118. Dandelion identifies the fourfold common ground of the world family of Friends, summarized as 1) direct inward encounter with God; 2) church business based on corporate direct guidance; 3) spiritual equality; and 4) preference for peace and social witness.
16. 16. Ben Pink-Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Chapter 7 of *The Quakers* explores the different traditions of Quakerism across the world.
17. 17. Hugh Pyper, "Quaker Thought," in *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, edited by Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason, and Hugh Pyper (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).
18. 18. This is usually in a circle or a square, with all seats facing each other.

19. 19. *Quaker Faith and Practice* (London: Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1995), 24.04. *Quaker Faith and Practice* (1995) is the “Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.” It is a collection of authoritative extracts offering guidance on matters of faith and practice, which is revised roughly once a generation.
20. 20. Brian David Phillips, “Friendly Patriotism: British Quakerism and the Imperial Nation 1890-1910: (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1989).
21. 21. Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism, 1860-1920* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001).
22. 22. Martin Ceadel, “The Quaker Peace Testimony and Its Contribution to the British Peace Movement: An Overview,” *Quaker Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 9-29.
23. 23. Geoffrey Carnall, “What about Hitler?” *The Friend*, 3 October 2008.
24. 24. Martin Ceadel, “The Quaker Peace Testimony and its Contribution to the British Peace Movement: An Overview,” *Quaker Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 9-29.
25. 25. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 23.02.
26. 26. Brian Phillips and John Lampen, *Endeavours to Mend: Perspectives on British Quaker Work in the World Today* (London: Quaker Books, 2006).
27. 27. Britain Yearly Meeting, 2008.
28. 28. Chris Argyris and Donald Schön, *Organizational Learning II* (Addison Wesley, 1996).
29. 29. Using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator with Quakers taught me that they had no difficulty in ascribing type preferences to the organization as a whole. Consensus was that the organization preferred introversion and intuition. It had less preference for outgoing practicality.
30. 30. J. Scott, “The Peaceable Kingdom,” a Quaker Theology Seminar (2002-2003).
31. 31. Ben Dandelion, *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming* (Birmingham, UK: Woodbrooke College, 1998).
32. 32. Carolyn Schrock Shenk, *Making Peace with Conflict* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1999).
33. 33. See Peter Collins, “The Sense of the Meeting: An Anthropology of Vernacular Quakerism” (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 1994). Collins discusses the prototypical Quaker,” a prototype that includes a commitment to peace.
34. 34. See the report in “Quaker Work 2006,” which forms part of “Documents in

Advance to Britain Yearly Meeting 2007.”

35. 35. This method is different from consensus. A similar method has been used previously for only a short period by Jesuits in the sixteenth century. Its use was lost within a generation. See M. J. Sheeran, *Beyond Majority Rule* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1983).
36. 36. See *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 3.04 and 3.06, for an explanation of how the method should work.
37. 37. This information comes from the experience of the Arrangements Committee that planned the event, which I convened.
38. 38. This term, and activity, has begun to be used in recent years after a long gap and change of meaning. See *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 12.26, which begins: ”This term currently denotes a meeting at which a variety of different, and sometimes controversial, opinions can be openly and sometimes forcefully, expressed, often in order to defuse a situation before a later meeting for worship for business.”
39. 39. Nic Fine and Fiona Macbeth, *Playing with Fire* (Leicester: Youth Work Press, 1992); Simon Fisher, *Spirited Living: Waging Conflict, Building Peace* (London: Quaker Books, 2004).
40. 40. This incident took place in a "Turning the Tide" group meeting, and I am happy to attribute the phrase to Steve Whiting.
41. 41. See the Epistle of Ireland Yearly Meeting, <http://www.quakersinireland.ie/archive/YM06.htm>.
42. 42. Conflict stories did not provide examples of theological diversity, though incidents of conflict about “unacceptable ministry” were quite common, and may have concealed issues about theological diversity. There was one incident of personal insult (in a post) to a lesbian woman.
43. 43. Different theological views were given expression in planned worship, but there was not open discussion. A letter strongly critical of liberal views on homosexuality was not published, though this attracted reproof.
44. 44. A conference, “Quaker Identity and the Heart of our Faith,” exploring different theological understandings and a consultation about issues regarding possible same sex marriage were both held in the first half of 2008.
45. 45. Personal communication (anonymous), and article in *The Friend* by Pamala McDougall, “Marriage and Committed Relationship, *The Friend*, 27 June 2009.

