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**AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING
AMONG QUAKERS**

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

The Quaker community is committed to conflict resolution; it might be expected that the community itself is conflict free. This study explores this proposition and presents a counter narrative: conflict does exist among Quakers, with its roots in the culture of the organization.

An ethnographic case study was undertaken in a context of observing participation, where the researcher was also actively responsible inside the organization. The project included: 39 semi-structured interviews with Key Informants, Grassroots Quakers and Edge Quakers; a collaborative inquiry workshop with 20 self-selected participants; recording of reflections over six months with a final workshop.

The study finds a dominant community narrative telling how the Quaker task is to 'mend the world' and live in a 'peaceable kingdom'. This is achieved by ignoring conflict within the organization, defensively following the maxim 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it'. A distinctive pattern of conflict handling is revealed; aversion precedes avoidance, relationship is privileged above outcome, and moderation and restraint are required. Conflict which does surface and persists focuses on the interpretation of Quaker identity. The culture of aversion from conflict makes it difficult for Quakers to articulate conflict experience; they lack confidence and are hesitant. Counter narratives and personal narratives are not made public. Consequently there are very few collectively articulated stories about Quaker conflict handling.

A constructivist narrative framework acknowledges the power in the internalised collective narrative. As proud individual nonconformists, Quakers minimise the coercive power of the collective narrative, which positions them as stultified in conflict, with their agency neutralized. It is argued that one way of creating radical change is to encourage the telling of more stories of Quaker conflict, providing new parts in the play.

Acknowledgements

In very many different ways this project has been a shared effort, and I record here my indebtedness to those who have helped me along the way.

Firstly I thank all those Quakers who have participated in the research process. This ranges from those who have given a casual word of interest, to those who contributed interviews, to those who participated in two workshops and gave a commitment of time and themselves. This research is their product, even if they do not agree with the analysis. If that is the case, hopefully it will prove the starting point for further exploration. The combination of challenge and support at the Quaker Studies Research Summer School 2003 was invaluable. No less am I grateful to the members of my own Quaker meeting in Huddersfield and to those in Brighouse Monthly Meeting who have continued to treat me like myself rather than as a researcher, and made me feel I do belong even when I have doubted it. The interest and concern of all these people has kept me going. I would not have dared to stop before the end and fail to give their work back to them.

Secondly I thank my supervisors : Vivien Burr, Trevor Butt and Graham Gibbs for their persistence in offering me three different ways of stimulating my thinking and for requiring coherent communication. Nancy Kelly, Christine Horrocks and Nigel Parton of Huddersfield University have helped with thoughtful questions and fruitful references.

In particular I record the assistance of my Quaker support group – three diligent nameless survivors through the process. Ranked behind them are Beth Allen, Margaret Crompton, Alastair Heron, Helen Meads, Pam Lunn, who acted as critical reader (in part), Annette Leech, who showed the way, Niladri, who reminded me of the importance of story, Ben Pink Dandelion, who had no official role but accompanied the work from a distance, Victoria Kennedy and Chayley Collis, who acted as proof readers. The participants on 'Quaker-B' have continually reminded me that there are many others struggling to understand the Quaker community.

Non-Quakers have also contributed to the project. Alistair McKay of the London Mennonite Centre has replied most patiently to my queries. Mark Chesterman has continued the pattern of 18 years by supplying the right reference at the right time, despite his profound reservations about Quakers. Without his contribution this thesis might have had a very different theoretical argument, but he is in no way responsible for what has resulted.

Also I am grateful to the proprietors of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and Benjamin Robson for providing the context for some of my best ideas. Matt Robson and Frances Robson also deserve thanks, although I cannot provide a happy ending. Finally, I must commend my continuing partner in conflict, David Robson, who has always expected 'outspoken comment within the family circle'¹. He has given support to this project and to me in innumerable ways.

¹ This is a quotation from Extract 320 in *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends* 1959, now superseded by *Quaker Faith and Practice* 1994.

AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING AMONG QUAKERS

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Chapter 1	Introduction Background; structure of the thesis	P1
Chapter 2	21st Century Quakers in the United Kingdom Worship and decision making; organization and individual; peace and conflict .	P14
Chapter 3	Understanding Organizational Culture Organizational Culture; change and conflict; images and stories	P33
Chapter 4	Understanding Conflict Definitions; theoretical models; in organizations; in religious organizations; among Quakers	P47
Chapter 5	Methodology Reflexivity; qualitative methodology; ethnography; collaborative action research.	P70
Chapter 6	The Key Informants: Restating the Paradox Interview methods; findings; observing participation.	P89
Chapter 7	Grassroots Quakers: The Conscientious Core Interview methods; findings	P105
Chapter 8	Edge Quakers: Mending the World Interview methods; findings	P128
Chapter 9	Discussion : Tensions in the Peaceable Kingdom Organizational culture; Quaker identity; utility of theory	P141
Chapter 10	Turning Inward: From the Collective to the Individual Self; reflective practitioner; insidership	P164
Chapter 11	Collaborative Effort: Reflecting on Conflict Together First workshop; findings	P174
Chapter 12	Pondering Alone: Constrained by Confidentiality Reflective writing; looking outwards and inwards	P192
Chapter 13	Reflecting Together Again Second Workshop; sharing experiences	P206
Chapter 14	Narrative, Story and Quaker Conflict Story of the research; the narrative approach; Conclusion.	P214 over/

Glossary of Quaker terms

References

Appendices

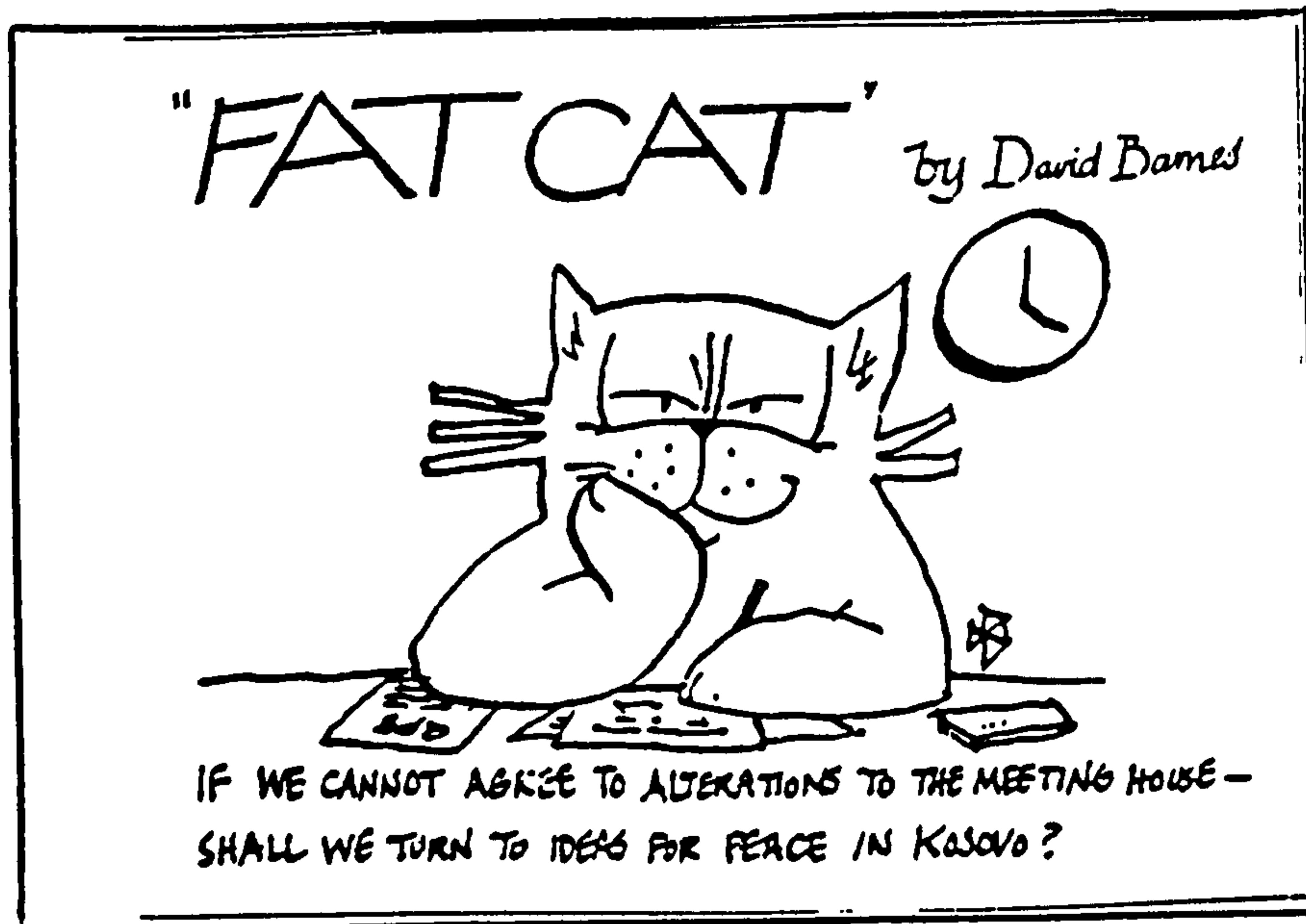
- A Correspondence to set up the interviews.**
- B Interview schedules for three sets of interviews**
- C Publicity, programme and papers for the workshop.
Follow up correspondence.**
- D An example of 'pondering' writing.**
- E Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis ; an example**

AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING AMONG QUAKERS

List of Figures and Tables

The Fat Cat Cartoon	Page 1
Figure 1. Taxonomy of 5 Conflict Handling Modes	Page 51
Table 1. Descriptions of the 5 Modes	Page 52
Figure 2. Galtung's conflict triangle	Page 54
Figure 3. 'Attributes' of Edge Quakers	Page 130
Figure 4. Morgan's model for Quaker conflict	Page 154
Figure 5. Age and gender distribution of workshop participants	Page 177
Table 2. Workshop Programme: September 20 2003	Page 180
Figure 6. Locations for psychological phenomena	Page 194
Figure 7. Written ponderings: number per person	Page 196
Figure 8. Elements of positioning	Page 226

Chapter 1: Introduction



Fat Cat, as Clerk of the Quaker Meeting, sits at the table and says 'If we cannot agree to alterations to the meeting house, shall we turn to ideas for peace in Kosovo?'¹

This neatly expresses the puzzle which provoked this research: though Quakers are not good at resolving their own conflicts they feel it their duty to be involved in the more complex and difficult conflicts of other people in other parts of the world,

This puzzle is sometimes acknowledged among Quakers, but it is difficult to find much thought or explanation on this topic. Unusually, an experienced and concerned Friend, writing at a time of international tension in March 2003 made the link between local and global. She suggested that practising conflict resolution in the Quaker meeting may improve the contribution to international conflict resolution.

¹ This cartoon appeared in *The Friend* on June 4 1999. That edition also contained two articles about the conflict in Kosovo.

“The world has changed for ever. I am sick with shame that we support the Bush regime. But I am also sick with shame that I remain unable to articulate the programme of change that I am looking for. I just pray that we Quakers renew our efforts to really address every conflict in our Meeting using all the skills of conflict resolution so that we can practice the courage that this requires”. (Legg, 2003)

This study explores the puzzle of the dissonance between Quaker aspirations towards conflict resolution in the wider world and Quaker practice in conflict in their own meetings.

It is suggested that research often focuses on ‘curious or anomalous phenomena’ (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) or even issues that ‘bother, intrigue, or make [one] nervous’ (Evertson & Green, 1985). The question of Quaker conflict handling certainly featured a degree of anomaly; it also bothered and intrigued me from the start. The nervousness may be appropriate when public presentation breaks the Quaker rule about talking about conflict. I shall explain below why this was an intriguing issue for me. Despite the fact that this has been a shared exploration and I have relied as much as I can on the contributions of others, an account of my own position is perhaps the most informative thing that can be offered. The reader is entitled to know about my ‘disciplined subjectivity’² in order to understand it and then to compare their own subjective experience.

I am differently positioned from many researchers as this work does not form part of a developing career. I am at the end of my working life and though there may be activities which follow from this project they will not enhance an academic career. Despite a first degree in sociology, for many years my academic knowledge was used only in application to practical problems in various social work settings. But then I found myself sitting on a board allocating money for study to people younger and less experienced than myself. Nobody ever suggested allocating money to me. So when I stopped working at the age of 58 I decided to allocate some money to

² This phrase derives from Mary Catherine Bateson.(Bateson, 1988)

myself. I completed an M.Sc in Social Research Methods, with a dissertation on conflict and gender, then looked about for a further way to use this.

Why Conflict?

Conflict of various kinds had always interested me. My professional life had involved intrapsychic conflict, both for others and myself. Interpersonal conflict, particularly couple and family dispute and distress had been at the root of all the situations requiring social work intervention. I am aware that I got a certain satisfaction from working at this intimate emotional level. After child protection social work, I taught and was involved in the implementation of The Children Act 1989 (HMSO, 1989). This Act attempted to move away from adversarial stances to a process of negotiation focused on the welfare of the child. For me it was brought to life in the theatre of the Family Courts, where I was impressed by the use of the formal ritual of the court to encourage the exploration of needs and possibilities in a relatively safe way.

With many other Quakers I have had regular surges of activity in outward and political peace work. I walked from Aldermaston, went to Greenham Common and stood out in the rain against war in Iraq. Despite apparent outward consistency my interior conversations have changed over that time and I have also learnt that groups working for peace are often far from peaceful.

My private life has contained remarkably little conflict. Though I argue and bicker I can only remember one lasting 'falling out' with someone, which was in a work relationship. Inevitably, in a social psychological thesis, questions must be asked about my early experiences of conflict and how these may have shaped my continuing interest. I was an only child, living between parents with different constructions of conflict. My mother was outspokenly truthful to the point of tactlessness and squabbled frequently with her own family. My father had a shy and hesitant nature and came from a family where arguing was effectively forbidden. I grew up between them wondering how to argue. What was the proper way to do it? One parent would try to do it, the other would quietly not allow it, and there were no siblings with whom to experiment with alternatives. Nevertheless, I did argue. Recently a gentle and sensitive male cousin recalled his horror at seeing me repeatedly challenging his bombastic father in intellectual argument about politics and religion. At the age of fifteen I knew I was right and did not hesitate to tell others they were wrong. I now realise that this question 'what is the proper way to argue or

disagree?' lay at the heart of my enquiry. The question of what is 'good enough' in sorting out disputes, either in the family, or to find a place of belonging in a group, is still a source of uncertainty to me.

Why Quakers?

So why focus on conflict among Quakers? It could be argued that there are many more significant conflicts in the world which could benefit from further study.

However, Quakers were all around me and I am most interested in the things under my nose in which I myself am involved. For me an illustration to strengthen an argument will be drawn from events in the room, in the same session, rather than from what happened years ago to other people in another place. So much of my life takes place among Quakers it is hardly surprising that my research focused here. To illustrate these two points I check my e-mail address book as I sit here writing and find that out of 208 entries there are only 33 which have no connection with Quakers. That fact does not particularly please me, but it is convincing.

I started to be among Quakers at the age of 12. It offered me a gender unrestricted way to grow and be active in many areas of interest, which my own family of origin did not. It was events in the real world which provoked me to join Quakers formally. In 1956 when events in Suez and Hungary shook the world I felt I wanted to place myself as a Quaker. However, my fifty years as a Quaker have not been fifty years of the same experience. My views have changed, grown, developed, diminished. I have been through phases when I have described myself as non-Christian, Christian, and post-Christian universalist. My approach to Quakerism is increasingly social constructivist (Boulton, 2002), though I am not ready to describe myself as humanist. However, the contents of my belief systems are far less important to me than participating in Quaker community; that too has changed through time.³ Burrowing among Quakers for the purpose of this research has affected my understanding, interpretation and actions in all sorts of ways. I remain an insider (Collins, 2002; Dandelion, 1996a; Pearson, 2002) but a more critical and niched insider than when I started the research.

³ I have changed as Quaker community, and indeed wider community, has changed. The dominant food narrative among Quakers is now vegetarian, though I am not, and I would not now dream of taking real sausage rolls to a meeting shared meal.

Insider and Outsider

At this point I stop to consider the distinction between insider and outsider with regard to the three areas above – conflict, research and Quakers. I share Collins' view that this is not a discrete distinction (Collins, 2002), but it separates some different elements in one person's position.

In conflict I must identify myself as both insider, participant and experiencer, and outsider, observer and sometimes interferer. The implications of this double identification, though not only with regard to myself, will be explored more thoroughly as a significant thread in the thesis.

In research I feel myself as an outsider, or perhaps a visitor. Among other post-graduate researchers I am aware of my unusual age, the gaps in my academic experience, my lack of career development pressure, and my easy economic position. From a Quaker researcher of similar age and position, though more achievement, I copy the phrase 'independent scholar' (Moore, 2000) which lends comforting credibility.

Among Quakers I am both insider and typical insider. My age(65), gender (F), occupation (social work), and roles (small to big) within Quakerism make me very typical (Waterhouse, 2002)⁴. There are several people similar to me among those who have contributed to the research. The only thing that is unusual about me in Quaker demographic terms is the length of time I have been associated with the organization. Also, perhaps ill advisedly, while doing the research I have held heavy and uncomfortably overlapping positions of responsibility in Yorkshire General Meeting.

It is important to me, though maybe a luxury, to feel free of constraints experienced by other students. I enjoy freedom from the need to build a career on this work, from the participation in the responsibilities and stresses of a university department, and particularly freedom from too much Quaker guidance and encouragement. I deliberately chose not to work within a Quaker study programme, or to request Quaker financial support. Though in reality probably neither would have tried to

⁴ Similar to Waterhouse's account of her typicality in the Soka Gakkai movement.(Waterhouse, 2002)

constrain me, it is important to me to feel that I am working for myself and no-one else, and that I am free to make my own conclusions.⁵

Why Conflict Handling among Quakers?

The first question which arose out of this combination of threads was the one indicated in the Fat Cat cartoon on Page 1. A great amount of Quaker time and attention is given to issues of public conflict and justice, international or community based. Quakers identify themselves with pride with the innovations which they believe Quakers have made in these fields. At the same time many individual Quakers were complaining to me about their own meetings and deploring the conflict which they experienced there. They did not know what to do about this. In itself this was an interesting, paradoxical question. It was also embarrassing in that the contrast introduced a suspicion of the presence of hypocrisy and raised questions about the integrity of the organization.

A second issue also arose in the Quaker context. I had co-led⁶ several workshops for Quakers using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator ® (Bayne, 1995; Briggs Myers, 1985).⁷ This system invites people to identify their place in a range of personality types. The focus is mainly on the individual, or how individuals perceive each other. However, when workshop participants had some familiarity with the system they would be asked to assign a type to the whole Quaker community. Whatever the range of personality type present, each group chose some aspects for the Quaker community with great consistency⁸. Again this puzzled me; I would not have expected such consistency. I became aware that the cultural context was more influential among these strongly individual nonconformists than I had realised. I

⁵ However, advised by Heron, an experienced Quaker researcher, I did recruit for myself a 'support group' of three other Quakers, within Yorkshire, but not from my own area. We met roughly six monthly and they offered a mixture of personal and academic support. I also attended the Summer School of the Quaker Studies Research Association in August 2003. This was attended by over 15 other researchers into Quaker topics, although mainly from different disciplines. This was both stimulating and supportive.

⁶ Between 1994 and 1998 Elizabeth Cave and I co-led about fifteen such workshops. The aim was to facilitate understanding of interaction in community especially in Quaker settings. In other settings this is more usually called team building.

⁷ The Myers Briggs Type Indicator ® operationalizes the Jungian outline of personality types. It is widely used both in industry, for teambuilding, and in spiritual communities to assist personal interaction. In all self selecting groups, whether the Annual Conference of Psychological Type or Quakers choosing such a workshop, the members will turn out to prefer the theoretical and imaginative (N) approach over the practical and factual (S). In this study the most relevant aspect of psychological type is the spectrum between Extraversion and Introversion

⁸ The participants in the workshops consistently chose the preferences of Introversion and INtuition for the type of the Society of Friends. These preferences would suggest a quiet nature which finds its strength within and chooses theoretical and imaginative approaches above practical detail.

wondered how this related to the handling of conflict. In the workshops people easily attributed conflict to individual differences (Robson, 1998b) but paid little attention to how they conformed to the culture. The contribution of the culture to individual perceptions and behaviour in conflict became a second theme that I wanted to explore.

I could find no answers to either of these questions in Quaker writings or speaking. There was information about some methods of conflict prevention or conflict handling, focusing on Quaker initiated projects such as Leap or the Alternatives to Violence Project⁹, but these projects were not directed within the organization. The aficionados of these methods seemed disinclined or unable to apply their skills among Quakers. Directories of Quaker conflict handling projects (QSRE, 1995) showed them working in the wider world with non-Quakers. I could not at that stage discover anyone researching in the field of conflict handling among Quakers. My dissertation (Robson, 1998) had introduced me to the literature about gender and conflict handling and some methods of analysing conflict, but these did not seem particularly pertinent to the two main issues above.

Looking more widely there were accounts of communities with a low level of conflict, handled by avoidance or suppression. A collection of pieces on cultural variation in conflict resolution (Fry & Björkvist, 1997) gave examples of the Semai, the Toraja, and the Tonga. These were all relatively undeveloped and separated communities at the time of the field work. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the community to the individual for economic, geographic or psychological reasons, which allowed the community to control the expression of aggressive responses. Dentan (1994) gave an account of two contemporary Western groups which were committed to a peaceful way of life. These secular groups were The Rainbow Family¹⁰ (a network of bikers) and Alcoholics Anonymous, both of which required the 'surrender' of self to the group or a 'higher power'. They were likened to other groups of 'surrendered men' in the Shaker, Amish and Hutterite religious communities. These were described as only able to maintain their pacifist position and peaceable communities by strict rules and traditions which visibly differentiated them from others in modern

⁹ LEAP Confronting Conflict now works with street gangs on handling conflict and violence. Alternatives to Violence Project provides training on handling violent impulses, often in prisons or with people with forensically acknowledged problems. Both these projects were started by Quakers, but now run independently, though with a lot of Quaker support.

¹⁰ The Rainbow Family of Light still flourishes, see www.welcomehome.org accessed on 14.02.2004. The stress on the lack of hierarchy is very noticeable.

society and which were unacceptable to most people. While connections could be made with contemporary UK Quakers, the differences seemed more than the similarities, and the questions remained unanswered.

Frameworks for exploration

When I began this exploration I was vague about the discipline in which it was situated. Because the subject of this case study is Quakers handling conflict, some people expect that it will fit in as sociology of religion or even theology¹¹. Neither is the case, though I do sometimes wonder if I am exploring determinism and freewill under another guise. It is now clear that its broad setting is social psychology, using social constructivist approaches focused on the use of narrative¹². On reflection, I am aware of threads linking the past, the present, several theoretical perspectives, the research project and me.

My theoretical presumptions have been shaped by my professional life, which has followed general trends in social work. The theory of choice in my youth was psycho-dynamic (Freud, 1956; Jung, 1969; Klein, 1959), and in some respects this is hard wired into my thinking. I use it even if I don't believe it. Later this developed into family therapy (Boscolo, 1987; Burnham, 1986) and systemic thinking (Campbell et al, 1988; Hoffman, 1986) which then laid foundations for constructionist viewpoints (Burr, 1995). This drew in theories of action (Argyris & Schön, 1996), collaborative research (Reason, 2003) and narrative, both social (Czarniawska, 2000) and personal (Crossley, 2000). Throughout there is always a dialectical dynamic between the context and the individual, the social and the personal, other people and me.

More pragmatically, I have drawn on theories about organizations which have involved the concept of first and second order change and double loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996). These focus on change, as does conflict handling theory. Personal change is also implicit in the theories drawn from therapy which have informed my working life, psycho-dynamic ideas, family therapy, and systemic thinking. It is perhaps no coincidence that I eventually used collaborative action research which has an inbuilt commitment to change or transformation.

¹¹ Some may complain that not enough attention has been given to religious or spiritual elements in this study. I have usually waited for the contributors to introduce religious material rather than suggest it in questions. I am aware that a similar approach was counter productive. (Lunn, 1999)

¹² See Plummer 2001 p 39, which lists the layers of life story meanings derived from a range of contexts from historical/cultural events through to subjective, possibly unconscious experiences. My work is influenced most by the first half of the list, including sociology of knowledge, discourse theory, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics.

In reflecting on my work, and shaping it to communicate, narrative approaches came increasingly to the forefront. I examined the function of narrative in understanding organizational culture, conflict handling and resolution, and eventually in Quaker conflict handling. I drew on particular narratives, or the lack of them, to illustrate my arguments. The 'exploration' in the title of the thesis became a narrative in itself. Gabriel's (2000) narrative outline of a protagonist, a predicament, attempts to resolve the predicament, outcomes of the attempts and the reactions (or reflections) of the protagonist was used as a basis for tracing the story of the thesis from start to finish. Kline (2002) identified the metaphor of personal journey as a significant Quaker 'trope'. It is therefore no coincidence that it makes sense to me to cast the exploration of Quaker conflict handling as a journey. The protagonist starts with the predicament of puzzles. She¹³ explores ways along several paths to try and find a clearer view; these are the attempts to resolve the predicament. Having climbed several small peaks she has some clearer views; these are the outcomes of the attempts. After another long haul up she can draw a map of what she sees below; this is her reaction or reflection. It can be shared with the people she has met along the way. A simplified version of that map is outlined below, but the explorer turns around and sees a whole range of challenging peaks ahead.

The exploration so far

The exploration has added much more information to the rather blank map at the start. The paths through interviews, collaborative action research and observing participation have revealed a distinctive Quaker culture about conflict handling within the organization. Quakers are committed to the understanding that their purpose is to mend the world, and that they already live in their own mended world or peaceable kingdom. However this espoused theory is only part of the story. Quakers do have conflicts in their community, which are often played out as identity conflicts concerning the 'proper Quaker way' to proceed. Preserving relationship takes precedence over right outcome. Because of their commitment to the hope of being a peaceable kingdom, Quakers use conflict 'aversion' and minimise these incidents. The theory in use (Argyris & Schön, 1996) tells them to behave in a 'Quakerly' way; be moderate and calm, restrain speech and retreat into silence. The approved place in conflict for a Quaker is on 'the third side' as a mediator.

¹³ Throughout the thesis I have tried to use gender-free or non-sexist language. Where, as here, the gender of the person referred to is public knowledge, (the researcher = me = female), I have not struggled to find an alternative form.

The consequence of this culture is inhibition and uncertainty in conflict handling, whether their own or 'somebody else's'. The theory in use regarding conflict produces strong advice 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it'. This maxim results in very few stories¹⁴ about Quakers in conflict; there is a story gap among the narratives. The dominant narrative is of the peaceable kingdom; counter narratives, both collective and personal, struggle to survive and are not told. Seeking reassurance about their identity in the collective, Quakers think they must follow the espoused theory, the dominant narrative, that Quakers do not have conflict among themselves. Using Plummer's (2001) outline of the social production and interpretation of narrative, this collaborative work has 'coaxed' into public view a counter narrative about the cultural context in which Quakers approach conflict. It has also discovered a lack of stories about conflict itself. This makes it difficult for Quakers to consider alternative positions when confronted with conflict. Because of this lack of choice their agency is neutralised, stultified. Radical or second order change would require the telling of new stories of Quaker conflict, the creation of new roles in new plays.

Structure of the Thesis

This Introduction tells how I came to ask the questions which led to the research, explains my choice of methodology and theory, gives a brief outline of the thesis, and provides a guide to finding the way through the document.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 provide an account of aspects of the literature which have seemed meaningful and relevant to me in this exploration, rather than an exhaustive review of the literature pertaining to these topics.

Chapter 2 outlines issues in contemporary Quakerism which are pertinent to conflict handling. It refers readers who look for a theological or historical account to other sources. The pertinent issues include silent worship and its use in decision making, the tension between the group and the individual, and the construction of public and private domains. The views of conflict and conflict handling outside and inside the organization are contrasted.

¹⁴ This scarcity applies to research, history, personal accounts and storytelling in the transmission of culture.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on organizational culture and its relevance to this study. It focuses particularly on Argyris and Schön's (1996) theories of action and their connection with change in organizations. It links these with the use of narrative in organizational culture.

Chapter 4 reviews the literature on conflict handling, which proves impossible to separate from conflict resolution. Models of conflict handling are examined and appraised. These include the dual concern model (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977), Galtung's (1996) conflict triangle, and reflexive methods such as narrative mediation (Winslade & Monk, 2000). Some studies of conflict in religious organizations are discussed. The chapter finishes with an appraisal of recent studies of Quaker conflict.

Chapter 5 considers my research methodology. It presents the research questions which arose from the previous chapters. It introduces the qualitative, ethnographic and collaborative methods which were chosen as most appropriate to the investigation of these questions. The 'hermeneutic spiral' (Osborne, 1991) tracks repeatedly between the social context and the individual person in the use of all these processes.

Chapter 6 is an account of Stage 1 of the research project, with sections on methods and findings. It includes findings from interviews with 7 Key Informants, and observing participation in that period. An organization without overt hierarchy is described. An integral part of its purpose is in international conflict resolution and relief. In the Quaker culture moderation, silence and control are all privileged. Conflict is viewed negatively, and preserving relationship takes precedence over right outcome. The informants were surprisingly hesitant about how to handle conflict.

Chapter 7 describes Stage 2 of the project, again with sections on method and findings. It draws on interviews with 25 'grassroots' Quakers from each Quaker area in the north of England and Scotland. Frequent causes of conflict for Quakers are identified. Most of the conflicts described were 'somebody else's conflict' in which the informant was observer, manager, or mediator, not protagonist. The Quaker culture encourages the avoidance of conflict, using 'aversion'. It also inhibits expression of emotion and speech. The contributors lacked confidence in talking about and dealing with conflict and had very limited experience of processes to

achieve this. They were, however, able to identify people whose example in conflict handling they admired.

Chapter 8 refers to Stage 3 of the project, which attempted to widen the perspective to include the views of Quakers who are not part of the 'conscientious core' which emerged in Stage 2. It draws on interviews with 8 'Edge Quakers', people either coming in to, going out from or with specialist experience in the Quaker organization. The data from these interviews brought into focus an understanding of Quakers which had been assumed but not so clearly articulated by the previous informants: the task of Quakers is to 'mend the world'. The espoused theory is that Quakers live in a 'peaceable kingdom'.

Chapter 9 discusses the findings from the previous three chapters. It outlines the characteristics of Quaker conflict and its handling. It notes that it is assumed that there is a known 'proper Quaker' way or collective identity, but that little attention is given to singular identities, which must interact for the purposes of conflict resolution. Conflict handling theory is of limited value as Quakers avert their minds from conflict before they reach it. Organizational theory is more relevant in revealing the espoused theory and the theory in use. This typical pattern shows how Quakers are defended against change regarding conflict handling. Other theories of collective defensiveness to change are outlined. Identity formation using 'commonality' and 'sociality' (Kelly, 1963) is contrasted, and its relevance to Quaker conflict handling explored.

Chapter 10 reviews further areas of theory and method pertaining to the final stage of the project. It pays attention to the perspective of the individual within the collective focusing on constructing the self, the reflective practitioner, and reflexivity and insidership.

Chapter 11 describes Stage 4 of the project, with aims and methods for a workshop for 20 people. It describes the workshop, exercises and findings and how the participants agreed to engage in reflective work about Quaker conflict over the next six months.

Chapter 12 focuses on the reflective work which the workshop participants did in the follow up period. They found this an uncomfortable process. It was difficult to prioritise time and energy, and difficult to observe themselves. Even thinking about

Quaker conflict made them feel they were being bad Quakers; they did not feel free to talk about it with others or in the research process. They were constrained by confidentiality. A rule was revealed about Quaker conflict handling 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it'.

Chapter 13 gives an account of the second workshop attended by half the participants. It tells how they reflected together on their experience. Though there had been no great transformation in their conflict handling they were more aware and thoughtful. They had become more reflective practitioners in Quaker conflict.

Chapter 14 is about the use of story and Quaker conflict. The story of the research exploration is told. The theoretical focus stretched to include models of conflict and change and the narrative approach. The effects of the 'rule' are explored in terms of the narrative approach and positioning theory. A lack of stories about Quaker conflict handling within the organization is identified. The consequence of this lack is that Quakers are unable to find alternative ways to position or reposition themselves in conflict and thus find new and creative ways of resolving it. The power of the community narrative stultifies their response; they are positioned by that narrative. The question is asked whether Quakers would wish to find alternative positions in a wider range of stories about handling conflict.

A Glossary of Quaker Terms is at the end of Chapter 14, followed by References and Appendices.

Appendices

Appendix A ; Correspondence to set up interviews in Stage 1, 2 and 3

Appendix B : Interview Schedules for three sets of interviews

**Appendix C : Publicity, correspondence and papers for the workshops
and follow up period.**

Appendix D: An example of 'pondering' writing.

Appendix E: Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis: an example.

CHAPTER 2: 21st Century Quakers in the United Kingdom

This chapter acts as an introduction to Quakers in the UK in the 21st century by focusing on the issues pertinent to this research project. It does not give a general account of the history, beliefs and practices of this small religious grouping; readers who need this information will be guided to other sources. The examination of the pertinent issues will draw on the authoritative resources of the organization itself, some social science explorations into the organization and, to a limited degree, personal experience and observation. Words which have a specific meaning for Quakers will be indicated in bold the first time they are used and then found with an explanation in the Glossary.

I intend to focus on the following aspects of Quaker life: silent worship and its use in decision making; silence and expressiveness; the organization and the individual; the 'double culture', public and private accountability; and peace and conflict both outside and inside the organization.

The material drawn upon may appear to show undue reliance on the early experience of Quakers with little attention to the middle years until the late 20th century. However regrettable, or uninformative, this accords with the current perspective of UK Quakers. This is how they tell their story to each other.

General Information Resources

For an understanding of contemporary Quakers in the UK the main text must be **Quaker Faith and Practice (BYM, 1995)**, the handbook for 'learning and discipleship' approved by the **Yearly Meeting**. This should be complemented by Heron's (1995) account of recent and current experiences. A reliable account of Quaker history to 1920 is taken from Moore (2000), Braithwaite (1912;1919), Jones (1921), and Kennedy (2001). The order cited indicates the sequence of historical periods studied. Regular publications available to the public are **The Friend** (weekly), **Quaker News** (quarterly), **Friends Quarterly**, **Quaker Monthly** and **Quaker Studies** (Research Journal). A website [www. Quaker.org](http://www.Quaker.org) leads to current information. Available only by application is the **Quaker-B** online discussion group.

21st Century Quakers in Britain

In the UK in the early 21st century there are under 30,000 people who can count themselves as Quakers¹. This includes members, attenders and children not in membership². This number is declining. Over 80% of the membership has joined in adulthood (Dandelion, 1996a), most commonly taking this decision over the age of fifty (Heron, 1994). As with other religious groups there are three women for every two men (Aune, 2004). There are no restrictions on what women may do and in the early 1990s women held most of the significant national posts, both voluntary and paid. Sociologists of religion may care to consider Dandelion's (1996a) argument that Quakers are both a sect and a denomination, depending on the characteristics considered. Whatever the category chosen this is a very small grouping in the national population. Pyper (2000)³ argues it has had more influence, on both religious and secular life, than might have been expected.

Distinct forms of worship and decision-making characterise Quakers among other contemporary religious groupings. These will be described and explained in order to provide the context for further inquiry.

Worship and Decision Making

The main activity of Quakers is the regular meeting for worship. A Meeting for Worship is the equivalent of a church service but noticeably different from this. It may be held in a Meeting House or a rented room in a community centre, but the setting is likely to have the seats in a circle or square, with none visibly set aside for particular officeholders. A central table will have a copy of the Bible, *Quaker Faith and Practice* and often some flowers; otherwise there are no religious symbols or decorations. Worshippers enter and sit in silence, using their own methods to 'centre down'. It is not unusual to have a whole hour of reflective silence. More often there will be three or four spoken contributions, usually brief and personal. These may take the form of a reading, a reflection on personal or public events, a reminder of a teaching from Quaker, Christian or other faith sources or, more rarely now, a prayer. The meeting ends when two participants (Elders) shake hands; often

¹ Worldwide there are another 325, 000 Quakers, with large numbers in the USA, East Africa and Bolivia. Though administratively linked by Friends World Committee for Consultation and in good communication some of these groups have very different beliefs and practices. The unprogrammed tradition of Quakers in the UK is also found in parts of the USA, Europe and Australasia.

² See (Meeting, 2002)

³ Though this case is well evidenced, it should be noted that Pyper, as well as being an editor of the volume, is himself a Quaker.

this is repeated around the circle. After such an experience, or probably a more intense variation of it, Robert Barclay wrote in (1678)

“when I came into the silent assemblies of God’s people, I felt a secret power among them, which touched my heart; and as I gave way unto it I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up; and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this power and life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed”.

Though it would be expressed in different words in the 21st century this is often still the experience of those who become regular Quaker worshippers.

Practice and conventions in the meeting for worship

This process of meeting for worship can be adapted for use anywhere or at any time. Described as **unprogrammed**, the lack of a programme does not mean that there are no conventions or rules. The stillness and silence of the assembled group exerts considerable control over behaviour, only repeatedly defied by the very young or socially disordered person. It can be felt as a heavy and oppressive experience, for instance by Elizabeth Fry as a girl (Rose, 1980); alternatively it may be ‘an intensified pause, a vitalised hush, a creative quiet, an actual moment of mutual and reciprocal correspondence with God’ (QFP 2.16). There are unspoken guidelines about vocal contributions. Dandelion (1996a), following Davies (1988), identifies seven aspects of normative **ministry** influencing the vocal contributions in a meeting for worship. He instances a typical length of under three minutes for speaking, an unemotional tone, with no more than one contribution from any participant. Timing and content also need to be suitable to the ideal. Contributions should not be critical or disagreeing with previous offerings and may often follow the subject or theme initiated by the first speaker. These conventions are almost always followed. They are not usually made explicit to newcomers and are probably only referred to when they are broken⁴.

The meeting for worship is a public event, and the core shared experience of Quaker life. However, certain ways of talking about it are not acceptable (for instance, open

⁴ In February 2004 the Committee for Eldership and Oversight of the Yearly Meeting issued ‘The Boundaries Game’, a form of group exercise designed to make these invisible rules explicit and available for discussion. No report of this is yet available.

opposition to vocal ministry), and there is no obligation to make open the private experience which presumably occurs inside the worshipper. In some ways it remains a mystery what happens in this shared public experience.

Decision Making : Meetings for Worship for Business

The **Quaker Business Method** is the term applied to the unique (Sheeran, 1983)⁵ Quaker decision-making process. There are two basic assumptions which underlie this. Firstly there is a belief that there is something (God, for those who are comfortable with such language) which can be involved, or called into, the process and influence the outcome. Secondly it is understood that the deliberations of a group are more reliable in following such a leading than those of an individual.

One definition of a group run according to the Quaker Business Method is Brown's (1963) 'the meeting for business is in essence the meeting for worship focused on specific matters'. There may be periods of unprogrammed worship and the worshipful spirit is supposed to last throughout the meeting. However, there is an agenda and often a decision to be taken. Though based on Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sheeran's (1983) study *Beyond Majority Rule* is the most thorough and thoughtful analysis of how such meetings do or do not work, and is frequently referred to as applicable in the UK. There is no voting, so that a majority may not overrule a minority. The decision rule⁶ on which such meetings are based is finding 'the sense of the meeting'. Some extracts from Quaker Faith and Practice may convey what is meant by this.

"our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other, and are not blinkered by preconceived opinions. It is this belief that God's will can be recognised through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes our decision making process from the secular idea of consensus" QFP 3.02

⁵ Sheeran's 'Beyond Majority Rule' (1983) is so far the most serious study of this method. He maintains that it is now unique. Jesuits experimented with a similar method in the 16th century, but its use was lost within a generation.

⁶ This term is used to refer to the way in which decisions are judged to have been made according to the prevalent rules in an organization i.e. a majority of 51% or 75%, consensus, the chairman's casting vote etc.

" It is always to be recognised that coming together with a variety of temperaments or background, education and experience, we shall have differing contributions to make to any deliberation. It is no part of Friends' concern for truth that any should be expected to water down a strong conviction or be silent merely for the sake of easy agreement. Nevertheless we are called to honour our testimony that everyone is given a measure of light, and that it is in the sharing of knowledge, experience and concern that the way towards unity will be found. There is need for understanding loyalty by the meeting as whole when, after all sides of a subject have been considered a minute is accepted as representing the discernment of the meeting." QFP 3.05

" when strong division of opinion seems to be threatening the worshipful basis which should prevail in meetings for church affairs, a period of silent and prayerful waiting on the will of God may well have a calming and unifying effect" QFP 3.16

Business meetings in practice

In practice the meeting will have a topic introduced and placed before it, relatively slow and measured discussion will take place, sometimes with spontaneous or requested silent pauses, then the Clerk will offer a draft minute summarising what he or she understands to be the feeling or decision of the meeting. If this is acceptable the minute is accepted and records the finding. If it is not acceptable the process is repeated, sometimes with postponement of the decision to another occasion. Some would ask: is this decision really the will of God? Morley(1993), based on US experience but widely quoted in Britain, is convinced that something spiritual intervenes. Early Friends certainly felt this inspiration keenly. Isichei (1967) suggests later the will of God was sometimes usurped by the will of the establishment. Now some Quakers talk more of finding a decision that is pleasing to God, rather than suggesting that there is one predetermined answer which can be seen if the mist will clear.

The business meeting will have a Clerk, and possibly Assistant Clerk, who is neither convenor nor chairperson. It is their job to prepare and structure the agenda, in response to the needs of the meeting. They facilitate the meeting, encouraging the use of vocal contributions and silent worship to elicit the **sense of the meeting**.

They record this sense in a minute which is presented to the meeting for its consent, and often its lively criticism, before acceptance is reached. The Clerk is considered to be the servant of the meeting. Eccles (2000) describes the preparation necessary for good clerking and also depicts finding the sense of the meeting as like uncovering the grain of a piece of wood, rather than waiting for revelation.

A serious difficulty with the Quaker business method is the fact that most Quakers do not use it much. From small sub-committees⁷ to Yearly Meeting, it is the mortar which holds the bricks of individual meetings for worship together. But as Sheeran (1983) points out it only works for those who believe it can work and have experienced a powerful 'gathered' meeting. Business meetings are not popular, with embarrassingly small attendances. Many people cannot be bothered with the slow and apparently trivial deliberations of their small meetings. According to Redfern (1993) less than 20% of Quakers regularly attend Monthly Meeting and acquire practice in using the business method. If they attend Yearly Meeting they may not understand how it is meant to work. Heron (1995, p148) described the use of the business method as 'critical', but few if any have rushed to offer treatment since then. However, it is in these meetings for worship for business that most arguments, disagreements and conflicts will eventually be tackled. The atmosphere and conventions of Quaker business method influence all Quaker interactions when difficulty arises.

The business method is the process. What criteria are Quakers likely to use when wondering whether something is pleasing to God? The answer may be found in what are known as **Quaker testimonies**: truth, equality, simplicity, peace and care for the environment. A concise account of these is to be found in a pamphlet issued in 2003.(QPSW, 2003)

Silence and Expression

The quiet atmosphere of the Quaker Business Method affects nearly all exchanges in **Quaker time**. In her poem *Against Speech* Fanthorpe (2000), herself a Quaker, writes of Quakers 'clever like fish in a soundless dimension'. Somehow Quakers negotiate round each other with little verbal noise when in decision making mode. **Documents in Advance of Yearly Meeting 2004** quoted from Morley (1993)

⁷ See (Bradney, 2000) In this the experience of small committees within a large meeting is quoted to show how Quakers take decisions.

"If the process by which we discover the sense of the meeting is to work, we must be willing to lay aside personal needs and grievances; we must be willing to reach beyond what you or I want. When I am able to set my ideas aside, and you are able to set your ideas aside, doors are opened which allow solutions to enter on a shaft of Light.

The sense of the meeting is not discovered through competition of ideas. Outcomes should be determined neither by rhetorical skill, nor logical brilliance.

The test of reason is not the test. Ideas should be explained rather than argued. They should be heard thoughtfully and respectfully, just as in meeting for worship. Sense of the meeting requires listening rather than contending, weighing rather than reacting. It requires the kind of patience that understands that all things will work themselves out in due course."

Some personality types will find this discipline of quiet self effacement comes more naturally to them than others⁸. This is, however, what is expected of the serious Quaker in decision making and also in other discussions.

Since the 1980s the silence has extended into methods of communication known as worship sharing or creative listening. (QFP 12.21) These use a convention in which individuals speak only of their own experience, often use a 'conch' or other object to control the flow of talk, and which requires that the only response to other people's contribution is worshipful silence. These methods have been widely accepted and it is rare to hear lively discussion or debate. Most small Quaker gatherings are likely to begin with 'Shall we start with a few minutes silence?' This sets the tone, or invokes the rules, for whatever follows.

Silence is considered to be a helpful contribution to any situation, whether it be worship or consideration. It is not necessary to have an opinion or to express it to

⁸ Using the MBTI ® the Quakers who find this easy are the people with a preference for introversion. People with a preference for extraversion may find following this discipline much harder. It is likely there are proportionally less extraverts in Quaker business meetings than in the population as a whole. Harvey Gillman, whose Swarthmore Lecture in 1988 listed the minorities to which he belonged, has added 'an extravert in the Society of Friends' to the list.

play a responsible part in the group. In a business meeting concurrence is not expressed with 'yes', which might be too near an opinion, but with 'hope so' which supports but does not decide. In the past Quakers had a reputation for direct communication to the point of brusqueness (QFP 12.01), and a tradition of letting your 'yea' be 'yea' and your 'nay' be 'nay'⁹. However, directness has changed to uncertainty. Dandelion claims that the only absolute for Quakers is 'perhaps' (1998). Quakers talk about speaking the truth in love (QFP20.25) and speaking truth to power; these are familiar phrases in the discourse but newcomers repeatedly complain that they are told to consult a book rather than talk with a person, and that it is difficult to get Quakers to talk about what they believe. The communication seems to be essentially inward rather than outward. This can create an unfriendly impression to someone wishing for human contact, as shown by an article written by a newcomer in *Reaching Out* (Anon, 1996).

Organization and Individual

In all organizations there is tension between the interests of the individual and the interests of the organization. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) is no exception.

The Quaker story began with revelation to an individual. In 1647 George Fox realised that 'there is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition'. The unusual thing about this at the time was that he knew this 'experimentally'. (QFP 19.02) That means he knew it in his own experience; it was not mediated to him by another individual representing an organization, or a book authorised by an organization. Fox was on his own in direct communication with God. He then invited other people to have this experience of the **Inward Light**, rejecting all other authorities in a forceful way¹⁰. Being searched by the light which came from God in order to encounter truth was the essential part of the early Quaker experience. It was an experience for the individual. The group or worshipping community may have supported the process, but it could not do it for the individual. A contemporary version of this process is described by Ambler (2002). The individual search and

⁹ There are various jokes which make this point. For instance a tired traveller calls at a farm. The farmer enquires if he needs refreshment. The traveller politely demurs, but refreshment is not offered again and he leaves unfed. Later he complains to another traveller who tells him that he should have said yes first time as the farmers are Quakers and practice 'let your yea be yea and your nay be nay'. See also (Sessions, 1952) *Laughter in Quaker Grey* P27 'When Marmalade was New'.

¹⁰ For further understanding see (Smith, 1998), (Ingle, 1994; Nickalls, 1952).

experience is essential to any understanding of Quaker spirituality, but its relationship with the collective insight has been and remains a source of tension.

Fox was not the only early Quaker to claim insight, and he disputed acrimoniously with other leaders, such as Naylor. It was to counteract this tendency for individuals to follow their own illumination that Fox began to strengthen the budding structure of the organization (Ingle, 1994; Moore, 2000). Fox rebelled against the established authorities, but did not appreciate rebellion against his own position.

"He was not particularly introspective and left almost no indications that he appreciated the irony of his later attempts to impose authoritative definitions upon a religious community committed, by his own stated principles, to individual experience". (Ingle, 1994. P 8.)

This lack of recognition of a tension between the collective and the individual is still present among contemporary Quakers.

Authority in the Structure

The structure of the organization was formed by grouping the local meetings together in clusters (**Monthly Meetings**) and these into larger clusters (**Quarterly Meetings**). Yearly Meeting eventually claimed authority over these arrangements, though even as it developed in the mid 1660s there were complaints about the hierarchy and the erosion of local autonomy. This structure is still recognisable after 350 years. It uses, without doubts, the Quaker Business Method from local to national levels. Despite aversion to hierarchy, particularly at the beginning and the end of the 350 years, authority is vested in this structure. In 2005 the RECAST consultation¹¹ may recommend some small changes to Britain Yearly Meeting.

However, not all Quakers understand the structure in the same way. The Yearly Meeting, which may now be attended by any member, of right, and attenders by permission, takes decisions which affect all members and meetings. However, individuals vary in their response. Some will endeavour to conform; others will query the way in which the decision was taken; others will quietly go their own (different) way. This relationship to an authoritative corporate structure was explored by

¹¹ RECAST stands for the working group on REpresentation, Communication, and Accountability in our SStructures. After consultation it will bring forward proposals for reform in these areas to Yearly Meeting 2005.