46. 46. Timothy Ashworth and Alex Wildwood, *Rooted in Christianity, Open to New Light* (Pronoun Press/Woodbrooke, 2009). Ashworth and Wildwood's project is described more fully later in the paper.
47. 47. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 16 and 17.
48. 48. S. Best, "The Future of the Religious Society of Friends: Simple, Contemporary, Radical," *The Friends Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (May 2010).
49. 49. C. Plüss, "A Sociological Analysis of the Modern Quaker Movement" (D. Phil. dissertation, Oxford University, 1995); *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 27.04.
50. 50. David Rush, "They too are Quakers: A Survey of 199 Nontheist Friends," *Woodbrooke Journal* 11 (2003).
51. 51. Timothy Ashworth and Alex Wildwood, *Rooted in Christianity, Open to New Light* (Pronoun Press/Woodbrooke, 2009).
52. 52. Committee on Eldership and Oversight, "Conflict in Meetings" (Britain Yearly Meeting, 2000). "Conflict in Meetings" introduces five modes of conflict-handling: competing, compromising, collaboration, accommodating, and avoiding. It uses the adaptation from "Mediation UK," which identifies the modes with animals, but for use with Quakers, two additional animals (the lemming and the ostrich) were added to the avoiding tittle.
53. 53. Personal communication. See full explanations in Susan Robson, "An Exploration of Conflict Handling among Quakers" (Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2005), <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/5945/>; and Susan Robson, "Grasping the Nettle: Conflict and the Quaker Condition," in *The Quaker Condition*, edited by Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008).
54. 54. Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning II* (Addison Wesley, 1996).
55. 55. With the exception of those with counselling experience.
56. 56. *The Friend*, 20 June 2008, 9.
57. 57. Personal communication with a Quaker Studies Research student (HCM).
58. 58. The forty-two paragraphs of "Advices and Queries" are "a reminder of the insights of the Society" regularly used in meetings.
59. 59. Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (Routledge, 1997), viii; quoted in Gay Pilgrim, "Taming Anarchy: Quaker Alternate Ordering and 'Otherness,'" in *The Creation of Quaker Theory*, by Pink

Dandelion (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004). Hetherington defines heterotopia as "spaces of alternate ordering [which] organise a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them. That alternate ordering marks them out as Other and allows them to be seen as an example of an alternative way of doing things."

60. 60. Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 62.
61. 61. The interviewees thought that to be Quakerly was to be quiet and moderate, not to show any kind of ostentation, and above all not to show anger.
62. 62. George Kelly, *A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (New York: Norton, 1963).
63. 63. Pink Dandelion, *The Silent Revolution: A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996).
64. 64. This emphasis on autonomy within the collective has existed from the beginnings of Quakerism. See Rosemary Anne Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 224. The slogan for outreach in 2008 was "Thou shalt decide for yourself" [sic].
65. 65. Jean-Michel Oughourlian, *The Puppet of Desire: The Psychology of Hysteria, Possession and Hypnosis* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 11-12. Quoted by Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 17-18.
66. 66. Ben Pink-Dandelion, *The Quakers: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
67. 67. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1990).
68. 68. Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977).
69. 69. *Advices and Queries*, 3.
70. 70. *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 2.16.
71. 71. Michael Billig, *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
72. 72. S. Best, "The Future of the Religious Society of Friends: Simple, Contemporary, Radical," *The Friends Quarterly* 38, 2 May 2010.
73. 73. Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (New York: Cambridge University

Press, 2007), 146.