Dandelion (1996b). He concluded that only a few Quakers are corporate minded, some are congregational and others are individualist. The corporatists are willing to hold responsibility in the wider group, therefore they run it and perpetuate its forms. Others see little point to anything further than their local horizon and are indifferent to a corporate view. Misled by noncredal protestations they may even hold firmly to the view that each Quaker can believe and do what she likes. The tension between organization and individual is alive and well for some, but not relevant to others.

Control of the individual

In the middle of the 350 year period the organization became much more conformist across all aspects of life, and was active in excluding those who did not conform. After the exciting and turbulent first 20 years, the main concern became to preserve what had been achieved rather than to innovate. It drew apart from the rest of the population

“concerned not so much to transform the world as to avoid contamination by it” (Punshon, 1984)¹²

The Elders in the Monthly Meetings began to issue guidance and epistles, some of which were very prescriptive. Modern Friends tend to refer only to the postscript of the 1656 epistle from Balby elders (QFP 1.01) “these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by ... for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life” omitting to remember the several pages of detailed advice which is the main content of the epistle. (Moore, 2000a). Over the next hundred years the Society became very inward looking and began to shrink in numbers; disownment was possible for financial failure, or for marrying according to Church procedures. During this period a whole new religious vocabulary developed, plain speech and plain dress were emphasised and the custom of recording ministers began. These ‘recorded ministers’ carried almost all the responsibility for vocal contributions in meeting for worship, with a result that meetings became very much quieter. Quakers began to live in a social and psychological enclave with hostility to the arts and other pleasurable diversions. Unable to enter Universities or the professions, because of their reluctance to take oaths, many Quakers were involved in trade, textiles, groceries, iron founding, banking (Roberts, 2004). This was the predominant social class within the group, perpetuated by intermarriage.

¹² Cited without page number in *Quakers in Britain* (Heron, 1995) p7.

The 'hedge', the term used to describe the customs and regulations which separated Quakers from their neighbours, and reduced their numbers to 13,000, was challenged by John Stephenson Rowntree's prize winning essay in 1859¹³. This started a swift process of change. In 1895 the 'Manchester Conference' opened the windows to new developments in science and theology, and began more interaction with the world. Gradually supervision of the individual's life style became less desirable and less possible. Quakers' unpopular stance in two world wars held the members together in the first half of the twentieth century. Many who had had to find and defend their own conscience in wartime increasingly used an individualist perspective, sometimes unwisely according to Wilson (1949). However, a weakening of authority and deference in society as a whole through the 1960s and 1970s also had its effect. A more open consultative democratic atmosphere in public life was echoed in Quakerism. In a Quaker educational context, (albeit in the USA) Lacey (1982) complained of an almost ludicrous rejection of past accumulated experience.

The tension between corporate guidance and individualism is thoroughly explored by Heathfield (1994) who comes to the conclusion that the contemporary Society of Friends is rather like Dr Dolittle's "push me pull you".

"It was rather like a horse but with a head at both ends. At times it wanted to go in two directions at once, and as a result it went nowhere in particular for much of the time. It was not destined to be a very successful species, though it was a very endearing creature." P110

'Double Culture', Public and Private

Before the dismantling of the Quaker hedge family, education and work were often all in Quaker contexts. For the 21st century Quaker this is not the case. This is the setting in which Dandelion makes his analysis of the Quaker 'double culture' (1996a). He suggests there is one culture which predominates when people are in 'Quaker time', and another which predominates when they are not. 'Quaker time' is taken to mean the time spent as a Quaker with other Quakers.

¹³ Rowntree J.S.(1859) *Quakerism Past and Present : an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decline in Great Britain and Ireland*. Smith and Elder, London

In the 'double culture' Dandelion distinguishes between the behavioural creed which governs activity in 'Quaker time' in the public domain and the liberal belief culture which governs behaviour in non-Quaker time, within the private domain. He argues that religious or spiritual belief held by an individual is allowed to be idiosyncratic (peculiar to a person) but that when Quakers are together in 'Quaker time' their behaviour is governed by a strict code or even creed. This (unspoken) creed focuses on the way Quakers do things as a group, the form of their corporate worship, and in particular their corporate worship for business. Here conformity is required and the mood is conservative. The liberal belief culture governs non-Quaker time. It does not require conformity either in personal behaviour or in belief content.

However, the two cultures are not necessarily equally involving for all participants in meetings. Dandelion points out that the current **Book of Discipline, Quaker Faith and Practice** (which he sees as encapsulating the authoritative behavioural code) was revised, compiled by people who thought this worth doing. There are others, probably the majority, who are content with experience in their local meeting, see no need for a wider group formulation, and are not interested in conforming to it (Dandelion, 1996b). No answer is supplied about how these people see themselves as part of the organization. If they are not interested in how people should behave together, what is it that gives them a sense of identity?

Diversity of belief is now a source of pride. It is the favoured word to describe the fact that Quakers have beliefs, no beliefs (Rush, 2002)¹⁴ and incompatible beliefs. A recently deceased much respected Friend (Wilson, 1998) described herself as a 'Godless Unitarian Quaker Buddhist' which was regarded as a pleasing idiosyncrasy. Dandelion's (1996) analysis of the theology of Quakers illustrates this stitching together of apparently incompatible labels. He found 22% of Quakers were not sure whether they believe in God (much the same as the general population, but higher than other religious groups) and those who did claim to believe in God defined it in varying personal interpretations. He discovered people (albeit only a few) who considered themselves atheist, agnostic, pagan, Hindu and Buddhist Quakers. Only half of his sample claim that Jesus is an important part of their spiritual lives. Both

¹⁴ Rush's 2002 study is titled 'They too are Quakers: A Survey of 199 Non-Theist Friends'.

these trends away from conventional Christian belief increase in the younger end of his sample. It is argued that the theological position is best described as post-Christian. A special edition of Friends Quarterly in 2003 contains 19 different responses about "What Jesus means to me", varying from 'very little' to a meditation on the stations of the cross.

Diversity in sexuality is also acceptable to many Quakers. It is common for meetings to contain people of all sexual orientations, and possible to celebrate relationships within these with '**meetings for commitment**'. **Meeting for Sufferings** has recorded supportive views on legislation to make life easier for transsexual individuals ¹⁵ However, details of individual lives are not enquired into, and remain confidential unless the individual 'comes out'. Where once this kind of information was regarded as the property of the group, and the group would not hesitate to reprove or disown (Marietta, 1984), it is now within the individual's power to keep it 'off stage'.

Richard Foster, an American Quaker, wrote about '*Sex, Money and Power*', and his book was well received in some other denominations. Among UK Quakers sex may have made it to the public domain in some respects, there are two other issues which are difficult in practice: money and power. Despite efforts to get the use of money onto the corporate agenda (Levin, 2000) it is certainly not discussed in any personal way in the local meeting. Gone are the days when the Monthly Meeting underwrote a failing business or disowned the founder when it went bankrupt (Cookson, 2004) Power is rarely discussed, but treated as something to be avoided.

The change from public to private accountability is shown in the use of the **Advices and Queries**. From 1682 Quakers required their meetings to answer 'Queries', firstly to elicit factual information and later to ensure consistency of practice (QFP 1.04) The Queries were later joined by Advices and combined together. After many revisions, these persist until this day. Originally the meeting was required to answer as a group, and individuals were in effect accountable for their lifestyle. Now the paragraphs are used as prompts for internal reflection. They are the quickest way to get an understanding of how Quakers aspire to be, but personal accountability is in private.

¹⁵ See The Friend, 7.11.2003 p6

Peace and Conflict, Outside and Inside

Peace - Looking outwards

From early days Quakers have believed that they are led to express their spiritual experience in involvement in the world. The corporate belief has been that they are led to do this according to certain principles, which they call testimonies. They have tried to give witness to truth, equality, simplicity and peace¹⁶. Of these the most commonly referred to, and the most relevant to this study, is the peace testimony. It merits a whole chapter (Chapter 24) in the 1995 *Quaker Faith and Practice* where the other testimonies are squashed into other chapters together under general subheadings. It has been part of Quaker witness since the mid seventeenth century. However, in Chapter 24 in *Quaker Faith and Practice* only nine out of sixty extracts come from before the twentieth century, which suggests that the experience of the twentieth century is now seen as most relevant. Now when joining the society each individual is likely be asked their view of the peace testimony. This marks it out as part of the group witness, even if they are not certain of their own future behaviour.

A frequent misunderstanding is often heard about the text of a letter written in 1660 by George Fox, which includes the words 'and this is our testimony to the world'. This is often referred to as 'the Quaker Peace Testimony' and quoted as the basis for pacifism. It is neither of these things, but was written for a specific purpose in a specific historical context. In 1660 King Charles II was very fearful of revolution. Many religious groups appeared a threat to him and were being persecuted. Quakers sent him a declaration to distinguish themselves from those suspected of plotting to overthrow the established authorities (QFP 24.04). Among other famous phrases it said " the spirit of Christ which leads us into all Truth will never lead us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world " The point to be made was that the Quakers did not intend to get involved in the militarised politics of that time. However, George Fox had often preached to soldiers in the Commonwealth armies and found them a very receptive audience, so many early Quakers were or had been soldiers (Ingle, 1994). Fox himself was brutally outspoken at times, but physically non violent. The strand of creative non-violence has been woven into the Quaker fabric from this time. However, this has sometimes resulted in rather devious methods to remain faithful to

¹⁶ The 2003 pamphlet (QPSW, 2003) includes care for the environment as a fifth area of testimony.

the vision, such as with Quaker sea captains who avoided using violence themselves but allowed others to threaten it (Hartshome, 2000). It rarely brought the whole group into contrast with the wider ethos of militarism. According to Phillips (1989) by the end of the 19th century Quakers were modestly basking in the praise of other denominations for their peace witness, but had not been challenged to put this into practice

The Boer War and the First World War brought home to Quakers the consequences of their peace witness in a way that had not happened before (Phillips, 1989). Public opposition to Quaker peace witness was visible and uncomfortable in the Boer War, but conscription was inescapable in 1916 (Kennedy, 2001). Responses were mixed but about a third of eligible Quaker men chose conscientious objection. This resulted in public opprobrium and many personal difficulties (Rubinstein, 2002). The officials of the Yearly Meeting itself were imprisoned for refusing to submit to censorship. Kennedy (ibid) instances the case of Wilfrid Littleboy who took the extreme absolutist view and was imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs, but who later became Clerk of London Yearly Meeting during the second world war. Among the corporate activities of Quakers absolute pacifism was highly respected. By the time of the second world war conscientious objection was slightly less vilified and organizations such as the Friends Relief Service and Friends Ambulance Unit provided opportunities for service and a response to the needs of war torn Europe (Bush, 1998; Smith, L. 1998). Gandhi's non-violent philosophy for India also attracted much support from Quakers (Sykes, 1997).

With the ending of conscription tribunals in 1958 Quakers found less need to define their individual position. The popular songs of the 1960s¹⁷ merged Quaker witness into 'flower power' for newcomers and the personal stand blurred into cultural trends. For some the emphasis shifted from pacifism, the definition of the individual stance, to Ceadel's 'pacifism' (2000) the constructive activities towards creating institutions of peace and behind-the-scenes work with international organizations. Wood (1962) and Bailey (1993) document this work.

Though conscription no longer existed, the use of taxation for armaments was a live issue and a few Quakers refused or avoided taxation on these grounds. In 1982 it was decided that Meeting for Sufferings, the employing body of Quaker paid staff

¹⁷ 'Give Peace a Chance' and 'Where Have all the Flowers Gone' were used to evoke this period in a pageant to celebrate the opening of a refurbished meeting house at Worcester in 1980.

could test the law by withholding a proportion of the PAYE tax of those employees who wished it (QFP 24.19). This continued until 1985 when it was accepted that this was against the law. Some vestiges of this issue still remain.

Quakers have taken part in peaceful anti-war and anti-nuclear demonstrations. The general surge of feminism in the 1980s was joined by Quaker women's support for the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp¹⁸. At the same time the Quaker Peace Action Caravan was touring the country using street theatre to make both the public and Quakers think about the causes of violence, both international and personal. However, there has been much controversy (to the point of resignation) about the extent and definition of non-violent action and what part Quakers should play in this as individuals and as a training body. Kline (2002) recounts difficulties and decision making on this issue.

While the fieldwork for this study has been taking place the UK and the USA have made war on Iraq. This provoked a rash of protest activity among Quakers, though for the first time they found they were not only a small minority in protesting against war. A 'Special Souvenir Issue' of *The Friend* on Feb 28 2003 recorded details of some of this activity.

The Swarthmore Lecture of 2004 is clear that vigils of protest are not enough. Fisher (2004) exhorts Quakers to become more assertive, professional and strategic in their interventions to help build peace in a fragmenting world. Speaking as a professional who feels called to this task he finds Quakers detached and disunited when there is innovatory work to be done. He also finds them detached from their spiritual support, which he himself finds outside the Society. He acknowledges that Quakers often avoid conflict, but asks them to consider it as an ally in the struggle for a compassionate human society.

Peace and conflict are two terms often used by Quakers. Peace is nearly always used with a good connotation, and its consideration is part of collective Quaker witness. Conflict usually has a bad connotation and if present among Quakers is treated as any other personal failing. Like liberal theology and variable sexuality, taking part in conflict is a private indulgence but is usually enacted in the setting of the whole meeting. Fisher (2004) differentiates between violence and conflict.

¹⁸ Also in 1986 came (1986), the Swarthmore Lecture from women's perspective.

Violence is the opposite of peace; it can arise out of conflict; it is bad. Conflict is neither the opposite of peace nor inherently violent. It can be good. It can be energising and give opportunity for public creativeness.

Conflict: inside the organization

How have Quakers experienced conflict within their organization? In the early years life was turbulent. Fox and his colleagues did not hesitate to verbally lambast the established church and the civil authorities. Inside the movement there were several major conflicts (Ch 4. p62) Less dramatic problems also arose. In 1699 Bristol Friends were minuting reproof to those Friends who endangered others by the careless parking of their coaches¹⁹. When Penn tried to create a Quaker state he expected there to be conflicts and set up a template guidance how to deal with these based on Matthew 18 (Cronk, 1991; Hartshorne, 1993)²⁰. This was used for some time among American Quakers but is hardly remembered now in Britain Yearly Meeting.

As Quakers settled into their quieter period reproof by the group became common. It was expected that the Inner Light would point everyone in the same direction, and there was little doubt that this was the way of the elders of the meeting. 'Disorderly walking', which usually meant succumbing to the pressures of ordinary life (being drunk or running out of money), resulted in disownment. This meant that people could continue as part of the worshipping community, but could not hold responsibility or share in decision making. Its purpose was to make it clear to the rest of the world what Quaker standards were.

From early days it has been recommended that Quakers should not go to law against each other and a method of setting up local arbitration was created. The 1931 edition of the Book of Discipline contains a whole (small) chapter on how this arbitration should be conducted. This has now disappeared and there are a couple of rather elliptical sentences on this topic (QFP 20.72.&73) Some General Meetings

¹⁹ Two pages of extracts from a Bristol Minute Book of the late seventeenth century were given to me early in the project. They were not referenced, and despite enquiring I have been unable to check their origin.

²⁰ William Penn's template followed Matthew 18 vv 15-20. This suggests four stages 1) speaking directly to the person who has offended you 2) invoking the help of a few trusted members of the church 3) invoking the help of the whole church 4) if all this fails, continuing to live with your opponent as a 'gentile and a tax gatherer', which can be interpreted as sitting down to eat with them, just living with the fact of disagreement.

The Quaker version of this is in Hartshorne (1993). The contemporary Mennonite version is in (Lederach, 1999) Chapter 9.

and Monthly Meetings have had standing committees which could act as arbitrators, or counsellors. Most of these have disappeared in the last ten years, although there is a little new growth (Ch 7 p 118). There is also a procedure by which grievances, particularly about membership, can be referred to Meeting for Sufferings for assistance, usually the appointment of a few Friends to investigate and advise. Bringing in an outside mediator, (not from within the disputing group) is usually the first recommendation which springs to mind when Quakers discover a conflict.

The new edition of the Book of Discipline in 1995 included 'Clearness Meetings' to assist individuals in making decisions about their life choices or sometimes to resolve conflicts²¹. These were not new ideas but in fact dated from the time when it was accepted that the individual's private life was the business of the community. Another innovation from the past, as yet very little used in BYM, is the 'threshing meeting' in which a topic and all the views about it are aired at length, so that some points rise up as nourishing and others sink into the chaff, but where no decisions are taken on that occasion.

There are only four extracts under the heading of 'Conflicts within the Meeting' in Quaker Faith and Practice (10.21-24). There are nine more under the subheading Conflict in Chapter 20 on Living Faithfully Today and a few references in the Peace Testimony chapter. The most succinct of these dates from 1833

"It is advised that, in all cases of controversy and difference, the persons concerned therein either speedily compose the difference between themselves or make choice of some faithful, concerned, impartial Friends to determine the same; and that all Friends take heed of being parties with one or another"(QFP 20.72)

This extract is still applicable but it is so sparse that it gives no idea how these things may be done. 150 years later Leavitt (QFP 20.71) outlines some necessary skills. When conflict arises the first thing to do is to name it, or to recognise and acknowledge it; secondly to listen to the feelings and needs behind the words of the conflict; thirdly, 'let go' of the will, the already determined personal solution, and eventually the conflict itself. This is not easy or spontaneous. Leavitt has found it

²¹ QFP 10.21 suggests clearness meetings may be used to resolve conflict. Marion McNaughton, teaching about this for Woodbrooke, suggests this method is not likely to be helpful in conflict resolution.

requires rootedness in a personal practice of waiting on God. It also requires practice in everyday life.

However, though there is a prescription for Quakers, it appears that they rarely take their medicine. Fitch in 1980 (QFP 10.22) and Fisher in 2004 agree that Quakers are not very good at handling their own conflict. This is in contrast with the many public pronouncements about how exemplary Quakers are in working with community and international problems. Quakers have begun to be aware of this and to give attention to their internal conflicts. In the year 2000 there was: the first Woodbrooke course on Conflict in Meetings; the publication by the Committee on Eldership and Oversight of a booklet by the same name; the first Yearly Meeting session on this subject; a day of Quaker Life Representative Council given to the subject. Some strands of this consideration are still running, but the interest of 2000 has died down.

The view offered to the public is of Quakers who have a contribution to make in matters of violent conflict and peace, and indeed this is often claimed as part of the organization's *raison d'être*. The view seen in private is people who cannot cope well with their own disagreements and whose organization offers them little help with this. The organization is proud of and known for its integrity, but this difference between the attitude to conflict outside and inside the organization brings this integrity into question. This is a matter of personal discomfort to me, but also a puzzling question for those interested in social ethics.

CHAPTER 3: Understanding Organizational Culture

In this chapter I intend to examine: the nature of organization and power within it; the identification of organizational culture; 'theories of action' and change in organizations; and the use of narrative and story in organizations. I present a selective overview of the literature rather than an exhaustive review. The selected theory is developed in more depth later in the thesis, woven into the consideration of the data.

Quakerism: an Organization?

I anticipate objection to the title of this section. Some Quakers will object to 'Quakerism' claiming that it suggests a structural unity of belief and practice which should not exist. Others will object to 'organization', preferring the softer 'movement', 'community' or even 'church' or 'religious society'. I have deliberately chosen the perspective implicit in 'organization'. It encourages a different framework of analysis and expectation from those commonly used when considering the Religious Society of Friends.

The term 'organization' is derived from the greek *organon*, meaning tool or instrument; it suggests that it is to be used to some purpose; it is not an end in itself. It raises the question 'What is the Quaker purpose?' It suggests that answers may be found in comparisons with large and complex human groupings based in the present, with a variation in form that is characteristic of post modernity.

Three conditions are suggested to differentiate between a rabble-like assembly and an organization (Argyris & Schön, 1996) To qualify as an organization the individual members of the rabble must

- I. Devise agreed upon procedures for making decisions in the name of the collectivity
- II. Delegate to individuals the authority to act for the collectivity
- III. Set boundaries between the collectivity and the rest of the world.

Quakers, therefore, have been an organization since before 1670. Three hundred year old terminology indicating delegation of authority to specified individuals, such as Six Weeks Meeting and Meeting for Sufferings, is still used (QFP 7.01).

The Formation and Continuation of Organizations

It is possible to create an organization for a specific purpose, such as a project team, which was not in existence yesterday and may not be in existence next month. However, more often large organizations evolve through slow processes. The participants may be only dimly aware of these. (See the example of the development of the Nike organization Hurst, 1995).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) proposed a way in which the social reality of organization is constructed. It explains how social institutions come to be perceived as having independent existence and how this exerts influence on individuals. This is essentially a shared social process, with sequential stages; the participants may move between the stages separately and at different speeds, but the sequence is the same. Berger and Luckmann suggest a continual dialectical process between 'moments' of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. 'Externalization' is the physical and mental creativity going out from individuals to conceptualize and shape the shared world. 'Objectivation' is when products of externalization appear to gain a reality of their own independent of their creators, which can then confront the creators. 'Internalization' is the process by which the structures and values of this outside world become an influential part of the inner life of the individual. In the following quotation 'organization' might well be substituted for 'society'.

"It is through externalization that society is a human product. It is through objectivation that society becomes a reality sui generis. It is through internalization that man becomes a product of society."

Berger (1969) P4

This model of process was originally based on examples of societies in which one culture, or one religion, prevailed. In later work Berger, cited in Woodhead et al (2001) addressed the post modern world in which religious groupings are no longer monolithic but each sub-group must compete for 'plausibility' in legitimating its rules. He suggests this legitimation is strengthened by continuing conversation with others in the subgroup. This social interaction gives reality to the particular interpretations of the sub-group. Berger asks how the future continuation of institutionalised order

can be best ensured, and concludes it is necessary to hide its constructed character as much as possible, in order to retain its strength.

This analysis is certainly applicable to the Society of Friends. It is interesting to note its relevance to the central authoritative text *Quaker Faith and Practice* including *Advices and Queries*. This is now treated with almost canonical reverence or rejected because it imposes too much authority. However, this text was publicly deconstructed and reconstructed over the period of eight years before 1995. At least 20 of the group which prepared the work for this process are still alive, and some say their views have changed¹. Many Quakers prefer to act as if they are unaware of the book's constructed character.

Power in organizations

Power is inherent in the concept of organization. The pertinent questions are: what is it understood to be?; how is it distributed and used?. The most common understanding is as hierarchical power in which one group or person has power over others who have less or none, and can make them do things; this is 'power over' or 'power to' (Lukes, 1974) This may be seen as dominating power or as legitimate authority. Organization theorists have frequently accepted this arrangement without querying it; any resistance to the implementation of the structure has been interpreted as at worst illegal or at best a nuisance. Views of society such as Marxism rest on the opposite interpretation that resistance to ill-distributed power is necessary. Power can also be seen as distributed throughout an organization in different degrees, like an overlaying web. Power may be in the status quo in the system vested in 'no decision' (Lukes, *ibid*).

Hardy and Clegg (1999) describe these viewpoints as reflected in the meta-views of the academic community, and introduce another

"power had been characterised in a number of ways but each required one to 'take sides'. For the functionalists, their side was that of the managers: resistance to their power was illegitimate. For the critical theorists, resistance was a good thing: it was an opportunity for creative human agency, particularly that associated with subjugated identities such as workers, women, ethnic minorities, to reassert itself against

¹ Personal communication in 2004 with Alison Leonard, former member of the Book of Discipline Revision Committee.

domination. An implicit morality was in play in both perspectives, and each was an affront to the other. Foucault's views and those directly influenced by him were different. Power does not involve taking sides, identifying who has more or less of it, as much as seeking to describe its strategic role – how it is used to translate people into characters who articulate an organizational morality play.”(p379)

In the earlier concepts of power the script of the morality play is written by those holding power; in the alternative conception the play is improvised as it is enacted.

“ Power is not an object to be used in the construction of identity; power is identity. We do not encounter power as such; we encounter practices which are discursively and politically enacted. We live in and through these practices, and people become the identities whose identities are being formed. Power, says Dyrberg, is not a game to be played; it is the nature of the game itself.” (McNiff, 2000)

In his exploration into how to establish power relations which are compatible with democratic values Dyrberg (1997) conceives of power as a circular structure, ubiquitous and affecting the formation of all identity. The negotiation of personal and collective identity is the game of power itself.

However, Quakers are not very interested in games, which perhaps parallels their denial of interest in power. They frequently object to the notions of hierarchy and top down power, to the extent that “ Power is not in our vocabulary”². A favourite phrase commends ‘speaking truth to power’ but this is interpreted as worldly power being held by someone else, who is usually wrong. Walter Wink (1998) an American theologian, is commended reading among Quakers; he gives a negative cast to the exercise of power, saying that Christians should maintain domination free relationships in a discipleship of equals. In the twenty first century Quakers often do not recognise authority or rules as a matter of principle ³. This tendency is so

² Heard at a gathering of seasoned Quakers 1995. See personal communication.S/W

³ See the letter in The Friend, 19 March 2004, p5, about complying with Criminal Records Bureau Procedures regarding working with children, which are described as a bee in the government's bonnet. The writer says ‘ the idea that our own moral judgement on anything at all should defer to that of Tony Blair, David Blunkett (etc) is laughable’.

marked that it is necessary for the Advices and Queries (Paragraph 35⁴) to remind members that they should not break or ignore the law without serious forethought. Quakers may wish to pretend to themselves that there is no power game and therefore there are no rules for the game. This is a naive view, or an uneducated one.

Leadership, both formal leadership, designated power, and personal charisma (personal power) is also unpopular among contemporary Quakers. The concept of *Servant Leadership* (Greenleaf, 1977) has been proposed as acceptable to Quakers, though it is really not novel, and rests on the supposition that most leadership has no benefits. Consider the following description of secular leadership, drawn from early management theory

"The leader guides the group and at the same time is guided by the group, is always part of the group. No one can truly lead except from within...the leader must interpret our experience to us, must see all the different points of view which underlie our daily activities....He must give form to things vague, things latent, to mere tendencies. He must be able to lead us to wise decisions, not to impose his own wise decisions upon us. We need leaders, not masters or drivers.....The skilful leader then does not rely on personal force; he controls his group not by dominating but by expressing it. He stimulates what is best in us; he unifies and concentrates what we feel only gropingly and scatteringly, but he never gets away from the current of which we and he are both an integral part"
(Mary Parker Follett 1868 -1933 cited in Hurst (1995))

Apart from the male language this might almost be a job description for the role of a 'weighty Friend'. This manager leader is also a servant to his group.

Some aspects of power in organization are not fully explored in this study, but should be mentioned at least to note their absence. Firstly there is the power exerted by the group over the individual (Kreitner, 1999). The mere fact of participating in a group influences the perceptions of the individual (Asch, 1951; Plous, 1993) governs behaviour (Clarkson, 1995) and the way decisions are made (Janis, 1982). Secondly

⁴ Advices and Queries 35 'If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for the prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.'

there are those aspects of power in organization particularly relevant to subjugated identities, power related to gender and ethnicity. Gender in organization usually reflects the power distribution in the wider society and is often queried by feminist writers (Calas & Smircich, 1999). Quakers, however, have a different arrangement of gender power. Some aspects reflect the distribution in the wider society, others do not. Purely from personal observation Quaker women are more likely to be assertive compared with a female stereotype than Quaker men compared with a male stereotype. This unusual balance of gender roles may have created an unusual type of organization that does not fit the supposed typification of masculine or feminine organizations (Brown, 1998). It may also have produced an organization which accommodates the unusual. Diversity of sexual orientation is acceptable but this is not to say that there are no sexual power politics (Hearn et al, 1990) among Quakers. Diversity of ethnicity is only just beginning to emerge into public view. These matters are all important in organizational studies but speculative among Quakers. They are opportunities for new inquiry and are not explored in this work.

Organizational Culture

The study of organizational culture has been highly contentious, provoking Martin and Frost (1999) to write of *The Organizational Culture War Games*. After quantitative positivist approaches to organization, in which the voice of the organization member was never heard (Pugh, 1963), the focus has moved back to the Weberian idea of meaningful understanding. The concept of organizational culture necessarily includes understanding the view from the inside of the organization. However, there is always interaction between the outside world and the inside of the organization. Changes in the voices heard in society generally, such as those of women, have been paralleled in the study of organizational culture (Calas & Smircich, 1999).

Approaches to the analysis of organizational culture are many and varied. For instance, Brown (1998) suggests organizational culture is determined by three things: the societal culture in which the organization is situated; the vision and style of the founder or leader; the type of business or purpose. Each item would reveal something interesting about Quaker organizational culture. But an alternative approach would follow Martin (1999) and use: an integration view to perceive common organization-wide elements; a differentiation view to examine conflicting subcultures; and a fragmentation view to identify ambiguity and flux. Again this

would reveal interesting material. However, Smircich & Calas (1987) argued earlier that the task is to query and deconstruct everything, even the ambiguity and flux, and resist the integrative view. All these views suggest that it is in the gaps, changes and transitions that most interest and illumination may be found. In any organization concerns which are not supported collectively may be significant; they may be owned by some fragment of the organization, or be rejected as out of date. There is obviously a task to explore dissonances and discrepancies in perceptions in an organization.

Whatever the theoretical approach to understanding organization there is some agreement about the sort of information which reveals an organizational culture. The culture contains a commonly shared meaning which unites individuals in and with the culture. Organizations have distinct patterns of belief, both the formal authoritative resources (Giddens, 1984) of public purposes and rules, and the informal culture which governs daily life. The informal culture is revealed in rituals, stories, jokes and myths particular to the organization (Brown 1998) and known to most of its members. The culture both formal and informal is transmitted in a socialization process. New entrants will be subjected to formal and informal social learning by their superiors and peers; they will be accepted, or not, and confirmed or rejected as a member of the group; if accepted they will take on the role of teaching a version of the culture themselves. Evidence of all these ways of sharing meaning can be found among Quakers as indication of a distinct culture. The question of the relative influence of the informal socialization in balance with the authoritative resources will be explored throughout this study.

The organization culture provides a context for the individual; the individual cannot function socially without connections with the context. Part of the context is always the authoritative resources. Giddens (1984) claims that these non-material 'authoritative' resources are derived from the way that humans interact with each other, often to make patterns of domination or control. They express the way that authority is distributed within the organization. Blackler (1995) categorises this same information (books, manuals, codes of practice, electronic data) as encoded knowledge, in his outline of five different kinds of knowledge in organization. The other four kinds of knowledge move further and further away from the sometimes tangibly identifiable items of encoded knowledge through the more insubstantial images of embedded, encultured, embodied and embrained knowledge.

If looking for the guiding information for Quakers in the UK, account must be taken of the surrounding non-religious social context and culture, and of the surrounding religious context created by related religious organizations. Within the organization itself, attention must be given both to such authoritative documents as Quaker Faith and Practice and the Advices and Queries. Described within these documents, although there is no written constitution, is the structure of interlinking decision making meetings which constrains individual power. However, this knowledge is not unchanging within a boundary, and Blackler's (1995) model of knowing as mediated, situated, provisional, pragmatic and contested could be usefully applied to aid understanding about what is happening in the organization at any given time.

Background, 'habitus', and recipe knowledge

In contrast to the authoritative resources there are less formal ways of being guided through organizational life. There are many actions in everyday life which people carry out without reflection or conscious intention, and where guidance is not formally recorded. Searle (1995) suggests that many of these are produced by interaction between the individual and what he calls 'the background'. Based in philosophy and linguistics he argues that the meaning of any sentence, and the experience underlying it, can only be understood between two people by means of a shared background of 'capacities, dispositions and knowhow' which are not themselves contained in the sentence. For instance (P3) he gives an example of the purchase of a beer in a restaurant; to understand this requires extensive experience of European culture which many people will have assimilated but be unaware of, and the whole scene rests on a 'huge, invisible ontology' of social relationships rather than information drawn from the physical sciences. These shared understandings form the 'background' against which we interpret our own experience without conscious effort. For different purposes it may be global, national, organizational or even relationship based.

This framework of expectations and understandings is called 'habitus' by Bourdieu (1977). For him habitus contains the principles which produce and reproduce the 'practices' of a particular social grouping, often a social class. These are the ways in which the group imposes ways of seeing favourable to their own interests. Collins' (2002) depiction of the 'Quaker habitus' has less political edge, but paints a useful picture of how Quakers expect each other to behave in small things.

Blackler (1995) is talking about much the same thing when he describes 'embodied knowledge' or 'knowledge how', which depends on sensory information obtained as people interact and do things together in specific contexts. The contextual cultural framework is particularly important here as the knowledge is often related to how to go about things in a particular setting.

The notion of 'recipe knowledge' was introduced by Schutz (1974). He described how people absorb knowledge from their background or habitus, so that it becomes completely 'self evident' that they 'can do' this or that. Some examples he gives now appear dated or sexist (smoking, chopping wood, shaving) but others (playing the piano, speaking a foreign language) show the complexity which can become automatic. One aspect of this automated knowledge is described as recipe knowledge; most people know 'how to' cook potatoes or use public transport, without fresh instruction or frequent reminders. The recipe for this is so well known it is not summoned up each time, but a version could be repeated to a visiting tourist if required. The recipe knowledge tells one how to achieve a certain aim in a particular social context, for instance how to be a 'good Quaker'.

Espoused theory and theory in use

Recipe knowledge may be drawn both from formal and informal resources in an organization. Argyris and Schön (1996) propose an analysis of how organizations function which includes both the formal publicly acknowledged resources and the informal, possibly unacknowledged, resources. These two separate sets of prompts to action are firstly espoused theories and secondly theories in use. Espoused theories are the values on which people believe their behaviour is based, to which the organization has made a public commitment. Theories in use are the notional maps which guide action in the organization on a day to day basis. These may differ from the espoused theories but people in the organization may not be aware of this. They may also not be aware of the messages in theories in use guiding their action. Theories in use can often only be discovered by inference from behaviour, including speech. What people actually do reveals the theory in use, not what they say they do or should do. This pattern is common in nearly all organizations, but if the analysis stopped there it would present a depressing view of unaware stagnation. However there is a second part to the analysis which offers an approach to change and development.

Stability, change and conflict in organizations.

Learning and Change

Conflict and change in organizations are often closely related, one involves the other (Ch 4,p 60) Among the welter of stories of change, two types have been identified: first order change where changes occur within the existing norms of a system and second order change where the values of the system itself are changed (Watzlawick et al, 1974; Hoffman,1986). Building on this foundation Argyris (1993) proposed the notion of double loop learning which enables second order change to take place. Double loop learning is the process by which an organization, or part of it, queries not only routine effectiveness (the first loop which queries the theories in use) but the assumptions and values which underlie the whole structure and its purposes (the second loop which queries the espoused theories). The relationship between the two sets of theories is also questioned. The first or single loop of inquiry seeks a solution to an identified problem, the second or double loop of distanced reflection seeks to inquire about the system in which the problem lies. Argyris and Schön identify two styles of implementing action, derived from theories in use, when an organization confronts a problem; Model 1 inhibits double loop learning, Model 2 facilitates it.

Model 1 includes the wish to win and control, suppressing negative feelings and inquiry, defensiveness and face saving. In Argyris' (1993) wide ranging research it is found that theories in use are overwhelmingly operationalised using Model 1. Whatever the content of the espoused theories about openness and searching enquiry these values are usually not brought into play in defending the theory in use. Model 2 implements values about access to information, sharing control and participation, surfacing conflicting views and encouraging public testing (Anderson, 1997; Robertson, 2003). But an unusual stimulus is often needed for the Model 2 approach to impinge on the defended theories in use and achieve double loop learning and second order change.

The process of change is not usually a comfortable one. Apprehension is often present. Drawing on personal construct psychology, Frances (1996) suggests that to soothe this apprehension there is a need 'to affirm those core structures, the weight bearing beams, which will hold the house together while it is being refurbished.' Robertson (2003) combines Argyris' approach and personal construct psychology to emphasise the need for sensitivity and respect in this fragile process of dislodging people from their 'super-patterns', which may have become 'undiscussible'. A learning environment in which change can take place must have 'opportunities for

people to talk openly and explore different ways of looking at things and alternative grounds for action'

An example: change in an ethical organization

A good example of how this model can be used to sort out conflict and enable change in organizations is given by Friedman (2001). The organization concerned was a 'politically alternative volunteer organization within the community health system'. Its founding ideology was that voluntary commitment was preferable to professional services. All volunteers were able to take part in the 'steering committee' which carried executive responsibility. Consensual decision making was the norm. There was a much valued feeling of community. Some similarity to the Quaker organization can be noted.

Friedman was called in as a consultant because of conflicts among the staff. He discovered that though the espoused theory was about participative values neither staff nor volunteers put this into action and volunteers only complained (or participated) when something they did not like was announced. There was a great deal of ambivalence about authority. Eventually commitment to two different espoused theories was revealed; some held the view that alternative (voluntary or self help) services were always superior to regular social services, others held the pragmatic view that any available services should be delivered to those most in need of them. There were two different worldviews about the purpose of the organization. Each side using Model 1 took a defensive stance and communication worsened.

Friedman created a causal 'map' which outlined the stages of the process. This was presented to the organization members, discussed and amended by them. It enabled them to look at their behaviour and their interpretation of basic values, and determine if they wished to alter these. The map showed that the conflict was embedded in the organization's self definition of its identity. Staff and volunteers were able to move to Model 2 behaviour and achieve double loop learning. Conflicts re-occurred but the map became the outline of the organizational morality play (P 36) and the next scene could be negotiated by the actors when the need arose.

Images and Stories in Organizations

Organizations can be described with the use of images and narratives, which may be more memorable than mere factual prose. Morgan's *Images of Organization* (1997) stresses both the insights and the limitations of applying metaphor to organization. In creating ways of seeing metaphors also create ways of *not* seeing (Morgan, *ibid*). The task is to use a variety of metaphors which illumine different aspects of any given organization and thus to reveal assumptions and gaps.

Setting aside Morgan's mechanical and biological images, two with a human analogy are potentially apposite to the study of Quaker culture and conflict. The first is the image of the psychic prison. Socrates' allegory tells of an underground cave with its mouth open to a blazing fire. Inside the cave are people who focus their attention on the shadows of the outside world reflected on the cave wall and treat these as reality. In effect they choose this limited view because there are no physical barriers to leaving the cave. If anyone does this and reports on the wider world outside their viewpoint is so changed that they are no longer comfortable as a cave dweller, and indeed their presence disturbs the other cave dwellers who prefer the familiar shadows on the wall. An alternative metaphor is that of a political system. Its elements such as power and control, decision making, structural arrangements regarding minorities, and conflict in problem solving might depict aspects of the Quaker organization. Considering the appropriateness of these images raises many questions. If one is more appropriate than the other why is this and how did it come about? And who is to say that it fits?

Organizations cannot have or use memory like human beings, nevertheless each organization has a history and at least partial access to it, and the metaphor of memory seems to be a helpful one if used with caution. In examining the conjectural concept of organizational memory Walsh (1991) hypothesises that it consists of six storage bins: individuals, culture, transformations, structures, ecology and external archives. The question for each organization is what is stored in each particular bin, and why? The question for the researcher may be who takes it out of storage and what meaning do they give to it. For Halbwachs (1950/1980) collective memory focuses on: 'who we are', 'where we've been' and 'what we hope to become'.

These three elements are often incorporated into the stories which are told within an organization and about it. Narratives can take different forms; they may appear as history, images or fiction. Gabriel (2000) suggests stories contain five features: a

protagonist, a predicament, attempts to resolve the predicament, the outcome of the attempts, the reactions of the protagonist (and of others, I would add). As Czarniawska (2004) points out it is not enough to discover that stories or narratives exist within an organizational culture. The question to be examined must be: what are the consequences of the story, for those who hear it, those who tell it, for those who study it? When stories in organizations are encountered what do they tell us about the nature of the organization, and what do they tell us about the functions of the storytelling?

There can be different narratives explaining what the same organization is, where it came from and where it is going. An example of the various positions which can be adopted with regard to one history is found in *'The invention of corporate culture: A History of the Histories of Cadbury'*. This is prefaced by a quotation from Jeanette Winterson⁵

"Everyone remembers things that never happened. And it is common knowledge that people often forget things which did. Either we are all fantasists or liars or the past has nothing definite in it."

Rowlinson and Hassard (1993) drawing on historical documents, tell how the confectionery firm invented its corporate culture, and the ethos of labour management relations, by retrospectively attributing significance to the Quaker beliefs of the Cadbury family. They argue that the five Cadbury 'institutions' (housing, welfare, division of labour between genders, scientific management, and worker representation) implemented in the firm owed more to contemporaneous industrial ethos than to Quakerism, and ask why the Quaker rationale has come to be privileged in the firm's own history. A whiff of expedient hypocrisy is in the air. However, while this case can be made, it would be equally possible for a writer with a different understanding of Quakerism to argue that the basic principles of Quakerism, such as equality, were being expressed in these institutions, albeit paternalistically. The housing at Bournville may have been in the mode of the Garden City movement, but the development of the Garden City movement was influenced by Quakers who brought their own ethics with them.

⁵ From *Sexing the Cherry* p 92 Winterson 1990. London :Vintage

Rowlinson and Hassard say that they are not trying to reduce the Cadbury history to a myth, but offering a competing narrative which incorporates and explains previous histories of the company. Making the 'history of histories' is informative both about the organization and how the histories were constructed.

The individual and the collective story

One proposal about how the collective narrative and the personal story connect with each other is supplied by Fowler (2000). Although working with a religious frame of reference his outline can be applied in corporate contexts and to Quakers. He looks at the connection and interaction between corporately held faith stories and individual life stories. His outline proposes that any faith, or perhaps any espoused theory, must shape its identity by the provision of a corporately-held narrative structure; individuals find purpose for their own lives in sharing in the understanding of at least part of this narrative; the individual's motivations are shaped by this experience and become habits, or dispositions; finally the individual becomes agentic in asking where they fit into the corporate story. What is their vocation in the terms of the organization? What part are they to play in the re-enactment of the corporate narrative?

All these issues of the nature of organizational culture, its application in change and conflict and its communication require exploration in the Quaker context.

CHAPTER 4: Understanding Conflict

This chapter will examine definitions of conflict; review theoretical models of conflict and conflict handling; consider conflict in organizations and in religious organizations; and finally begin to explore conflict among Quakers.

In all these considerations of conflict it will be important to note the varied viewpoints which can be adopted, from individual subjectivity to supposedly objective analysis. Where does the voice offering an account of experience, interpretation or advice locate itself? Does it take into account its own needs only or is it aware of the demands and constraints of the overlapping contexts of post-modernity? In the models for conflict handling and resolution there is a range from the distributive explanations focused on individual interest to the more broadly-based explanations which place the cause of conflict in social structure or cultural context. Narrative is used as a tool for exploration and resolution in these structural and cultural interpretations.

Conflict: Defining the Field

Definitions of conflict are numerous; here follows a small selection.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary 1949 offers "fight, struggle" (lit and fig).

Other aspects are added by the following more detailed efforts from organization studies, social psychology, and conflict resolution studies.

Van de Vliert (1997) "individuals are in conflict when they are obstructed or irritated by another individual or group" p38

Curle (1981) "when one individual, community, nation or even supranational block desires something that can be obtained only at the expense of what another individual or group desire" p3

Helriegel (1992 Ch 14) "situation in which there are incompatible goals, thoughts or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition"

Also Mapstone (1996) on argument "an argument is taken to be a discursive interaction in which two people disagree about an issue, and each wishes to convince the other of the validity of his [sic] point of view."p 219

Schrock-Shenk (1999) goes to the lowest level of intensity with 'differences plus tension' p23

The first four definitions contain an element that indicates that change is wished for by at least one party. That party will attempt to influence the other party to achieve

the change, with methods ranging from nuclear warfare to persuasion. Schrock-Shenk's definition is less precise, perhaps even vague, but therefore able to encompass the fierce opposition in the earlier outlines and to include lower key and covert experiences. This seemed particularly appropriate to the kinds of conflict I sought to examine. 'Differences plus tension' thus became the standard definition against which I compared events, and which, when pushed, I shared with participants in the research.

Alternative constructions of conflict.

All the definitions above frame conflict as something with negative or at most neutral consequences (Bjorkqvist, 1997; Hocker, 1991). This is a commonly held view both in academic and lay contexts. However, there are other views of conflict which construct it as a positive opportunity for change, development and growth (De Dreu, 1997) and indeed essential for these. A similar dichotomy is the construction of conflict as either destructive / constructive (Kriesberg, 1998) or functional / dysfunctional. Amason & Schweiger (1997) differentiate between cognitive conflict which can be functional, and affective conflict which is dysfunctional. They suggest teams and organizations should aim to encourage cognitive conflict but limit affective conflict.

'Conflict' is often accompanied by another word; resolution, management, transformation. All these suggest that the task is to control conflict and change it into something else. These words do not suggest that the person concerned is actually involved in the conflict, is in conflict with another, but that they have the task of sorting out someone else's problems. This orientation is clearly demonstrated in 'The Third Side' by William Ury (2000), a book addressed to a non-academic audience, but rooted in the Harvard based development of negotiation theory. Here Ury suggests that there is a 'third side' which can be effective in ameliorating conflict. He re-imagines conflict as three sided and uses a metaphor of this third side as a social immune system which prevents the spread of the virus of violence. He outlines ten roles which can contribute to and perform in this third side¹, but which are all outside the conflict. These ten roles are commended to all. In this approach the first and second sides, the actors who experience the conflict from positions one and two, are not explored. It seems important to acknowledge that at different times each individual may act in first, second and third sides, and that experience in all

¹ These roles are Provider, Teacher, Bridge-Builder, Mediator, Arbiter, Equalizer, Healer, Witness, Referee, Peacekeeper. (Ury, 2000)

these is needed. Therefore in this research project I have tried to use the term 'conflict handling' which as well as the suggestion of a control and management role, also seems to include the roles of the actors on one side or the other². Rothman's 'conflict engagement' (1997) struggling with the same dilemma of language, is probably an improvement on 'conflict handling'. However, 'conflict handling' is closely associated with the dual-concern model which is most often used amongst Quakers (QHS, 2000), and makes the point of agentic responsibility with more neutrality than 'engagement'.

Conflict and its resolution

At the start of the research I intended to try to study conflict on its own, without any of the accompanying words and their underlying assumptions. But both Quakers and others seemed to assume that I was studying conflict resolution, and indeed would add 'resolution' when I purposefully omitted it. It has proved far more difficult to make this separation than I expected, and I suspect I have abandoned the attempt. My belief is that it is possible to study anatomy or physiology without any commitment to treatment of disorders; there seems to be no equivalent discipline of studying conflict processes without commitment to resolution or at least management. Galtung (1996) is explicit about his commitment to a quasi therapeutic medical model, where anatomy is explored for its usefulness in the treatment process, and a prescription will be made.³ Similarly he holds that conflict is to be explored for its usefulness in peacemaking, to which researchers are already committed.

Galtung identifies three threads in peace studies. Firstly, empirical peace studies, in the mainstream of social science, yield data about the past, but cannot be presumed to contribute a positivist prediction of the future. Here data prevails over theory. Secondly, critical peace studies can evaluate data about the present and its policies, but do this in order to say whether a practice works or not in terms of assumed values. Here values prevail over data. Lastly, constructivist peace studies focus on the future, take theories about what might work and bring them together with values about what ought to work. Here values prevail over theories.

² This term comes from work on the dual-concern model of conflict handling (see page 51)(K. W. Thomas, 1988)

³ (Kriesberg, 1998) suggests there are limits to this 'clinical model', and the most conflict studies can offer is a public health model which prescribes general conditions for healthy conflict.

This intertwining of values, data and theory characterises study about conflict more strongly than other disciplines. It seems difficult to identify conflict without constructing it negatively as a disease and being impelled to cure it. This applies to intrapsychic conflict, interpersonal conflict, intergroup conflict and international conflict.

However the alternative view of conflict, as opportunity for creative development and change, is most visible in organization studies (De Dreu, 1997), where the focus is on interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

"growing evidence suggests that conflict may be beneficial to performance in groups and organizations, and that avoiding and suppressing conflict reduces individual creativity, decision quality in teams, product development and communication between work groups. Moreover a case can be made that stimulating conflict sometimes enhances individual, group or organizational performance."

De Dreu 1997 (p1)

From the same academic setting Tjosvold (1997) waxes almost lyrical on the positive outcomes of conflict:

" 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 prepared to contribute to their groups and organizations.

Success in turn further strengthens relationships and individuality."

(p23)

It should be noted that this view of conflict imagines it in a situation in which individuals acknowledge their interdependence.

It should be noted that this view of conflict imagines it in a situation in which individuals acknowledge their interdependence.

Theoretical models of conflict

I propose to examine several models of conflict and its handling. All of these are to some degree subject to the confusions outlined above, mixing data, theories and values in different ways. I do not intend to critique these models for validity (K. W. Thomas, & Kilmann, R., 1978) but to indicate that they are models in use, and point out some of their applicability for this particular study. This will include attention to the interaction between the context and the individual, and shared and individual story lines.