74. 74. Chuck Fager is an American Quaker, a prolific writer in Quaker publications and online communications. For a good example of his style and the use of the term “passive aggressive,” see [www.afriendlyletter.com/index.php/hard-core-quaker/thoughts-on-quakers-c...](http://www.afriendlyletter.com/index.php/hard-core-quaker/thoughts-on-quakers-c...)
75. 75. A Quaker testimony is an accumulation of experience and witness, lived rather than documented, about a particular aspect of life. Currently these concern peace, equality, simplicity, truth and care for creation.
76. 76. Jackie Leach Scully, *Quaker Approaches to Moral Issues in Genetics* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002).
77. 77. Helen Meads, “‘Experiment with Light’: the Radical Spiritual Wing of British Quakerism,” in *The Quaker Condition*, by Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008). Researching the “Experiment with Light,” Meads finds that the generality of Quakers are often wary and fearful of the self examination that takes place in “light groups.” Those who “experiment with light” welcome the opportunity for self examination. The “Experiment with Light” uses a guided meditation, based on early Friends’ writings, to lead through a process of self discovery and spiritual illumination. Groups using this method exist in many meetings.
78. 78. See *Quaker Faith and Practice*, 19.47, for an account of George Fox telling William Penn to wear his sword as long as he could. This is described as “oral tradition which has played so large a part in Quaker thinking that it is included here.” In other words, no one knows whether it is historically true, but it is a useful story to make the point that you are not expected to be the perfect Quaker today.
79. 79. June Rose, *Elizabeth Fry* (London: Macmillan, 1980). June Rose’s biography of Elizabeth Fry does include problematic material, but this does not form part of the broad community narrative.
80. 80. John McConnell. “Working with Quakers and Buddhists,” in *Patterns and Examples* (York, UK: Sessions, 2005).
81. 81. An informal session of the Quaker Studies Research Association Summer School, August 2007.
82. 82. James W. Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000). Fowler offers an outline of a hierarchy of narratives, from the core story

- of a faith, through the central passion of the core story, through the formation of the affections in accordance with these, through the generation of virtues corporate and personal, to the formation of worldly vocation in each life in the community. This sequence is very similar to the Scully model, but Fowler gives illustrations from the Christian tradition, while stressing that this model can also be applied in other faiths.
83. 83. Diana Francis writing in *The Friend*, 2 April 2010: “The Society has become a rather unsupportive place for overt Christians and the word God is no longer a comfortable one to use.”
  84. 84. Sandra L. Cronk, “Gospel Order: A Quaker Understanding of Faithful Church Community,” Pandal Hill Pamphlet Series (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1991).
  85. 85. One workshop took place with Chester Elders and Overseers in 2005, the other at Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in 2008.
  86. 86. In the research data there was one example of a meeting that experienced difficulties and then embarked on a review of its common life. This was not painless but was judged to have changed things in a good way.
  87. 87. *The Friend*, 17 March 2006, 8.
  88. 88. “The Future of Quakerism,” *The Friends Quarterly*, no. 2 (2010): 76.
  89. 89. Peace is used as a blanket term. There is little flexibility in vocabulary for the range of peaceful and non-peaceful behaviours such as that demonstrated by Douglas Fry (2006) and at Cambridge University, 2008.
  90. 90. Douglas Kline, “Quakerly Conflict: The Cultural Logic of Conflict in the Religious Society of Friends,” (Ph.D. diss., Edinburgh University, 2002).
  91. 91. Dean Tjosvold, “Conflict with Interdependence: Its Value for Productivity and Individuality,” in *Using Conflict in Organizations*, edited by Casten De Dreu and Evert Van De Vliert (London: Sage, 1997), 23. Tjosvold, D. (1997).
  92. 92. Susan Robson, “Grasping the Nettle: Conflict and the Quaker Condition,” in *The Quaker Condition*, edited by Ben Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008). Patrick Grant, “Northern Ireland: Religion and the Peace Process,” in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, edited by Harold Coward and Gordon Smith (Albany: State University of New York), 261-278.
  93. 93. Patrick Grant, “Northern Ireland: Religion and the Peace Process,” in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, edited by Harold Coward and Gordon Smith (Albany: State

University of New York), 261-278.

94. 94. Verna M. Cavey, "Fighting among Friends: The Quaker Separation of 1827," in *Social Conflicts and Collective Identities*, by Patrick G. Coy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).
95. 95. Fred Lamar Kniss, *Disquiet in the Land* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
96. 96. John Paul Lederach, *The Journey toward Reconciliation* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1999).
97. 97. See the policy adopted by the General Conference of the Mennonite Church at Wichita Kansas, 1996. This appears at the front of the Mennonite Convention 2009 programme and can be accessed at [www.mennoniteusa.org/Home/Convention/Delegates/Disagreeing/tabid/510/Def...](http://www.mennoniteusa.org/Home/Convention/Delegates/Disagreeing/tabid/510/Def...)
98. 98. S. V. Hartshorne, "Quaker Justice in Seventeenth-Century Pennsylvania," *Friends Quarterly*, October 1993, 348-364.