The Dual Concern Model.

Figure 1 shows the taxonomy of the five conflict handling modes posited by the dual concern model of conflict handling.

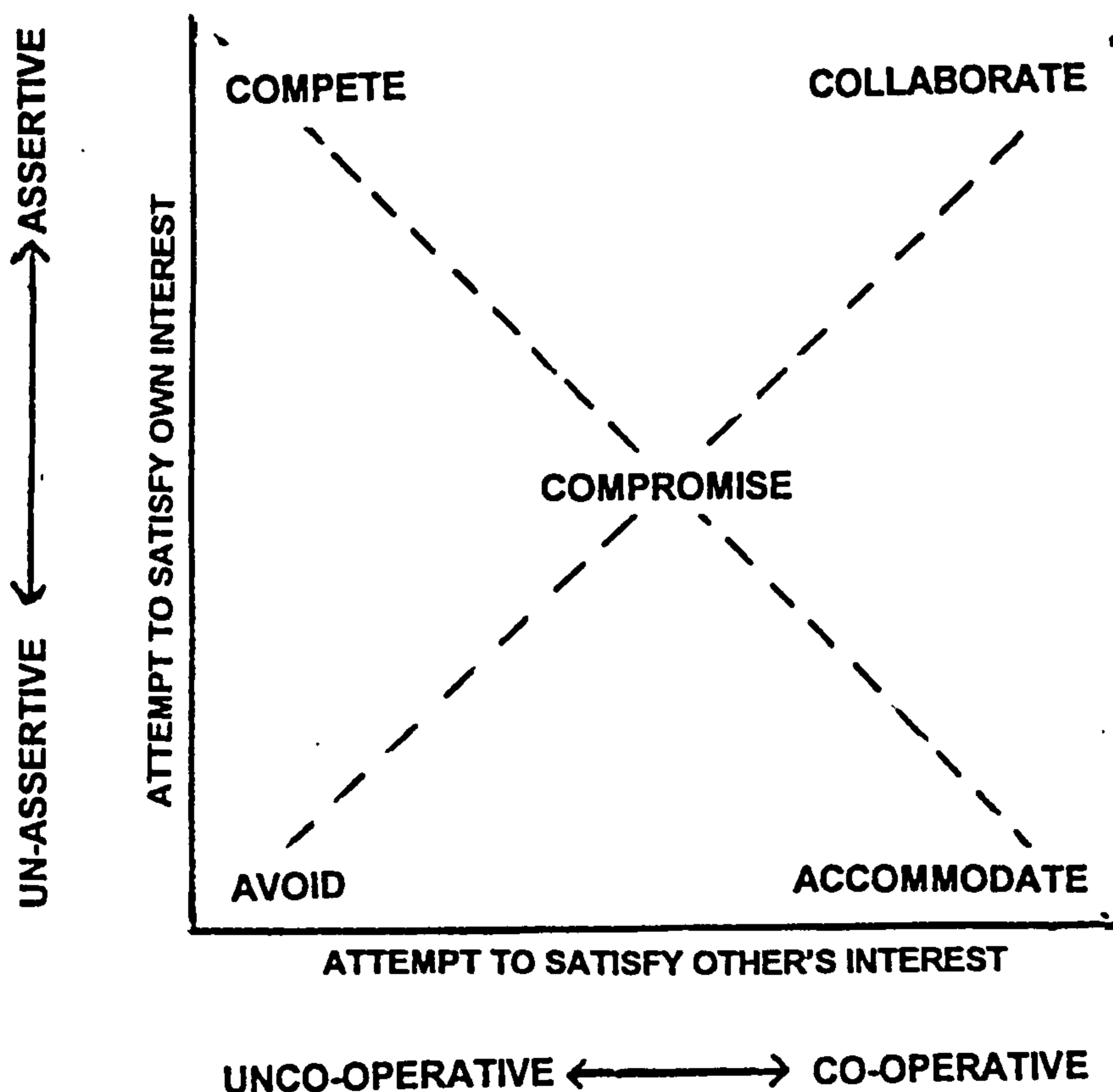


Figure1 . Taxonomy of the five conflict handling modes.
Compiled from Kilmann (1975) and Thomas (1988)

The Dual Concern Model of Conflict Handling has existed for thirty years in the field of organization studies. The two concerns are concern for one's own interests and concern for the interests of the other; this is sometimes re-phrased as concern for outcome and concern for relationship. Reliant on a nine point grid developed by Thomas (1978) it is operationalized as the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1986). The schema proposes two dimensions: 'assertiveness' and 'co-operativeness' (another version of the two concerns above) which in combination produce a taxonomy of five conflict handling modes (see Fig 1).

These five modes, or their close relations, appear in parallel systems under slightly different names such as 'forcing' and 'yielding'(Cosier & Ruble 1981) but are identified here as shown in Table 1 below. Each mode, or intention, is described. In addition a communication message from each position is given; though not part of the original model this is suggested for use in training and self-reflective applications (Xicom, 1986).

Table 1: Description of the 5 modes

Compete: assertive and not co-operative, an individual concerned to win his/her own position. *"It has to be my way"*

Collaborate: assertive and co-operative, an individual involving the other in working out a solution, concerned with satisfying both his/her own and the other's wishes. *"Let's see if we can find a solution that satisfies all parties"*.

Avoid: neither assertive nor co-operative, an individual trying to avoid creating unpleasantness for self, trying to postpone or not worry about issues. *"I don't want to deal with this"*.

Accommodate: not assertive but co-operative, an individual concerned for the welfare of the other rather than their own. *"If this is what you want I will agree"*.

Compromise: midway in assertiveness and co-operativeness, an individual tries to find middle ground or exchange concessions. *"Let's split the difference somehow"*.

This model is rooted in organizational studies. Its great benefit is that it turns the attention of the actor to him or herself, implicitly or explicitly suggesting that the actor can choose between alternative strategies (Thomas, 1988). Its limitations are that it does not explore how far this choice is influenced by pre-existing personality characteristics (Antonioni, 1999; Killen, 2003) or the influence of context (social structure or organizational culture) on the nature of the conflict. In addition it is suggested that in practice people simplify their perception of the five modes. The cognitive perceptions of the four non-competing modes are much more alike than the representation of 'Compete', and are grouped together as 'non-competing' (Van de Vliert & Prein, 1989). In other words, though the theorist may give equal weight to all five modes, the public tends to see only two modes, fierce contention or apparent absence of contention. Therefore subtle choices between alternative strategies may be elusive.

Considering the uses of this model De Dreu (1997) divides conflict into cognitive and affective types. Cognitive issues are about facts, task related questions and outcomes. Affective issues concern questions of identity, values and relationships. His review of the research suggests that avoidance strategies are unproductive in cognitive issues, where the stimulation of conflict produces more varied and creative solutions. However, affective issues do not profit from the stimulation of conflict which is damaging. It is hard to imagine an issue which is purely cognitive, with no elements of values associated with identity. Emotion is often more strongly experienced and recognised in affective issues, concerning values and relationships, which this model does not take into account (Nicotera, 1993). This is another example of its limitations.

The dual concern model is based on the notion of symmetric conflict, where there is a conflict of interest between relatively similar parties. These are the conflicts where there is optimistic talk of win-win solutions⁴. However, because of the lack of attention to emotional tone, personal story lines and the structural context in which the conflict occurs, the dual concern model seems mechanistic. Many conflicts are not symmetric but represent a different balance of interests between dissimilar parties. Examples are a majority and a minority, government and rebels, employers and employees. These are asymmetric conflicts where the conflict is built into the structure of the connection or relationship between the parties, often expressed in

⁴ Rothman (1997) refers to 'naive optimism' that real conflicts can ever have win-win outcomes, suggesting that this purely distributive focus is misleading, wrong and shallow.

terms of who holds more power. Investigation is needed into the historical background, the current understandings and emotions of the protagonists and the opportunities for choice and action. The next model addresses these issues in more depth.

Galtung's Conflict Triangle

This model, rooted in the experience of 'Contemporary Conflict Resolution' (Miall, 1999) is able to take account of both symmetric and asymmetric conflict. It includes the social structure in which the conflict is embedded.

Galtung suggests that conflict can be viewed as a triangle, with contradiction (c), attitude (a) and behaviour (b) at its vertices.

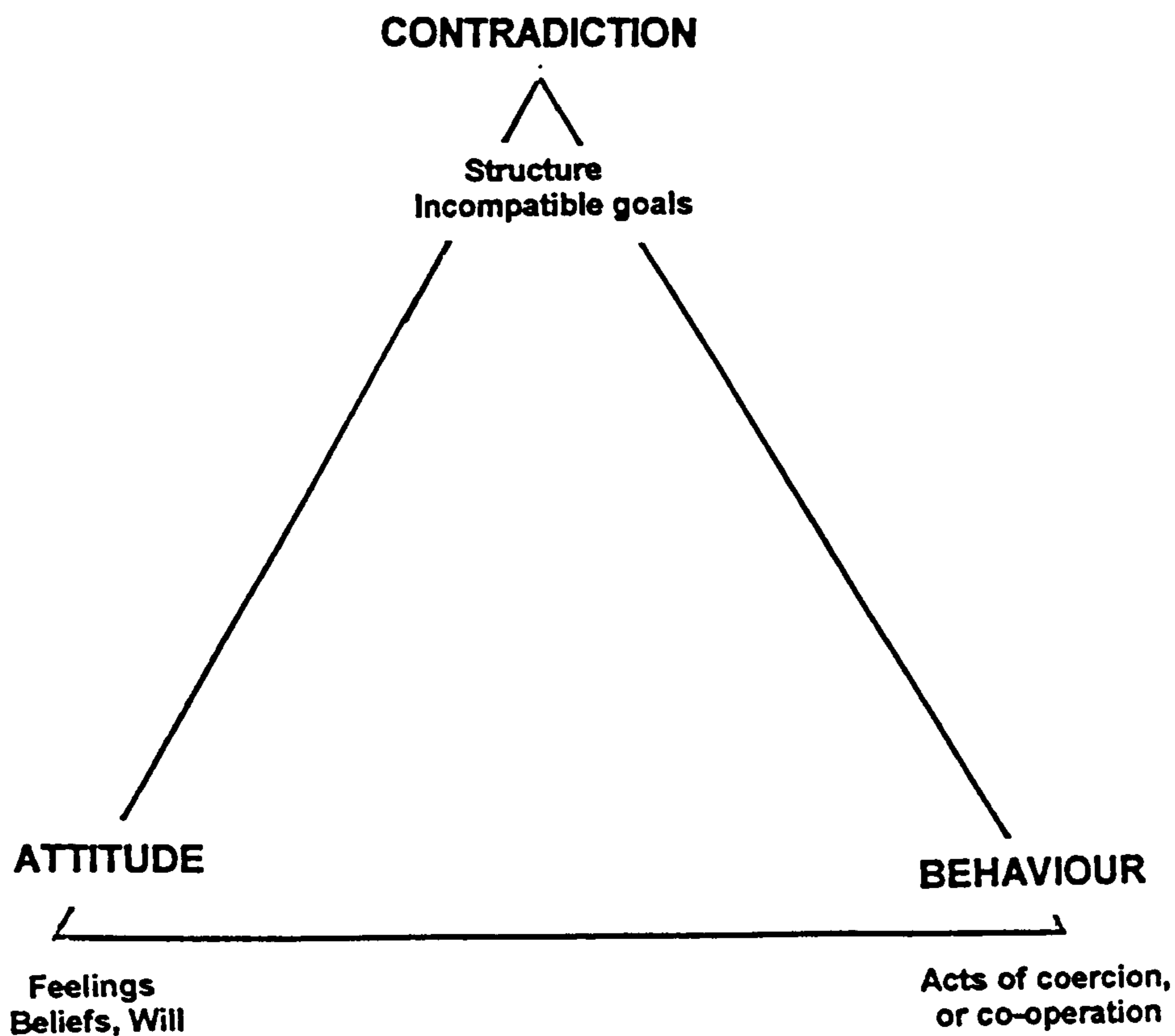


Figure 2. Galtung's Conflict Triangle
Adapted from Miall et al (1999)

Contradiction refers to the clash of interests between the parties, which may be rooted in the structural relationship between them. Attitude refers to the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other, with emotive (feeling), cognitive (belief) and conative (will) elements. Behaviour is the third component: co-operation or coercion, gestures of conciliation or hostility. Focus on the subjective meanings of these three elements yields an 'expressive' view of the conflict, which is an account of how it feels to be engaged in the conflict. Focus on more objective aspects such as structural relationships or material interests yields an instrumental view of the sources of conflict, which may be described in terms of economic or political disparities. 'Instrumental' and 'expressive' may have some similarity to 'cognitive' and 'affective'. Obviously for a full understanding of any example of conflict all these angles of insight need to be included in the analysis. However, using the Galtung framework produces a rich and textured account of any incident. It can use a historical perspective to explore the structural underpinning of any conflict, and chart the life cycle of the interactions. Its application to the complexities of the real world is useful and is most commonly found among international conflict resolution professionals.

This model helps understand why conflict arises by looking at the structural context as well as the interests and behaviour of individuals. It takes the structure into account in looking at change, why the conflict seems intractable or in looking for ways to resolve it. I used the Galtung Conflict Triangle and its associated subsections to analyse one of the complex conflict interactions described to me in this project. Seeking information under the main headings quickly revealed areas of personal tension, history and context which had not been addressed in attempts to resolve the issue over a period of several years.

The ARIA model for conflict resolution

A third model comes clearly under the heading of conflict resolution. However, it deals specifically with the question of identity based conflict, towards the more intractable end of the conflict spectrum. Rothman (1997) draws on experience resolving conflict across the world, including the personally sensitive position of a USA assimilated Jew working in the Israel and Palestine conflict. He focuses on conflicts which he describes as 'relatively intangible....rooted in the more abstract and interpretive dynamics of history, psychology, culture, values and belief'. Sometimes it is hard to know which comes first, interests in scarce resources or identity needs. Polkinghorn (2000) doubts whether they can be separated. Rothman clearly has

credibility in difficult international conflict resolution, but his process is just as applicable to couple disputes or organizational complexities.

Rothman uses an elaborate metaphor of a musical quartet struggling to play together to illustrate his theme. It moves through a sequence of Antagonism, Resonance, Invention and Action (A.R.I.A.)

- Antagonism brings out festering angst and anger and puts them forward for discussion.
- Resonance explores and articulates threatened needs and values, and enables antagonists to discover what they have in common.
- Invention brainstorms mutually acceptable and creative options to address the underlying needs together.
- Action builds on the previous stages, planning what, by whom, how and when.

This model is important because it pays serious attention to what the protagonists wish to express, but links this to the context in which the conflict exists. It brings into focus positions one and two of conflict handling before approaching from position three, the third or mediating side. The initial opening up of antagonism gives priority to the meaning of the conflict to the individual concerned. Following this the resonance process draws in the context surrounding and giving meaning to the conflict. This may produce recognition of some shared needs. This resonance phase (Rothman, 1996) is used to develop engagement in the conflict. Both sides are encouraged to use a reflexive dialogue to clarify the subjective core or inner meaning of the conflict, and to deepen their understanding of themselves, the other party, and the structural issues affecting both. Thus the resonance phase moves through the hermeneutic spiral between interpretation of context/structure and personal interpretation.

Narrative Mediation

There is an affinity between the ARIA process and the method of narrative mediation developed by Winslade and Monk (2000). In this the mediation task is to assist

people to overcome the divisiveness of conflict by working with the stories in which the conflict is embedded rather than pursuing an 'objective' reality. Narrative mediation views stories that come to dominate over other stories as complicit in the creation of power in social relations. Working from a narrative perspective places the cultural world, and power relations within it, at the centre of the process of mediation. 'Deconstructive questioning' of the protagonists by the mediator loosens the authority of a dominant way of thinking and opens the door for the exploration of alternative positions.

Narrative Mediation is just starting to be known in the UK. It is virtually unknown to mediators in the public services, who have been trained in interest-based mediation which sits best with the distributive dual concern model⁵. To those with no experience in family therapy methods, its focus on the context rather than the problem seems to require more psychological sophistication from the participants than is usually found⁶.

Conflict in Organizations

In this section overt conflict is distinguished from hidden or covert conflict. Much attention is given to conflicts which are public and use established protocols for their working out. However, there are also less visible ways in which 'differences plus tension' manifest themselves. These 'hidden conflicts' may have a significant effect on an organization.

Overt Conflict

Examples of conflicts in organizations are most often drawn from industrial and business groupings, so there are many accounts of formalised opposition of interests between different strata of workgroups (Morgan, 1997). One group of theoretical approaches privileges the role of management, regarding active conflict as a failure in the exercise of management authority. This may be linked to large scale themes in the structure of society as a whole, with echoes of class and hierarchy issues, instanced by Weber and Marx. Or they may be more detailed examination of the structure within the organization with conflict seen as a particular problem where management has to intervene with solutions (Galbraith, 1977). A second group of

⁵ For an interesting comparison of narrative mediation with both interest based and transformative mediation see www.crimo.org/narrative_mediation/comparisons_between.cfm accessed January 2005

⁶ Personal conversation with a recently trained mediator employed by a local authority.

theorists (Kanter, 1977; Pettigrew, 1973; Pondy, 1967) sees conflict as a pervasive fact of interaction which becomes the essence of organization. Diverse sets of organization members may form shifting coalitions in vying for influence and control.

The issues which provoke conflict in organizations are often replications of themes in the broader community about class, race and gender. Empirical accounts of conflict in organizations focus overwhelmingly on tensions between different groups of workers in industry. Often these are hierarchical tensions between management and labour. Fincham & Rhodes (1994) give many instances of such conflicts. Tensions are not always hierarchical, but can be related to sapiential influence, holding specialised knowledge. Pettigrew's study (1973) of the setting up of an early Information Technology department illustrates tensions between professional knowledge and managerial needs. One of Morgan's (1997) images of organization is as a political system in which conflict is enacted with ritual procedures of argument and negotiation. He emphasises particularly the work of Mary Parker Follett in developing a pluralist approach to conflict management (Graham, 1995). Studies of conflict repeatedly revert to the question of power in their analyses (Hardy & Clegg, 1999).

Smircich & Morgan's study (1982) of an insurance company where a particular culture about conflict avoidance prevailed is relevant to this project. A new president had set out to bind the staff together after a difficult period of disintegration. He adopted a style of management which required organizational members to repress their differences and act harmoniously. Conflict avoidance was encouraged. Imagery and ritual strengthened this message. As a consequence the staff did not really engage with issues in the public arena, where all had to appear to be running smoothly. Differences did exist but discussion was confined to private places, and not given the attention and exploration which was necessary. The culture of overt conflict avoidance and inhibited conflict exploration was judged by the writers to be detrimental to the health and productivity of the company.

Smircich (1982) suggested that some organizations have cultures which avoid conflict. Kolb (1992) is clear that conflict exists in all organizations and that much of it is not visible. The conflict that is acknowledged is merely like the tip of an iceberg. She presents a more nuanced and subtle description of conflicts, focusing on a dialectical approach where opposing interests co-exist, interact, and evolve but do not necessarily reach expression, resolution or closure.

"The public, formal and deliberate aspects of conflict frequently mask a more complex set of affective dynamics that take place informally and in private but that are critical to dispute dynamics and outcomes"
Kolb 1992 p212

This hidden conflict is particularly relevant to the moderated expression of the Quaker organization. .

Conflict in Religious Organizations

While it is common to hear organized religion blamed for many intractable conflicts, such as between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, it is not so common to meet an expectation that there will be conflicts inside churches. Indeed the opposite is often the case.

Mennonite literature includes the following description of levels of intensity of conflict in congregations (Blackburn, 1999), relying on wide experience of consulting to such problems. Note that only the first level might be described as 'cognitive'. The final stage relies on the use of authority, which may be problematic in a group which is hostile to the whole idea of authority.

Level 1 is 'problems to solve', which remain task focused and are solved by usual decision making methods within the congregation.

Level 2 is 'disagreement', with more emotion and personalization. It may require skilled facilitation, often from within the congregation/leadership.

Level 3 is 'contest' with win/lose dynamics, distortion, factions and people making threats about leaving. It may need trained consultants from outside the congregation.

Level 4 is 'fight/flight'. People try to break the relationship; they threaten to leave or try to make others leave. They seek to punish others, factions solidify, stereotypes become rigid. It needs intervention by professionals experienced in consulting to church systems.

Level 5 is 'intractable'. The major objective is to destroy others. Issues have been lost; personalities are the issue. People see themselves as part of an eternal cause

and free to use any means to defeat the enemy. It may need arbitration by an authority figure in the denomination.

The following section sets out to correct the misconception that church communities are conflict-free and explores several studies on the topic of conflict inside churches. This will provide some comparisons against which to place conflict among Quakers. The studies instanced use different research methods, reflecting the approach of the writer rather than the nature of the church.

Conflict, congregation and community.

Ammerman's (1997) wide ranging study of community and congregation illuminates contemporary congregational life and its conflicts. It develops from Berger's (1969) concept of plural religious institutions competing in a market for consumers. Her survey of a twenty-three widely differing congregations from Christian denominations in the United States asked about change and interaction with the surrounding community. Her finding is that religious communities are not insulated but reflect and respond to what is going on in the local community. When times are 'unsettled', almost by definition in the late twentieth century, the congregation adapts either to decline, to new birth or to re-orientation. But these adaptations are often the cause of conflict and further splitting in the congregation. Conflict is often the result of the congregation trying to find new ways to relate to its local community which then causes changes within the dynamics of the group. The conflicts are seen in terms of ideological and political issues affecting the whole local community, rather than as specific to church life and belief. Though a congregation may only include a small proportion of the community it is in continual dialectical relationship with that wider community.

A Southern Baptist Ethnography

Greenhouse (1986) writes from an ethnographic standpoint about the meaning of conflict in one Baptist congregation in southern USA. As a participant observer over several years, her research focus moved from local records to the community congregation and its understanding of itself. She found a way of living with conflict very different from those demonstrated to Ammerman. Conflict was thought to be located among the unsaved outside the church, therefore it was not enacted in public dispute and wrangling within the church. It was not seen as being about relationship, and was therefore not for overt discussion. This did not stop even a saved individual

experiencing hostile and oppositional feelings, but these were interpreted as the individual failing to live the spiritual life properly.

Because the Baptists believed that God had a purpose for the world, which individuals committed to when they became saved, any dissatisfaction with the events in the world was taken to signify an alienation from this purpose. So if a person was in conflict in their marriage this was not an argument in which the other person could be blamed, as is often the case, but a challenge to the believer to adapt to the purposes of God. Therefore there was very little description of two sided argument in formal or informal arenas among the Baptists. However, Greenhouse did note the prevalence of narratives about people in difficult situations, merging into gossip, as a method of transmission of values to newcomers or young members. This was an oblique way of posing questions which might have seemed too confrontational, and left it to the individual to respond in their own privacy.

A quantitative approach to Mennonite Conflict

Kniss (1997) took a much more quantitative approach in researching conflict in the Mennonite Church, which like Quakers has a long-standing pacifist position. Though Mennonites in the USA have referred to themselves as 'the quiet in the land', making little disturbance in the general population, their own history has been riven with disagreements, splits and schism. Kniss itemises 200 Mennonite conflicts at congregational level or broader in four states between 1870 and 1985. He proposes that conflict arises from tension between 'traditionalism' and 'communalism'. These two polarizing points hold different views on the locus of moral authority in the church, and what constitutes 'the moral project'. Therefore many Mennonite disputes have been about changes to the traditional power of bishops and how far the church should interact with the wider community, often intertwined. The conflict examples are divided into 6 themes related to these two poles and distribution through time is traced.⁷ However, Kniss argues that even if the religious group perceives itself with a firm boundary between itself and the wider world it is not in fact a closed system. Conflict emerges as a result of the interaction between internal dynamics, external events and socio-cultural change. This is a more narrowly focused version of Ammerman's thesis.

⁷ For instance 'anti-authority', the most frequent type of conflict over 100 years, reached its peak in the years between 1907 and 1934, whereas 'separatist' issues remained low until a dramatic leap between 1959 and 1985.

Kniss is not alone among Mennonites in giving serious consideration to conflict in churches. The stance and experience of the Mennonite Church is highly influential in conflict resolution circles in both US and UK. The thinking and literature comes out of the US experience (Lederach, 1999; Schrock-Shenk, 1999) but is used in the UK. In the 1990s the Mennonite church in the USA⁸ adopted a policy about how its congregations should handle conflict, using various biblically based models. This approach is now offered to representatives of UK denominations and is being disseminated throughout them, for instance among West Yorkshire Baptists (Lassetter, 2003).

Conflict among Quakers

A non-Quaker English teacher (Stanbridge, 2001) said “‘Quaker Conflict’- that’s an oxymoron”. This is not an original thought⁹ but one that is widely held among non-Quakers. A former colleague (Hale, 2003) very active in his own denomination, asked how I got any data for my research. Did I have to go round stirring up all those ‘peaceful Quakers’? These two comments were based on UK experience where the impression of peacefulness is possible as dissensions followed by public splitting have been few and small and Quakers speak publicly about the need for international peace. Many UK Quakers probably share the view that theirs is a peaceful organization with little conflict. Their reconstruction of history is biased towards what they want to believe. In the US, Quakers have argued bitterly several times, and the differences have caused complete splits. There are several different kinds of Quakers in the US, with theological and organizational separation.

Historical Accounts

Conflict has been present among Quakers as long as they have existed. Ingle (1994) cites examples of serious quarrels between founding Quakers, often between the leaders of the movement. These disputes with Nayler, Perrot, Rawlinson (Ross, 1949), Wilkinson and Story were prolonged, bitter and unresolved between the disputants¹⁰. George Fox survived within the central movement while others left or

⁸ See handout P6 from Transforming Congregational Conflict, conference organised by the London Mennonite Centre April 2000.

⁹ Kniss uses the same construction about Mennonites.

¹⁰ Swarthmoor Hall Committee, in charge of the historic home of George Fox, has chosen to remind Quakers of the existence of these early conflicts by naming two rooms after these people in the refurbishment in 2000. That decision was made in the knowledge of this research.

died disgraced. His view of the growing society was that people should do things his way; this would result in little dispute. The disputes arose when others wanted to do things their way. William Penn, setting up his 'Holy Experiment' took a broader view expected more conflict and built into the constitution a model for dispute resolution among Quakers (Hartshorne, 1993) based on a Biblical framework still used by Mennonites today. This option remained in use for a century at least (Cronk, 1991) in the USA, but was little used and is little known in the UK.

Though there have always been disputes among Quakers in the UK these have not resulted in major splits as in the USA.¹¹ Isichei (1967) attributes this difference to the tightness of geographical constraints in Britain and the strength of family connection. Selected British Friends also took some of their controversial views and added them to the more volatile mixture in the USA (Cavey, 2000). These disputes in North America are documented by Ingle, (1986) a historian and, more disappointingly, by Holden (1988). The latter writer set out from a position of sadness that such things had occurred. His aim was to find out why and to offer a remedy. Unfortunately he was overwhelmed by the detail of the incidents and was unable to attempt any interpretation or analysis which would point towards the remedy. As a final item in the glimpse across the Atlantic, Brutz's work (1986; 1984) has no parallel in the UK. She explores conflict resolution in US Quaker families, finding that patterns of violence in these families were strikingly different from other families. Quaker fathers reported more violence to their children, and there was more violence among Quaker siblings than others. She also found important gender related differences in the relationship of commitment to non-violence and domestic violence. In men, high levels of peace activism (public commitment to non-violence) were associated with high levels of marital violence. These two studies raised many interesting questions, but acknowledged small samples which may have skewed the results. Repeat studies with a firmer methodological base would be valuable.

While there is no work in the UK linking public attitudes and private behaviour, it is worth examining the shared story line prevalent among current UK Quakers about public peace and private attitudes. It is commonly believed that all Quakers are, and are required to be, pacifist. Pacifist is taken to mean totally against participation in

¹¹ The two most significant controversies were the 'Beaconite' issue of 1835, and the establishment of the conservative Fritchley Friends in the 1860s. Both resulted in break away groups; the former faded away and the latter rejoined London Yearly Meeting a century later. For more detail see (Kennedy, 2001)

any kind of violent action or war. Ceadel's (2000) term 'pacifist', which he uses to describe a person who works actively and practically for peace but who may in some circumstances accept the use of force for peace-keeping, has gained no currency among present day Quakers. Newcomers will think they are in an almost invisible minority if they doubt whether they would really be able to keep the historic peace testimony when under threat. However, this is a case of history being adapted by those following after. Both Ceadel (2002) and Rubinstein (2002) found that the position of Quakers in World War 1 was not monolithic. Of those men eligible for army service, one third was exempt or unfit, one third joined the services and one third took the position of conscientious objector.

Contemporary studies of conflict among Quakers

This section includes consideration of the work of Collins, Plüss, Bradney and Cownie, and Kline. Collins' anthropological account of 'Dibdenschaw' meeting (1994) does not focus on conflict, but does refer to it as part of the humdrum life of the meeting. His account of how a compromise is reached about the amount of money to be allocated to the meeting's children's committee is typical of small scale decision making where there are different views. Implicitly it raises questions about any high flown claims for Quaker business method. More importantly he introduces the 'prototypical Quaker', a standard or exemplar constructed by each member. According to Collins the prototype is usually 'fuzzy'¹², but when it becomes clear, assertive and visibly different from others conflict arises (p456). Arguing about the prototype is identity conflict.

Plüss (1995) titled her thesis 'A Sociological Analysis of the Modern Quaker Movement'. She aimed to investigate 'how certain substantive features of [contemporary British Quakers] contribute toward the movement's unity' and for this purpose focused on the lack of unity or conflict between two Quaker groups: the New Foundation Fellowship and the Quaker Universalist Group, which claimed different theological understandings. Her methods included observation of worship at one local meeting, some very short interviews with members at this meeting, and longer semi structured interviews with theologically informed Quakers involved in the debate. This instance of conflict is well selected as the issue was, and to a lesser degree still is, central in Quaker life. However, Plüss does not focus much on

¹² According to Collins, the elements of prototypical Quakerism are: worship that is silent and corporate, an expectation of social concern on the part of members, centring on the Peace Testimony, and a business method which is unique. (Collins, 1994)

understanding or interpretation of the conflict itself, but draws on it to ask broader questions about how belief systems are validated, where she provides useful insights. Indeed, her thesis that the Quaker reliance on experience is accepted as unchallengeable 'final vocabulary'¹³ within the movement is crucial to her understanding of the conflict.

It is not clear if Plüss fully understood the difference between meeting for worship and meeting for business. Her interpretation of a worship meeting [sic] as 'to discern the will of God as it relates to the establishment of peace and social justice' is more appropriate to a business meeting. At the same time she concludes that a local Quaker meeting could not take a decision about a theological difference (p 135)¹⁴. However, in her example of theological conflict, resolution was achieved without using the business meeting structure. In 1993 three Friends representing different views (two of whom she had interviewed) held special interest groups at Yearly Meeting to address this issue. They produced a 'reframing' statement, acceptable to all three. This they presented to Yearly Meeting in the following year. It immediately became part of the text (27.04) of the new edition of *Quaker Faith and Practice*. After this both the separate groups and the Yearly Meeting as a whole found themselves in a new position. Plüss would appear to attribute such unacrimonious changes to tolerance and affective ties between the participants. I would argue that it was more due to a shared intention to follow and develop the Quaker cultural tradition of unity, and that it was no coincidence that the persistent process was taken through by men who combined many years of seasoned commitment with a familiarity with academic debate.

'Living without Law' is an ethnographic study of Quaker decision making, dispute avoidance and dispute resolution (Bradney & Cownie, 2000). Collins (2003) suggests the authors could be accused of being co-opted by the group, in other words they adopted the Quaker espoused theory uncritically. I suspect they were over-influenced by the avowed purpose of the book: a study of methods of alternative dispute resolution. A very limited ethnography, which focused on the smallest groupings, meeting committees, which would refer any conflict to bigger and

¹³ A term used by Rorty to indicate beliefs or constructions which their holders cannot explain in terms of other frameworks, something is true because it is true..(Rorty, 1989)

¹⁴ She uses the example of the Quaker Universalist Group's proposal that the phrase 'humble learner in the school of Christ' be removed from criteria for admission to membership. She anticipates that this would have to be a decision of Yearly Meeting which would have proceeded through a local meeting, a Monthly Meeting and upwards. She surmises that as all local meetings include 'Christian' Friends this proposal would not get past the local level.

more formal structures, failed to provoke any doubt about whether practice matched the aspiration. The wish to establish the Quaker method as an effective alternative dispute resolution method within the legal context colours their approach from the start. However, they are not alone in this; one of the interview contributors to this project with much experience in law also felt that Quaker methods could contribute to alternative dispute resolution, although he had not heard of Bradney and Cownie. The methods in their pure form may have a contribution to make in other settings, but among Quakers they do not prevent or always resolve disputes. Nor do they tell us how Quakers construct their experience of conflict.

Like Plüss, Bradney and Cownie relied on a partial view of one Quaker meeting. One author wrote a diary as a participant observer for a year, including service on meeting committees in responsible positions. This was followed by 19 semi-structured interviews with members and attenders of the meeting. These two methods of information gathering were supplemented with informal experience by the Quaker author in her life in the meeting. In reporting results considerable attention is given to the functioning of the committees within a large meeting. A privileged position is given to the respondent who says 'they feel nice, everyone is heard' and the authors go on to argue that though the committees sometimes do not use formal Quaker business method the atmosphere is noticeably different from secular gatherings which are more adversarial. The authors record only one difference of principle being explored in Preparative Meeting during the period under study. They are more concerned to explore the question why so few people attend this business meeting, but seem reluctant to accept the consequence of this observation that some people are only shallowly involved in the meeting. They want to be convinced that the meeting is a community.

They also want to be convinced that the incidence of disputes is less among Quakers than among other people. They say that if a meeting takes its decisions in accordance with Quaker business method then disputes cannot occur. This is both obscure and mistaken. Disputes do occur; how they are expressed may or may not be influenced by the Quaker business method. It is also an example of how Bradney and Cownie frequently confuse the theory and the practice, the 'ought' and the 'is'. Having instanced the existence of both substantial and trivial disputes during their study they do not consider these, but in apparent contradiction say that there would not have been enough material had they drawn on that meeting alone. Then

**"Our observations have shown that Quakers in our Meeting are not normally or even frequently in dispute with each other and that they enjoy a measure of calm and order in their community which is unusual (although not unknown) in circles outside the Quaker faith community."
(p 153)**

The written argument has an 'unpleasant vacuum' at its core (Collins, 2003), but I am even less convinced of its validity because in the same year that the book was published my own observing participation noted more than one member of the same meeting sent to educate themselves to help in solving serious conflicts there. However, the book is interesting because it presents a view which many Quakers would hope really exists. It does not, however, tell us much about conflict among Quakers.

Kline (2002) offers a more grounded and thorough anthropological analysis in his thesis "Quakerly Conflict: The Cultural Logic of Conflict in the Society of Friends". The field work for this was carried out from the base of a university city in Scotland in 1998-9. Kline, an attender, used participant observation (including part time employment as a warden, like Collins), 28 semi structured interviews with Quakers in the area, and finished with 3 focus groups which commented on the thesis. Permission was sought and granted from the relevant local meetings. There is an illuminating case study of how one issue, which was disturbing Quakers nationally, was handled.

In this instance Kline observed the tensions about the 'Trident Ploughshares' incident in 1998. At Meeting for Sufferings, the Quaker executive body, the question had been raised as to whether the Society should supply training to people who intended to take direct action against the Trident nuclear submarine. The question was in doubt because the direct action might involve breaking the law and criminal damage to property. This matter was referred back to local meetings for consideration and Kline recorded his observations in the business meetings in which it was considered. In effect this is an account of a difficult and emotive issue being well handled in a Quaker meeting for business. There was considerable preparation before and structuring of the event; the clerking was good and the meeting was well disciplined and rooted in silent worship. The final process of decision making was so emotionally powerful that it made the hairs stand up on the back of Kline's neck. Nevertheless he was able to analyse it all later and come to the conclusion that the

Clerk of Meeting for Sufferings had acted wrongly, an argument which is doubtful from the evidence he offers.

Kline uses Goffman's distinction between on-stage and off-stage behaviour, and also includes out-of-the-theatre behaviour (this is in contrast to Dandelion's 'Quaker Time'). On-stage, in meeting for worship or business meetings, the individual is most strongly constrained by the Quaker cognitive framework. Behaviour and expression is likely to be disciplined in the form which encourages unity. Off-stage in informal Quaker settings, for instance over shared lunch, the conversation about conflict is less constrained, more expressive and more personalised. Here there may be a different account of the on-stage behaviour where conflict is likely to have been denied or controlled. Out-of-the-theatre behaviour is unpredictable; Quaker constructs of conflict may or may not be in play.

Unlike Bradney and Cownie, Kline is convinced that conflict does occur among Quakers, though evidence is largely drawn from its avoidance, or its control by the business method. His conceptual range in considering conflict is narrow. In describing conflict avoidance he uses only a simplified version of the dual concern model of conflict handling. He draws attention to the construction of 'conflict as growth' which he finds in some authorised resources, but does not explore how widely this is accepted or disseminated. Kline's account rings true. However, he does not raise the question of Quaker response to his description. Were the Scottish Quakers satisfied with the picture he presented to them or uncomfortable with it? What were the implications for the organization in reflecting on this picture?

It is clear that the study of conflict handling among Quakers is still at an early stage. Collins (1994;2002b;2003;2004) offered useful insights into the context in which identity conflict flourishes; Plüss (1995) used a particular Quaker debate to inquire into validating religious experience; Bradney and Cownie (2000) illustrated the espoused theory about Quaker conflict; and Kline (2002) explored the cultural logic of Quaker conflict handling, examining three of the main tropes. A critical enquiry as to whether subjective perception and practice among Quakers is congruent with the espoused theory of a conflict resolving community was still required.

The research questions to be explored in the empirical work were

- **How is conflict viewed in the Quaker organization?**
- **What difficulties do individual Quakers experience in conflict handling?**
- **How widespread are these difficulties within the organization?**
- **Is it possible to enable individuals within the organization to widen their repertoire of conflict handling styles?**

CHAPTER 5: Methodology

This chapter focuses on qualitative methodology and ethnography, particular techniques selected for this study, and the use of reflexivity and ethical considerations for a researcher inside an organization. All these combine in the rationale for the design of the study.

The research questions were stated at the end of Chapter 4. However, behind these had emerged two broader issues underlying the more detailed inquiry. Firstly there was the apparently paradoxical situation in which Quakers paid great attention to conflict resolution in the outside world and very little to conflict handling in their own community. Secondly, it was not clear whether conflict among Quakers was considered to be a problem for an individual rather than for the collective; what was the influence of the collective culture on conflict handling? These underlying issues with emphasis on the relation between belief and action, moving from organizational culture to individual perception were particularly suitable to qualitative investigation.

The Design of the Study

Bearing in mind all the considerations above the design for the study took the following form.

Firstly it took place in the context of observing participation, routine Quaker responsibilities and research activities running in parallel with cross-fertilisation between the two. In 2000 there were several occasions where Quakers formally considered their own conflict, which I attended in both roles, and collected data.

I decided to conduct two series of interviews, to obtain information from different parts of the organization. I was aware that this might produce different perceptions and understandings. The approach chosen may have some similarity with Martin & Frost's (1999) distinction between integration, differentiation and fragmentation points of view within an organization. It was also important to consider how the subject and the ways in which I made contact with prospective interviewees might influence the content of the data (Burman, 1994).

The first series of interviews, with 7 'Key Informants', sought out Quakers who could give an experienced and authoritative view from the centre of the Quaker organization. The semi-structured interviews focused on their views of the

organization, conflict within it and individual experience. The contributors knew that they were speaking from a powerful position in the integrated system.

The second series of interviews, with 25 'grassroots' Quakers, was geographically representative across the North of England and Scotland. Covering the same topics in the interview schedule it sought local points of view, based in the day to day experience of 'ordinary' Quakers. However, the recruitment process using the Northern Friends Peace Board inadvertently produced not a mixture of Quakers but the conscientious core who keep the system running. These were the people who were available when the request for an interview was made at a collective occasion, or who was thought already to have an interest in Quaker conflict. They turned out to be working in the same system as the Key Informants, but with more differentiated experience.

Information from more peripheral Quakers was needed. A wide ranging questionnaire was rejected, and 8 interviews with 'Edge Quakers' were undertaken. . It was expected that they might have a different perception of Quaker identity and conflict handling. These were people who were either coming in or going out of the organization, or who occupied a particular or critical position within it. Often they would opt out of the system, or a conflict, when they found they could not influence it; they were on the edge of fragmentation.

The data from the interviews was then analysed to discern patterns of thought and behaviour. These brought both the espoused theory and the theory in use of the organization into clear focus. At the same time there was little information about personal conduct or reflection in conflict; individuals were shadowy and obscure.

It was necessary to test this analysis with other Quakers, before proceeding further. It had always been intended that the final stage of the research would be a collaborative one; a 'workshop' of 20 self selected Quaker participants was held. Many of the participants were experienced in conflict resolution in Quaker and other contexts. One purpose of the workshop was to present the analysis of the first stages of data collection and to obtain the response of the participants about its validity. Originally, I had also planned to involve the participants in deliberately using different conflict handling strategies during the follow-up period, but it was clear that that they might have neither opportunity nor agency to do this. The second intention was adapted to invite the participants to undertake some personal reflection about

conflict among Quakers and their own position in it, to gather more data about self-reflection in Quaker conflict.

16 of the workshop participants undertook personal reflection over six months and offered a written record of this. At their own request, 10 of the participants in the original workshop came together again to talk over their experience.

All this data was analysed, using NVivo 1.2, developing a thesis in which the limitations of conflict handling theory were augmented by the width of the narrative approach.

Reflexivity: positioning the self.

The personal detail in the introduction may appear slightly surprising or unnecessary to some researchers. In contemporary language "What does it matter where I am coming from?" Would it not be more professional to write in an objective way, giving the impression that I am convinced about myself as a researcher and the assertion of what I write? The answer to this second question is no. I find myself firmly positioned with those researchers, often feminists (Hollway, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1990) who argue that the experience of the researcher is an essential part of the account of any research, if not the main part. Many social scientists argue that there is no way of discovering objective truth, partly because no truth can be identified or perceived without a socially interacting person using language to describe it or give it meaning (Burr, 1995; Mead, 1967; Willig, 2003). An account or explanation by a researcher is inevitably shaped by their own experience. While this account from the researcher cannot be objective truth, if accompanied with evidence and reasons for conclusions, it may be the nearest thing to a subjective truth, or at least honesty. In being clear about the limited personal position from which observation and interpretation takes place the researcher implicitly invites others to compare their truth with hers. This process may produce not objective but many-faceted truth. The researcher's position and experience is therefore a necessary part of this.

Reflexivity is the process by which the researcher's position and experience is discovered and displayed.

"Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the "human as instrument"..... It is a conscious experience of the self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and

learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself.”

Lincoln & Guba (2000) p183

Reflexivity is an ongoing process, continuing throughout any particular research project. It involves continued questioning of the researcher, both by herself and by others around her. Such questions will focus on choices, made intentionally or unwittingly by the researcher. These choices may concern identifying the topic; using one philosophical or methodological approach and rejecting another; how the researcher affects or is affected by the processes and people in gathering data; how interpretations are selected and expressed (Lunn, 2003). The perspective given to reflexivity can vary from intensely personal detail forming the substance of the research (Hollway, 1989) to a brief acknowledgement pointing out that the piece is written by a human being, although personal pronouns are rigorously avoided. My intention is to position myself nearer the former than the latter, so that my learning and reflection is visible but contrasts with and comments on the contributions of others.

Reflexive questioning was particularly required because of my position inside the organization into which I was inquiring. The whole project could be said to have arisen out of my prejudices, or ready-formed judgements, about Quaker conflict handling. Therefore I tried to listen for voices with other views. It was difficult at times to recognise the difference between Quaker characteristics and those of the rest of the world, and to separate my experience as a Quaker and my role as a researcher. Nesbitt (2002) considers all these issues after interviewing seven 'Quaker Ethnographers', all researching in faith contexts. It was very helpful to me to have three supervisors with very little knowledge of Quakerism between them. Their continued questioning 'why do they do that?' helped me see with a fresh eye. They also asked 'why do you do that?' and made me question myself and my assumptions about what might or might not be allowed by my interpretation of the culture.

Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology

As part of the personal information I should examine my choice of qualitative methods for this project. Most of the research I have learnt about and from has been based on quantitative methods, using experimental methods in the laboratory or survey methods in the outside world. The numeric or statistical foundations on which

the (dis)proved hypotheses of this research are displayed are impressive to the non-numerate and give an impression of desired scientific objectivity. This can, however, be misleading. The intentions of the researcher in selecting the topic and designing the project with quantitative methods also need reflexive enquiry. The quantitative methods of analysis are only techniques for communicating understanding (Robson, 1993). Both Bryman (1988) and Smith (2003b) argue that there is overlap in using quantitative and qualitative methods; there is not a hard and fast line between them. In planning this project I seriously considered using survey methods. Responses to a questionnaire might have indicated how many people subscribed to certain beliefs or had experienced certain practices regarding conflict handling. Despite the Quaker tendency to redefine the question (Homan & Dandelion, 1997)¹ useful quantitative work using questionnaires has been done among Quakers. Heron's (1995) figures showing that most Quakers do not take part in decision making activities do not need replicating. It is possible to explore even theological matters using questionnaires, as with Rush's (2002) enquiry into the existence of non-theist Quakers, though here the absence of a developed analysis is disappointing. The collection of numerical and factual information about beliefs and historical actions can be very thought provoking (Dandelion, 1996a; Rubinstein, 2002). However, I decided that my exploration was directed more to the understandings and meanings that lie behind the Quaker experience of conflict handling than to questions about incidence of conflict or conflict handling processes. I wanted to know what happened in people's minds when there was conflict, and how they made sense of this. It did not seem likely that this kind of material could be discovered in a questionnaire. However, I did not want the data to be detached from life, or 'nebulous' as one critic later described it. I hoped to follow Hollway & Jefferson's (2000) belief that indexical accounts rooted in time, place and person add a richness to any interpretive narrative. Conversations and pictures are necessary to engage the attention of the reader and therefore to convince them of the argument.

Validity and Reliability in the Qualitative Paradigm

The concepts of validity and reliability are necessary in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. My first course in social psychology in 1960 impressed two meanings on me. Validity: does it measure what you are trying to measure?

¹ Homan and Dandelion (1997) raise the question whether Quakers are really more picky in answering questionnaires than others, as appears at first experience. They conclude the tendency to 'redefine the question' is common if the subject of the questionnaire requires individual religious thought.

Reliability: would you get the same answer if you did it again? The implicit expectation taught to me at that time was that quantitative methods and replicable experimental processes would be used. However, the questions are just as necessary with qualitative methods but they may produce different kinds of answers. With qualitative methods exact replicability is impossible, with possible changes in the researcher, the contributors, and the social context. (At least two of my contributors have already died, others have become more strongly interested in the topic, and the subject of conflict among Quakers has become both more and less visible in the organization over the 5 years of study).

“The meaning that is produced in the course of [qualitative] research is something that has to be followed and recorded carefully and sensitively, and an account of the process of tracing and presenting the analysis as the ‘results’ of the study is an account of *change*, and this entails change in the research tool itself. The aim in qualitative research is not so much replicability as *specificity*.”

(Parker, 1994) p11

Specificity involves indexicality, as far as possible saying when, where, who and how, to place information firmly in the experience of the research participant. But it must also include a focus on the researcher, her conception of the project, her implementation of it and her interpretation of it. Detail from both angles supplies the information which grounds the particular project in the world as well as the researcher’s head. In qualitative research the process may not be replicable but it should be explicable.

The concept of validity in qualitative research is also reframed by Yardley (2000), cited by Smith (2003b). As measurement is rare in qualitative methodology, Yardley suggests alternative criteria to ensure rigour and integrity. The first criterion is sensitivity to context, which can include sensitivity to the resources or literature of the field of study, sensitivity to the data and the people who supply it, and sensitivity to and in the research process. The second criterion comprises commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence. Commitment is demonstrated in experience of the method or experience in the field of study, rigour in the thoroughness and completeness of the study. Transparency and coherence relate to the openness and clarity of the research process and how it is communicated. The final criterion is perhaps the most important one: impact and importance. Does the research actually

tell us anything we did not know, and if it does will that make a difference? The difference can be in the thinking of academic colleagues or in social change in the real world. If research does not make some difference, what has it achieved, has it any validity?

Yardley's criteria demand a high standard from the researcher throughout the research. Impact and importance will be assessed at the end. Importance may be indicated by a topic which is widely debated, one that brings a new awareness or illustrates the influence of a paradigm, or that introduces a new voice (Lincoln, 2000). However, there is no doubt that many people, both Quakers and those who live and work with them, hope that this study will have both importance and impact. They are convinced that this work needs to be done. If it brings a new voice, a counter narrative, will they listen to it? There is also the question of impact and importance outside the Quaker world. Does the work say anything which will be useful to other organizations? Does it change thinking about conflict handling in organizations?

Qualitative Methodology

Jantzen (2003) offered a vision of the academic research life which used the metaphor of making pots. Qualitative research can be likened to a room full of people making pots. Each one may be different, an individual creation; there are no set criteria or patterns. But each potter must be able to answer the question: does your pot hold water? It is the task of the companions, not competitors, in the room to point out possible flaws in the construction which might cause it to spring a leak, and thus to make sure that all the pots are serviceable. It is also the task of the potter to explain how to make that kind of pot, so that someone else may be able to follow that method and possibly make an even better pot. In qualitative research attention must be given to leaving a clear account of process (or audit trail) so that it is possible for evidence on which conclusions are based to be checked (Yin, 1989). For examples of this see Appendix E.

This rejection of a linear, replicable process is echoed by Parker (1994), who describes qualitative research as part of a debate, not fixed truth. It can be

“a) an attempt to capture the sense that lies within, and structures what we say about what we do;

b) an exploration, elaboration and systematization of the significance of an identified phenomenon;

c) the illuminative representation of the meaning of a delimited issue or problem. " (p3)

Qualitative research is therefore endeavouring to cast light on meaning as understood by both human actors and researchers in any chosen research context. This sense of tentatively illuminating an exploration is one which would appeal to many Quakers.

Under the qualitative categorisation there are a large number of approaches and methods. Here I will briefly outline those which have become part of my study, and why I selected them.

Ethnography

Ethnography is 'the direct observation of a small society' (Jary & Jary, 1995); Taylor (1994) describes it as the quintessential qualitative research method. Its roots are in anthropology, but it is now used more widely in all the social sciences. Once conducted among geographically remote and 'different' tribes, it is now used in many more familiar and complex contexts. This raises questions about the boundary of any 'small society'. An individual is now unlikely to live in one all encompassing group, but is usually subject to the influences of several small and large 'societies'.
But

"the ethnographer participates actively in the research environment but does not structure it; the approach is discovery based, the aim being to depict the activities and perspectives of actors"

(Taylor, 1994) p34

Ethnography attempts to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) which emphasises attention to the fine details of everyday life in the group studied. This is not to provide description per se but in order to elicit the basic assumptions which contribute to the rules which prevail in that group. Ethnography often takes place in the everyday world but it aims to go further than description or story telling to the formation of theories and explanations which are tested (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or

at least explored during the research itself. Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe this process as the development of grounded or emergent theory; data grounded in the social group is gathered then interpretations and hypotheses emerge from the data. Glaser (1992) takes an objectivist view that the researcher can perceive patterns in the society which existed before the research and are independent of it. Charmaz (2003) argues for a more constructionist view in which a focus on meaning while using grounded theory increases interpretive understanding. She appreciates that the researcher cannot be a neutral observer, that the research process affects what emerges, and that this is part of the data. She recommends close attention to the detail of thick description and rich data. In order to do this the researcher should

- Describe participants' views and actions in detail
- Record observations that reveal participants' unstated intentions
- Construct interview questions that allow participants to reflect anew on the research topic
- Look for and explore taken-for-granted meanings and actions
(Chamaz, 2003 p 88)

One aspect of ethnography is the accumulation or deliberate collecting of data from the 'small society'. This can include many aspects: documentary or media promoted evidence, observation, direct communication with individuals, informally or in interviews, and involvement of members of the community in the research process. It is pertinent to ask how the researcher gains access to these sources of data, and to point out the distinction between sources which are public (or even private), which are not produced in response to the research process, and sources such as interview contributors and workshop participants who voluntarily respond to the research process. The interest of these last people in the subject and the process has to be noted. Their position may produce different accounts from those who treated any knowledge of the project with indifference.

Ethnography encompasses a variety of methods, supporting the validity check of triangulation (Robson, 1993), and the tracing of the hermeneutic spiral threads between context, person researched and researcher. In this study I have used participant observation, interviewing and collaborative action research. All of these

are based on a necessary respect to be accorded to the experience and voice of the participants. As Smith and Osborn (2003a) suggest, personal accounts from people trying to make sense of the connection between their individual experience and the social world are privileged as the researcher tries to make sense of them.

Observing Participation

Participant observation is the basic method of ethnography. The researcher lives among the different tribe and attempts to understand its experience. However, for me 'the different tribe' is like the water in which the fish swims. I have to work hard to be aware of its differentness. Though naturally disposed to the 'observer position' (Campbell et al, 1988), I am not aware of my blind spots. I try to differentiate my fifty years of participation among Quakers from my five years of participant observation among Quakers. I compare contemporary accounts of events with my own memory and realise that at the time I either misunderstood or did not notice significant meanings which have since become obvious to others. So now, as researcher, I try to balance my interpretation or understanding with as many other accounts as possible.

In fact I no longer think of myself as a participant observer, somebody who participates in order to observe and understand. On most occasions in 'the field' my role is somewhat different. I am there because I am expected to be there, because I carry responsibility, and would be there even if there was no research. I am a participant, but with an additional role. Whether I carry a notebook or not I am continually making connections in my mind between issues in the research project and issues in my roles in Quaker meetings. This works in both directions, the practice informs the research and the research informs the practice. This is described by Torbert (1991) and the position redefined as 'observing participation'. He outlines three features which distinguish this from other social scientific approaches

"The researcher views himself or herself as a participant in the action to be studied – indeed as a committed participant; instead of "participant observation" the researcher creates a role of "observing participation"

The researcher views his or her own experience and action as within the field of study, not only to explore the effects of the research on the setting, but also in order to explore how to become more effective.

The researcher expects the study to be longitudinal in nature – and not just six months or one year.” (p242)

I now use the phrase ‘observing participation’. This position is only made explicit in circumstances where I think people are unaware of my double commitment and the topic for discussion is conflict handling.

Torbert’s third criterion, of longitudinal commitment, now seems to me the one with the most consequence. There is really no end to sharing in the responsibility which started with undertaking the research project. However, it is necessary to think hard what my contribution within the organization can be. While the research is unfinished and unpublished I am quite clear that I cannot give advice, or intervene in any other way in any of the dilemmas which have been reported to me in confidence (though this has been requested of me). This would breach the understanding on which contributions were given. Furthermore I should also be clear that I am not an intervener in any sense; I am not trained in any method of conflict resolution. My responsibility is to the findings of the research process, to offer these to the organization to provoke its thinking.

However, informally I find that there is now continual cross-fertilisation of information between the two roles. In Quaker responsibility I may find myself briefly quoting my own work, or be prompted to speak out, or not to speak out, by the memory of what I have learnt in the research. The research thinking is being continually fed by participating in Quaker life. Some of this is recorded in my research journal.

Collection of Field Notes

I did not usually carry my field notebook with me. Items were often written on yellow sticker pads, and then stuck or transcribed into the notebook. These included my observations, quotes from printed Quaker and other sources, or quotes from live Quaker sources. If these came from a public meeting they may have been noted without permission, but if addressed directly to me the permission of the speaker was usually obtained. Reference to the Field Notes is indicated in the text thus (FN). My field notebook was re-examined in the process of making the analysis, and further comments and links marked in red. I also kept a reflexive journal of my journey through the research, which included my journey through my own conflicts. This is private, because other people are clearly identifiable. This is my personal narrative,

largely untellable because of its interactive nature. I became aware that as well as detailing my own conflicts with others, this journal relied heavily on external stimulus. Many entries started 'X said to me....' and then went on to develop my responsive thoughts. However, where it contained a record of my own thinking it could be drawn upon.

Ethical Considerations

Starting the research I believed the ethical dimension was not greatly significant. It was not likely to expose the participants to 'risks greater than or additional to those encountered in their normal life-styles' (BPS, 1996). However ethical questions gradually assumed more importance.

The double role as researcher and Quaker, and its likely continuation, made me particularly aware of ethical issues in constructing and making public the research. The fact that I was already in a 'personal and moral relationship' (BSA, 2002) with my local meeting helped me to decide that I should not draw information from that source. All the people who gave interviews and took part in the workshop were self selecting, at least willing to oblige the person who recruited them. However, life was not that simple. Several times in the interviews, and elsewhere, I was warned about the difficulties that other Quaker researchers had experienced in trying to set the boundaries of anonymity and confidentiality. The differing perceptions of researcher and researched had caused much heartache.

Therefore in the interviews I spent a long time explaining how I intended to achieve anonymity. I made it clear that participants could embargo the use of any sections in the interview. It was quite common for someone to say 'please don't mention that' and this was respected. Only one participant asked for a transcript of their interview. With these constraints I quoted from some of the interviews at the workshop and asked the participants there whether they felt I had achieved an acceptable level of anonymity. They said I had and they would be willing to be quoted in the same way. However, apart from one person who considers that Quakers are unnecessarily sensitive and delicate, they all, apparently gratefully, accepted the very high standards of anonymity offered at the workshop. Participants were not required to identify themselves except by first name, and could 'pass' at any point.

Though workshop participants had said they were willing to be quoted it became clear that the nature of the extracts from their speech and writing was very different

from the 'quotes' from the interviews. As intended, these were much more personal, and to maintain the sense had much more detail about other people, even if strict anonymity was used. Eventually² I felt I had to check the consent of workshop participants. I wrote to them all saying that I would be quoting from them; when the quotation had been said in public I would feel free to use it, although they could ask me exactly what I intended to say if they wished. One bruised Quaker researcher had said that it is not the quote but the 'spin' or interpretation added to it which hurts. When I intended to quote at length I sent a cutting of the relevant extract with any interpretive sentences. Most of these participants replied with permission. One contribution was disguised more effectively, and one was withheld.

While undertaking the purposeful research interventions such as interviews and workshops it was relatively easy to be aware of the effect of the research. It was more problematic when I was moving in Quaker activities pertinent to the research topic. This was most sharply felt when I wanted to attend the 'Conflict in Meetings' short course in February 2000, which was the beginning of my data collection. As an ordinary Quaker I was entitled to attend if there was a place free. As a declared researcher into the topic I received very guarded and cautious permission to attend, after making undertakings about respecting the other course members. I felt I was dangerous; this was probably more a reflection (Mattinson, 1975) of the anxiety about conflict than about research processes.

Interviews

Interviewing is counted as a specific research technique, but with many approaches. Its overarching aim is to elicit and record the experience and point of view of the person being interviewed. It can challenge the researcher and any sense of control or power that they have. If an interview is a 'conversation with a purpose' (Bingham, 1959) the question is not so much what purpose as who's purpose. Reflexive deconstructions of any such event, by both interviewer and interviewee, would reveal immensely variable perceptions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

Perhaps unfortunately, I was not frightened by the prospect of carrying out interviews. My professional life has largely consisted of interviewing, counselling, dialogue, co-constructed conversations, and shared minute writing. Consequently I may not have felt enough stage fright to perform well. I am aware that I broke some

² After conversations with Professor Jeff Hearn at the Postgraduate Research Conference 2004.

'rules' (I talked too much), and did not think on my feet to the standards of the highly introspective (Hollway, 1989; Lunn, 2003)). I fear I was often too engaged with what people were saying and indeed my reaction to it, which I did not always conceal. The interviews were intended to fall in the category of 'semi- structured', but were very varied. All styles of contributing were relevant and valuable. I never felt I had wasted my time.

However, I was glad to have had a framework, and to have tried to cover the same topics with all contributors in the same sequence. Though one person, well qualified to judge, deplored the fact that my research style was 'too boxy' for her taste, I was glad at that stage to have boxes (or specific question areas) to compare across the contributors. However, I also tried to listen and be led by the contributors. Some of them sent me written material afterwards and I followed up some of the suggestions they made about reading. It was an interactive process which extended outside the time spent together.

However, all the interviews contained traces of Burman's (1994) four approaches which all rely on reflexivity. There were ethnographic elements, in the identification of the Quaker population and the issue of conflict. All the contributors accepted these as suggested by the researcher and indeed were keen to speak about this topic in this context. There were social constructionist elements which constantly called into question the premises of the research aims; the question of why the research should be done was often part of the conversation. There were new paradigm elements in that the researcher did not place herself apart, but sought the understanding of the contributor as valid in itself. Linked to this there were feminist elements about the power and position of the researcher. However these last two elements may not have been experienced as usually expected.

Several authorities stress the power dynamics in an interview, often with reference to gender (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981) but this sometimes presupposes a socially disadvantaged, even less intelligent, interviewee. Some of the people with whom I carried out interviews turned out to be very powerful in either worldly (academic or political) or Quaker terms³. Bannister (1966) points out the reciprocity inherent in psychological enquiry, contrasted with 'objective' science:

³ Compare the experience of Kline researching roughly the same subject three years before. He planned focus groups of Quakers for the last stage of his research. He found the group assembled in one of them contained so many academics it was more like a 'mock viva'.

" The scientist sits alone in his laboratory, test tube in hand, brooding about what to do with the bubbling green slime. Then it slowly dawns on him that the bubbling green slime is sitting alone in the test tube brooding about what to do with him. This special nightmare of the chemist is the permanent work-a-day world of the psychologist – the bubbling green slime is always wondering what to do with you" (page unknown)

In many of the interviews it was hard to tell who was scientist and who was slime.

Collaborative Action Research

Collaborative Inquiry is focused on action and change in the real world (Heron & Reason, 1997). It is perhaps no coincidence that I found myself using this method without knowing it. Though not intending to create change, the final stage of the research was looking to see if (or what) change resulted after a time of reflection. If there was any change it would be found in the experience of the collaborators, not to my design.

The final stage of my research was planned as a 'workshop' for twenty people to respond together to my tentative findings, to be followed by a six month period of individual reflection on the same subject. The reflective period was expected to yield more information than the workshop.

When I planned this stage of my research project I had in mind no particular methodology, although I was clear that my intentions fell within the ethnographic paradigm (Taylor, 1994). I thought I had combined my experience as a training officer working with groups and my Quaker experience of working in groups in a slightly illicit way. I understood focus groups⁴ as tools for advertising or political techniques; they were not suitable. We settled on the term 'workshop', argued whether this was an intervention or not, and persevered without a methodological framework. It was only when the workshop had taken place and the reflective work was started that several half-heard voices (both in the university and among Quaker researchers) and browsing reading came together, and I asked 'why has no-one told me I'm doing collaborative action research?' Belatedly I became aware of some of the literature

⁴ Later I realised that the workshop could well have been considered as a social research information gathering focus group, as described by (Wilkinson, 2003).

(Reason & Bradbury 2001). How consoling it was to read McArdle (2002) and Reason (2003) after my beginnings and how useful it would have been to have read them earlier.

The philosophical or ethical underpinnings of collaborative action research are all to do with the reframing of traditional power structures. This includes redistributing the power between the researcher and the researched. Using authentic interaction between real people as the source of knowledge and learning significantly reduces the role of the researcher in defining and interpreting the problem. Power is redistributed and renegotiated within the research project. But the methodology aims at more than that. The basis of action research rests in: treating persons as persons; a participative world view; an extended epistemology; and a liberationist spirit (Reason, 2003). Note that most of these points do not refer only to how the 'self aware, critical community of inquiry nested within a community of practice' (Reason, *ibid*, p211) should conduct itself. They refer more compellingly to how the community of inquiry should relate with the wider world and transform its vision. The provision of new knowledge is not a politically neutral act

"It asserts the importance of liberating the muted voices of those held down by class structures and neo-colonialism, by poverty, sexism, racism, and homophobia." ⁵

(Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p9)

Values are woven into collaborative action research almost as tightly as into conflict handling theory.

"It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities"

(Reason and Bradbury 2001 p1)

This definition is set in a section entitled 'Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World Worthy of Human Aspiration'. The writers move on to examine the nature of 'flourishing' which will include sacred science expressing the beauty and joy of active

⁵ It is tempting to sketch out the purpose of the pondering inquiry as an attempt to liberate the muted voices of those held down by the need to be Quakerly.

existence. The ethos of collaborative action inquiry is notably congruent with, and almost as ambitious as, Quaker aspirations.

Interpretive Editing

The stage before the final writing up of the project is the analysis. However, in qualitative research analysis does not only take place at one time point in the process, after most of the data has been collected. It can be woven into the process throughout, resulting in re-draft of research questions and lines of enquiry. Bryman (1988) offers 6 characteristics of qualitative research which combine to emphasise responsiveness to discovered data and flexibility throughout the process (Gibbs, 2002). This continuing flexibility was most obvious to me in my use of fieldnotes in my notebook and research journal, which interacted throughout with more purposeful use of requested data. I also paused and reflected on the analysis of Stages 1 and 2, before proceeding to Stage 3, and included others in the reflection before Stage 4.

The phrase that best seems to describe my method of analysis is 'interpretative editing'. 'Interpretative' because it attempts to understand meanings of different kinds to different people, and to place these in communication or contrast with each other (Miles & Huberman 1994). Data of different kinds and great depth of detail must be accumulated and stored for flexible re-appraisal, but it then requires editing to make sense of it. 'Editing' acknowledges a selectivity (the researcher's) which includes or excludes data, and emphasises one point rather than another in congruence with an overall view. This is the point when the power that has been distributed in the interviews and the collaborative process returns at least for a time to be expressed by the researcher.

Constructionist developments of grounded theory are acknowledged as being akin to phenomenology (Charmaz, 2000). Therefore it was comfortable to start the analytic process using the preliminary techniques of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2003a), in marking up the transcripts. This was followed by using the computer programme NVivo 1.2 (Gibbs, 2002), which is particularly suited to the application of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), though I have not used the latter in a pure form. In practice first the transcribed data was coded into categories (or nodes) in NVivo, which contained nothing but extracts from the words of the contributors. In searching for coding categories I originally rejected 'template analysis' (King, 1998) preferring a method closer to interpretive phenomenological analysis. However, I found that the schedule of the semi-structured interview had in

many ways already formed a template and eventually accepted this. A 'memo' was written on all the useful nodes, drawing out themes, and indeed omissions, in the words. Note here the use of interpretive selectivity. Another researcher with the same data might make different judgements about what is useful, what should be developed or ignored. In this case 'useful' probably meant a node with several, or surprisingly few, extracts coded to it. 'Surprisingly' also shows the researcher's preconceived ideas. Second there was a linking of the content of the memos into wider themes, linkages or disparities. Third, these linkages were explored in relation to potentially useful social science theory. All these stages of constructing the analysis could be carried out within the NVivo programme. (See Appendix E for more detail and examples).

Overview

This chapter started with a justification for reflexivity which questions the positioning and contribution of the researcher. However, it will have become clear that my understanding of the individual is always explained in terms of the social context. Making sense or understanding an individual is achieved by understanding the relationship between the specified context and the individual. Hermeneutics originally evolved to help with the problem of interpreting Biblical text at a distance of time. The context was not the same at the time of writing and reading and a conscious effort had to be made to understand what it had once been and how that related to later thought patterns. So there is a line which tracks from one point in the social context to the individual or text and then back to another point in the social context; repeating this process produces a track which can be described as the hermeneutic spiral (Osborne, 1991); though in fact, in post-modern society, where a person moves through several contexts there may be several spiral tracks.

However, in my interpretation the individual and the social context are part of each other. To understand what an individual is doing we have to know the economic, cultural and linguistic conventions in the social group, the various interpretations of these by the specified individual and others. Using Butt's (2004) analogy of the jigsaw puzzle we can only understand the full meaning of the individual piece of the jigsaw when we see it in the assembled picture, and without the individual pieces we have no assembled picture. If the purpose of the research is to look for meaning it also has to understand social process.

How does this social configuration affect the research and the researcher? In being reflexive, the researcher explores not only herself but her connection with the various contexts in which the work takes place. There has to be a "circular progression between the parts and the whole, the foreground and the background, understanding and interpretation, and researcher and narrative account" (Addison, 1992) These include the academic setting and the specific context of the research, in this case the Quaker organization. This may need more disentanglement than usual when the researcher shares some of the same mental frameworks as the research population, but rejects others. No assumptions can be made. I need to be aware that all my editing decisions may be influenced by my interest in how the social shapes the personal, and look for alternative interpretations. At the very least this means being aware that for modern Quakers there are many social contexts.

CHAPTER 6. The Key Informants: Restating the Paradox

This chapter gives an account of seven semi-structured interviews with Key Informants. It also draws on my participation in some events relevant to conflict in the Quaker organization occurring in the same period.

The Key Informants in Context

Selection and Method

Eight people¹ were asked for interviews (See Appendix A). One of these was used as a pilot (identified as P1), and also included in the findings. One person declined on the grounds of advanced age, 84 . The participants were selected as people known to me (2 personally, 4 by reputation) as having wide and deep experience in **Britain Yearly Meeting**. They were all used to speaking in public on Quaker subjects, and were thoughtful and articulate. All accepted willingly and indicated that they thought the subject was worthy of investigation.

These Key Informants were four women and three men, ranging in age from 26 to 71, with an average age of 51. The mean length of association with Quakers was 42 years; all were members except one who had resigned on a point of principle but continued as an active attender. Two had Quaker families going back several generations. Two of the seven were in their twenties, and had experience particular to that age group² but had also had responsibility in non-age defined activities. Together they were resident in the South, the Midlands and Yorkshire, but had also lived in Scotland and Wales. Between them they had accumulated experience of membership in 35 local meetings. All had at one time or another been appointed to national committees of Britain Yearly Meeting and had often served as **Clerk**. Two had been employed by Quakers for several years. All were also involved in non-Quaker activities. Their experience included responsible positions in industry, church organizations, international aid organizations, local government services, higher education and the criminal justice system.

These were people who carried responsibility in certain parts of the non-Quaker world, but who were also respected within the Quaker world. As Quakers they knew

¹ At the start of the process both David Robson and I completed interviews using the schedule. This was partly as an experimental pilot process. The content of these interviews is not included in the interview data but could be used as a baseline against which to assess personal change in the researcher as the research progressed.

² This was involvement with Young Friends General Meeting, which is for Quakers between the ages of 18 and 30.

what they were talking about, because they had been involved in considerations and changes in both local and national settings. Their knowledge was authoritative and detailed, although they did not claim that. They were all active; six out of the seven were present at the **Yearly Meeting** which took place in that year.

Interview Methods

Development of interview schedule.

I chose the semi-structured interview form because I wanted to strike a balance between encouraging the contributors to focus on the same areas (so that a general picture, if such existed, could emerge), and allowing them freedom to speak about what seemed important to them.

The interview schedule (See Appendix B) was for use only by myself, and contained both reminders about what I should cover (use of recorder) and rather cryptic questions ('How many meetings?' meant something like 'how many local meetings have you felt you belonged in?') the detail of which I invented as I went along. There were five main sections in the schedule: the preamble on interview conditions; personal details of the person interviewed, locating them in both Quaker and wider world; questions about how they understood the Quaker organization; questions about conflict and Quakers in conflict; questions about conflict handling. A final section encouraged reflection on the interview process. Each section had several main questions, with follow ups or prompts. The schedule was not rigidly adhered to. Often once a person started to talk they answered many of the questions in recounting one episode. However, the schedule was useful to check whether there was any particular topic which had not arisen naturally. Each section was noted onto prompt cards in a separate colour, and it was easy to do this checking process as the colour changed. The schedule was probably too long and too complicated. If there were questions which did not stimulate responses I was happy to move on rather than to probe for them.

The Interviews

Interviews took place as follows: one (the pilot) at my home, five at the contributor's home, one at a place of work. The pilot contributor suggested it would be helpful to give prior notice of the questions which implicitly asked for quotation from authoritative literature. This warning was given in the final arrangements letter. The atmosphere of the interviews was relaxed and informal; the three women interviewed in the summer all wore bare feet. I carried out a semi-structured interview, working

from a schedule divided into five major topics, with extra prompt questions (see Appendix B). After explaining the process the topics were: personal information; understanding Britain Yearly Meeting; conflict and experience of Quaker conflict; conflict handling, guidance and role models; an opportunity to make additions or suggestions. I tried to avoid giving the contributors a definition of conflict which might limit what they said. They had all agreed to the subject of the interviews without cavil, and I did not want to limit or lead them. I used phrases like 'What sort of thing comes to mind when you use the word 'conflict'? The average length of the interviews was two hours fifteen minutes. All the informants were interested and articulate. The content was recorded on mini discs.

Analysis

I transcribed the interviews, becoming very familiar with the content, then annotated them according to the first stage of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 2003). This method makes sure that any later stage of analysis is rooted in the actual words and explanations of the participants in the research project. In one margin a mark was put against particularly interesting or seemingly significant remarks. In the other margin marks indicated developing subjects and themes. Some groupings were factual information about contributors, others were general themes like 'rules/ making rules/ breaking rules'. These themes and the contributors were then formed into a matrix framework, so that it was possible to identify who said what about which theme, and how much material had emerged regarding a theme. Reflection throughout this process culminated in the interpretive editing referred to in Chapter 5.

Findings from the Interviews

This section draws very fully on the responses of these few people. They set a tone and outline an understanding which is frequently re-iterated in the later sequences of interviews. Bracketed numbers, as in (K1), indicate and differentiate the contributors.

Perception of the Quaker organization

There is no doubt that all the Key Informants were describing the same organization. Their accounts of its distinguishing characteristics at times used the same concepts, or even phrases, though they were not repeating a parroted mission statement or a creed.

Equality and hierarchy

All contributors emphasised the equality of all participants in Quaker activities, the dislike of any idea of hierarchy, and the stress on the value of each individual. It is a basic Quaker tenet, re-expressed by K3, that there is *'that of God'* in everyone (QFP 19.32 Fox), or by K6 as *'we are all equal in the sight of God'*. This thought may be found in other denominations, but it is made explicit in Britain Yearly Meeting with *'no priests'* (K2), *'no paid clergy'* (K1). It goes further than that; not only are there no priests there is *'no leader'* (P1), *'each opinion counts'* (K5), *'status is not important'* (K3), *'all can be led by the spirit'* (K6). There is a *'different relation to authority'* (K5) and in secular terms the structure is *'as flat as it could be'* (K4). Though this is not always perfectly achieved because *'they'll probably listen to some people more than others'* (K3), the participants did not doubt that this equality was the wish and intention of the group. There is no trace of a hope for a strong leadership.

Decision making

Therefore decision making within the organization is a shared exercise, which takes place within the accepted group structures. But *'the way we make decisions is pretty unique'* (K4). The decision making process, often described at **Quaker Business Method**, relies on the recognition of equality of all participants. Four Key Informants considered it as important as equality *'it's a crucial difference ... not voting'* (P1). The way of reaching decisions without a vote is not merely consensus, but the result of *'a long standing recognition that hidden within the minority may be a better solution'* (K6). It is based on respecting each individual and also a belief that some courses of action are more congruent with Quaker insights, or *'more pleasing to God'* (K2). It is the task of the business meeting as a whole to discern which these are. From these basic beliefs have arisen a whole range of conventions about process in such meetings. These will be discussed below. Commitment to the principles of the method was acknowledged as central by all the respondents. Queries could be raised about the conventions, but this was not common.

An Exclusive Culture: Rules and Being 'UnQuakerly'

The interviews were used to look for information about what rules were effective in the organization. This ranged from any formal, authorized or written rules to understandings implicit in the organizational culture but rarely verbalised.

Rules were not a comfortable concept to the Key Informants. They metaphorically wrinkled their noses and substituted more congenial terms *'I don't think we use the*

word rules, we use the word expectations' (K1) or more with the tongue in the cheek *'no, there are very clearly not rules, there are established processes'* (K5). Most found it difficult to give instances of either explicit or implicit rules. When they did it was often about conventions of behaviour in the meeting for worship, such as not speaking twice or not directly debating or criticising previous vocal contributions. Young Friends General Meeting issues a leaflet to newcomers giving guidance about Quaker business method, but such information is not available generally.

All Key Informants were able to offer examples of things which they considered indicators of a Quaker culture. There is a distinctive Quaker lexicon. K6 referred to *'A sort of shorthand which we understand because we have been Quakers for years'* which would include acronyms, initialisms, particular use of words and phrases and probably general moderate style. K6 regretted its exclusiveness which could make people feel left out. There is also an equality based style of address without any titles, which is not so different from the outside world in 2000 as it was in previous centuries. Failure to use this style can raise doubts about the authenticity of someone's claim to membership (K2). A commonly used word to describe Quakers was 'middle class'. Only one contributor noted that these middle class people were regrettably usually white. *'A little grey haired lady with sensible shoes'* was instanced as the archetypal Quaker, with the rider *'and she's unshockable.'* (K2)

There was also reference to the culture of 'knowing the rules' particularly at large business meetings, where people follow behavioural codes almost without knowing they are doing so, such as waiting to be called to speak, not adding new thoughts after a minute is written, waiting in quiet while a minute is prepared. *'There are so many of these funny ones of not thanking people for ministry, not thanking people for service, not putting people's names in minutes, there's all sorts of different levels of rules'* (K2). These last conventions are often not observed at local level in my experience and might not be known to many Friends. K5 expressed an awareness that this aspect of the culture, the knowledge of how to behave in large meetings, can be lost in small local meetings where people only attend that meeting. These customs are often only articulated if they are breached, so may not be obvious to everyone.

A term which is used sometimes humorously, sometimes semi-seriously and sometimes too seriously is 'unQuakerly'. All the contributors recognised this term; most of them admitted to using it sometimes. One disapproved strongly of it *'it's not*

a good thing to use that term at all, and so I react badly when I hear it used' (K4).

The implication here was that it was a judgmental term, where one Quaker judged another. One strong theme emerged: moderation. This could apply when *'you open the second unQuakerly bottle and giggle' (K2)* or *'if people show off their wealth' (K3)* or are pushy and assertive and make themselves noticed.

How are these rules implemented? What happens if someone breaks them? Here there was a united answer; they would be spoken to. *'There's a real intake of breath because you don't [break a rule] and I'm sure people are taken aside and words said. There's a lot of taking aside and words said.'* (K2) This was often seen as the role of the Elders (K3) and expected to take place in private. However, there was no recommended follow up after the speaking to, though it was admitted that this was not always effective. There seemed to be little experience of private 'speaking to' becoming a public argument in the whole meeting. There was occasional mention of people going to other meetings or leaving the Society altogether after difficulties.

K6 came up with a different level of unwritten rule *'One rule is that we shouldn't have ambition for particular appointments and shouldn't go around canvassing support'* which indeed is usually acted upon but rarely articulated. This led him into a revealing reflection on *'the concept of power for Quakers is a no no by definition' 'it's one of those issues which is consciously kept out of mind officially, and yet it's there'.* To seek power or influence would be to break this unwritten rule.

Comparison with the wider world

All contributors had spent time in other organizations and were able to compare these experiences with Quaker experience. Whilst reluctant to generalize several did make relevant comments. One compared the moderation of Quaker presentation with another voluntary organization which was vehemently passionate in its commitment to good works *'it doesn't feel the same'* said K2, with regret that the passionate commitment was missing among Quakers. Others spoke of the atmosphere in secular meetings being *'more open' (P1) 'more competent [handling conflict].... more is said' (K1) 'less tension, clearer rules' (K4)* The point was made that expectations in a Quaker setting are different. In some non-Quaker large meetings one contributor was used to hearing voices raised and people chipping in with barbed comments, even microphones switched off and people dragged out without registering much surprise. But if someone challenges the Clerk in Quaker

Yearly Meeting *'it's quite shocking.... my blood pressure went up, my pulse went up..... because that doesn't happen.'* (K5)

Contributors were aware that not only were their reactions to other organizations different but that they themselves sometimes behaved differently in other settings. P1 described *'best behaviour'* in Quaker settings, particularly within a meeting house; her language would be less vernacular and she would not tell some jokes. K4 was aware that when she had a role of teacher or parent she would feel it was right to be *'fierce'* but when she had no authoritative role in a Quaker meeting this would seem neither necessary nor permitted. K2 surmised that many people had come to join Quakers perceiving it as *'a balm..... a healing place, a privatised place'* where they would have more theological liberty than in their previous experience.

Conflict

Though the main focus of the interviews was conflict within the Quaker organization the Key Informants all referred to the attitude within the organization to conflicts outside it, in the wider world. They were convinced that Quakers had a deservedly good reputation for their contribution to handling international conflict, although at times it may be exaggerated. They pointed to the work of famous Quaker academics and practitioners in several stressful international situations (Bailey,1993; Curle,1981; Mendl,1974).

The view about how Quakers handled conflict among themselves was much more equivocal. First responses tended to be sweeping *'they probably handle it worse than others, because they think they are good at it'* (K2) *'bloody awful'* (K1) *'hopeless at dealing with things in our own meetings'* (K3). But on reflection most moved to the conclusion that Quakers were no worse than other people or groups *'but they ought to be better.... given what they say'*. (K4) This last remark highlights the problem with Quaker conflict handling. A few examples were given of constructive conflict handling. K3 suggested that big issues (e.g. withholding PAYE)³ were dealt with better than smaller ones.

³ Quaker Faith and Practice 24.19 “ In March 1982 Meeting for Sufferings considered the request by some London Yearly Meeting employees that the part of their income tax attributable to military purposes should be diverted to non-military uses”. There was considerable opposition to this proposal, but unity was eventually reached and tax was withheld for three years, until it was ruled unlawful.

No one had difficulty in thinking of examples of conflict within Quaker circles. Topics which had caused friction were wardenship, meeting house developments, theological understandings, ethical and lifestyle issues, and conduct of the meeting for worship. These issues were usually worked on in the regular business meetings, but conflict was also noted by the informants in the correspondence columns of *The Friend*, and the Quaker-B online discussion group.

What feelings do such conflicts evoke in the respondents? Most commonly mentioned were anger, fear, a mixture of pain, hurt, suffering and powerlessness. One contributor suggested conflict might be healthy, but otherwise the responses to conflict were negative. If anger featured it did not seem to empower. The fear that met approaching conflict was identified in various ways. There was a general anticipation that people would get hurt and of *'pain and disintegration'* (K1). More specifically there is the fear that *'we might lose a Friend'* (K6) or *'they'll lose the Society they joined... it will not only change but it will dissolve away entirely'* (K3). If the meeting decides that you should be the person to handle it then there is *'a great feeling of being frightened'* (K6) and also a fear of failure. No one conceived of interest and excitement as conflict approached, or anticipating a positive outcome.

Though there were clearly instances of short and long-running conflicts there was often little to see or hear at the time. Raised voices were very rare, threatening physical behaviour so non-existent as to be remembered distinctly on only one occasion by one informant. *'Most Quakers probably feel that anger is not appropriate'* (K6). Certainly its outward manifestations are rare. So how do people know when there is a conflict to be recognised (or denied)? By *'whispering'* (P1) (K2) or *'what I feel – the intake of breath, the pulse rate... a kind of nervousness'* (K5). Expression of emotion does exist, but it is usually distress *'someone's been very upset. They've spoken and sometimes cried and sometimes left, gone out, stormed out'* (K4).

Looking for recipe knowledge about conflict handling

Searching for a corporate Quaker view or guidance on how to handle the kinds of conflict mentioned proved difficult. *'Wherever you look for people doing conflict studies you'll find Quakers littered all over it [but within the actual organization] there's not that much'* (K2). The general view seemed to be that Quakers should be *'trying to find some way of resolving conflict peacefully without violence, it's all part of*

living your life taking away the occasion for all wars, which we all pay at least lip service to. And I think that is so at a local level as well as at an international level' (K3). More down to earth is *'be nice, listen to people even if you don't agree with them'* (K4). But running parallel with this view of what ought to be was the experience of what is. *'They think if you close your eyes to it eventually time will heal it' 'we don't want to recognise it' 'sweep it under the carpet'* (P1). A more detailed view was *'Friends like to feel that we are all equal in the sight of God and that therefore we don't have conflicts between ourselves. If there are some difficulties we can just put them on one side or put them under the carpet and move forward so that any apparent difficulties are best ignored'*. (K6) This approach was characterised by K1 as *'Friends Drift and Denial Syndrome'*, for instance *'we're pacifists, we don't have conflicts, so there isn't one'*. These views of the function of lack of recognition and denial recurred throughout the interviews.

It was also suggested that the religious framework could produce complicating factors. It was particularly difficult if one participant or faction claimed *'I'm led by the Lord and you're not'* (K1), or if the conflict arises from someone's claim to be led to a conclusion in prayer. The equality basis of Quaker theology finds it hard to cope with this. There are also occasions when Quaker tradition can be used as a smokescreen for bad practice (K6) in a way that appears dishonest.

Transmitting the Recipe Knowledge about Conflict Handling

The Key Informants were steeped in Quaker practice and very articulate. But what they produced about the topic of how to handle conflict among Quakers was surprisingly patchy and half remembered.

How does a Quaker learn the recipe knowledge, particularly recipe knowledge about handling conflict? There is no easy way like the instruction courses of the Roman Catholic Church known to K5. The contributors were quite clear that there were no training courses focused on personal conflict handling which were readily available to most Quakers. This contrasted with secular organizations where regarding handling violence and conflict resolution *'we're continually being trained'* (K3). The two contributors under thirty had a slightly different view; they felt that the workshops designed for people outside Quakerism had also had an educational effect on their generation within Britain Yearly Meeting. Nowadays children are not instructed *'they're supposed to gain it from osmosis'* (K3) but if you grew up in a Quaker family

in the past *'the Quaker way is not to get angry, [not] to show emotion, it's to be calm and to be there for others'* (P1).

It was thought the 'recipes' were written down. *'If they look in Quaker Faith and practice in the right place they will find a paragraph which tells them what to do'* (K6). This view was shared by all the informants, with added commendation of *Advices and Queries*. However, they found it difficult to pinpoint the most relevant extracts. Despite advance warning, only one contributor had relevant passages from Quaker Faith and Practice, the Bible and the Koran ready to quote. Two informants were able to indicate paragraphs which were both relevant and thought provoking (Leonard QFP 20.75; Leavitt QFP 20.71) but the rest were vague and trusting that there would be something useful.

As a check on this lack of directive information I began to ask the contributors if they knew about the Young Friends Epistle from Greensboro'. This is relatively contemporary (1985) but has entered the canon of Quaker thought with three references in Quaker Faith and Practice (QFP p16, 2.92, 29.17). It is distinctive because it recognised a conflict where people were 'enraged, intimidated and offended by ... differences in each other' which was eventually resolved by generous giving on both sides. These extracts did not occur to anyone spontaneously as an example of how to do it. But when it was offered to them many claimed it *'I know it off by heart, because I was there. Well, there of course is the classic conflict passage... a model of conflict handling... a model of what I believe the Quaker culture is about'* (K2), *'it's lovely, 1985.... a good example'* (K3) *'very inspiring, you have to go into it to come through it'* (K5). These extracts were clearly known and highly valued as guidance, but they did not come into the minds of the contributors until prompted. This suggests that Quakers do not usually quote authoritative texts to bolster a viewpoint, or even to answer a question.

Guidance from the Bible usually relied heavily on the Sermon on the Mount and *'turn the other cheek'* (K4), although two spoke in more detail of the learning from Jesus' whole life. Overall there seemed, except for one contributor, less knowledge of and reliance on the Bible than Quaker Faith and Practice. One idea was raised that the Bible often told of *'wise figures'* (K5) who solved difficult problems. This model was said to be often used in other churches where there were recognised authority figures. It did not sit easily with the lack of authority in the Quaker structure, but sometimes people were pushed or tempted into this role.

Practical recipes

What was learned from this generalised guidance? How should the good Quaker tackle conflict? There were two related ideas which recurred frequently, using silence either in a formal business meeting or otherwise in a group, and individual listening. Both the under thirty contributors developed the listening theme into a much more detailed model. *'Listen, listen carefully to both sides... be informedmake the conflict comprehensible to both parties... see the good things in the other person's position....hold that person in the light....this may be hurtful but this person is a child of God as well and you should listen to them....talking and negotiation, because all differences you have to negotiate.'*(K4)

Contributors were asked if they had met, or heard of, someone who they would regard as a good example in conflict handling. Seven of these role-models were still alive and within Britain Yearly Meeting. They were all women (in contrast to the academic theorists and international conflict practitioners who were all men). They were admired for two kinds of skills. The first was more passive *'she's remarkably calm... she's very good at listening and trying to negotiate....she allows all these emotions to bounce...she's like a sponge and soaks it all up'* (K4). *'She handled it by saying please can we have a bit of silence, and that worked'* (K1). The second kind of skill was more active. Role models were *'less afraid and embarrassed by [conflict]. But they also recognise the need for it to be tackled...turning towards it rather than turning away from it'*. (K5). K2 described an elderly Quaker woman who is *'just stunning'*. She worked in community mediation and *'Chief Constables quailed when she came into the room'*, she handled conflict brilliantly *'never lets it lie smouldering, [brought] out the things which were buried under the surface'* *'and she did it with steel and love...it was extraordinarily loving, extraordinarily caring and nothing namby pamby about it...it was strong tough stuff'*.

All participants had knowledge of some organizational procedures which could be invoked when conflict arises. Half of them had personal experience of a **clearness meeting**, either as a focus person or supporter, and thought these were useful. Several had experience of ad hoc groups appointed to a particular difficulty. One had been part of a local committee set up to advise on legal disputes, though the others were unaware of such committees. Four of them had observed the national grievance process which can work through Meeting for Sufferings. They were reluctant to commit themselves as to whether this works. *'It worked in the sense that*

it was overturned... but that has really split the meeting.... so there's no healing' (P1), 'well, it's operational' (K3), 'the fact that we heard almost no more about it meant there was a solution' (K6) but 'I'm never very sure whether if you calm things down...it will be better for everyone'. (K3)

Observing participation

In the period in which these interviews took place there was an unusually large amount of public time given to the consideration of internal conflict in the Quaker organization. This was very different from previous years. K6 said that *'it's a feeling that's around'* that conflict could be ignored no longer. Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre ran the first practical course on conflict handling in meetings; there was a Yearly Meeting session on this topic; the Committee for Eldership and Oversight published a book on the topic; the annual conference for Quakers at the Tuke Centre was on this topic; Quaker Life Representative Council devoted a day to the topic. I was able to take part in these events as part of my normal Quaker life. This rush to consider conflict has not continued at the same pace in subsequent years.

During this time, and subsequently, I was taking on the role of 'observing participation' as described by Torbert (1991)(see Ch.5 p79). I was involved in the events above but also carrying routine responsibilities such as the Clerkship of Brighouse Monthly Meeting and Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire⁴. There has been continual internal dialogue between my active Quaker self and my researcher self, with each influencing the other. I have been sharing the systems and mental frameworks of the organization and attempting to make them work; at the same time developing ideas from the research have produced questions about how things could be done, not all of which I have kept to myself.

Findings from the Quaker context

What was learned from these busy few months of public events?

The weekend practical course was the first on this subject to be held at the Quaker Study Centre, Woodbrooke. It was run by a member of the Woodbrooke staff and the person who had written the book on this subject for Quaker Home Service.⁵ This

⁴ Brighouse Monthly Meeting comprises 5 local meetings in West Yorkshire. Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire is a cross Yorkshire committee which enables and co-ordinates publicity and conferences.

⁵ QHS (2000) *Conflict in Meetings*, Quaker Home Service, Friends House, London.. See further consideration of this in the discussion section ? Ch 9

was clearly the voice of the current Quaker establishment. Participants came to the course because of personal interest but some were sent by their own meetings in the hope they would learn something helpful to a particular problem in their local setting.

The message from these two days was two fold. Firstly that conflict is personal, sensitive, and potentially immensely hurtful. Secondly, that a good Quaker becoming aware of a conflict should either act as a mediator or recruit one. At the end some participants felt that there had not been enough recognition of the fact that conflict is often about issues of truth and justice, as well as mere different points of view. Their point was that conflicts may have to be fought as well as resolved (FN). Most people are involved in conflict as protagonists rather than as mediators and little attention was given to how the individual can develop their own ability in handling conflict. Conflict was allowed to be described as something which happened to other people rather than those present in that group. There was little focus on conflicting feelings or views held by the participants in that group.

For comparison, I attended another workshop run by the Mennonite Church for people from all denominations to consider conflict in their congregations. The Mennonite Church is, like the **Religious Society of Friends**, an historic peace church with a pacifist witness dating from the 16th century. It has a limited presence in the UK and devotes most of its energy to teaching about conflict handling from a Christian standpoint. There was no lack of individual ownership of conflict in this workshop; the leaders acknowledged that they could be in conflict as well as resolving it. Mediation was one technique among several recommended, but there was much more emphasis on the role of each individual in contributing to conflict situations. Clear prescriptive outlines based on Biblical events, were recommended for dealing with small and community sized disagreements⁶. The authority of the Bible and of clergy were assumed, with a confidence that although conflict was endemic people could help themselves to live with it and churches could tell them how to do this.

The third conference was offered to Quakers by a small offshoot of a larger historically Quaker institution⁷. This was a conference aimed at Quakers, not

⁶ For instance the outline based on Matthew 18 vv15-17. This is currently used among Mennonites, but a version of this was also built into the constitution of the Quaker State Pennsylvania by William Penn. Hartshorne, S. V. (1993) *Friends Quarterly*, 348-364.

⁷ It was run by staff at The Tuke Centre, which is based at The Retreat, a psychiatric hospital founded by Quakers in the eighteenth century and still retaining many Quakers on its management committee.

provided by Quakers. The psychotherapists who ran it offered knowledge and experience which might be useful to Quakers. The purpose in running the workshop was to give some Quakers an opportunity to explore the 'emotional baggage' that they brought with them into conflict. There were several unstructured group sessions run on group analytical principles (Foulkes, 1965, Young, 1999)⁸. In contrast with the other two conferences these sessions produced conflict between the participants for personal and group examination. Some Quaker participants were taken aback at some of the stories of Quaker conflict which were offered in discussion. They had a view of Quakerism as a healing place where that sort of thing did not happen. Some expressed a horror and distaste at witnessing conflict, let alone participating in it, which made me aware that my own interest borders on voyeurism.

Yearly Meeting is the annual meeting for church affairs of Britain Yearly Meeting. It is open to every member, though in practice only about 6% attend. A typical number at a reasonably popular session is roughly 700. Sessions can take decisions but can also be occasions for reflection and general direction seeking. In 2000 there was, for the first time, a session (2 hours) in which Friends were 'challenged to acknowledge that conflict does exist within **BYM**..... to share their experiences of conflict, resolved and unresolved, acknowledged or avoided, and to pool practical ideas' (**Documents in Advance**, 2000). This was clearly a novel idea in this setting. The session took place with a variety of contributions. There have been no comments that the views expressed were atypical, although **Quaker News** (Summer 2000, No 36) while saying it was 'an eye opener for the more complacent' wondered whether they should have been expressed at such length. One contributor spoke of the difficulties of acknowledging conflict as 'we know we're all for peace, so these nasty things can't happen here. Once we acknowledge we are human⁹ we will find ways forward.'

It was obviously felt that the point about admitting the existence of conflict needed to be reinforced. When the minute of the Yearly Meeting session was received by **Meeting for Sufferings** the Clerk found it difficult to write an appropriate minute

The conference was advertised among Quakers and aimed specifically at them. All the participants were Quakers, but the leaders were psychotherapists and not Quakers.

⁸ Young's account of unstructured group processes among very psychotherapeutically sophisticated individuals shows how this method often elicits and demonstrates the unpleasant side of human nature. See www.human-nature.com/rmyoung/papers/pap118.html. accessed 2001.

⁹ In this context I would take 'acknowledging we are human' to mean acknowledging that we share common human failings, the 'nasty things' referred to in the previous phrase. Eva Pinthus later suggested that what Quakers call 'being human' other denominations call 'sin'.

receiving this because there was ongoing conflict in his own meeting (*The Friend*, 7.7.2000), but he was told that 'if he had asked for another Friend to take his place for this item, there would have been difficulty in finding one in whose meeting there was no conflict'.

Also during this period I was first directed to 'Quaker-B' the online discussion group, where '*a lot of conflict is played out*' (K2). A person who subscribes to Quaker-B is offered guidance, an 'Online Advices and Queries', about how to behave. It is suggested that participants should treat it as an online meeting for worship, though several have indicated that they see it more as a discussion group. Quaker-B contained some very acrimonious exchanges during this period, and indeed subsequently. The medium records clearly the different styles of personal approach. The tension between the pursuit of truth, justice and supposed factual accuracy and the maintenance of caring personal relationship is frequently demonstrated. The participants on Quaker-B are aware of this and from time to time reflect on their different aims and styles and the difficulties produced by these.

Conflict in Meetings (QHS, 2000) gives authoritative guidance. It places conflict in the meeting as a regrettable fact of life, which may nevertheless prove a valuable learning experience. It reports the issues which have commonly given rise to conflicts and lists the roles and procedures which are available to help in conflict resolution in Quaker settings. It gives example case histories of problems, how they have been worked with and resolved. These 'happy endings' are in striking contrast to the conflicts described to me which were often in full flow, and it was not clear whether they would be resolved or not. Brief instructions for conflict resolution skills are recommended. A version of the dual concern conflict handling model is given, which directs the reader to consider her own behaviour. The 'modes' of the model are translated into animals: compete = shark, accommodate = teddy bear, compromise = fox, collaborate = owl. But the writers of the book have augmented the turtle which represents avoidance by adding two other kinds of avoidance, the ostrich and the lemming. This adaptation of Mediation UK's anthropomorphic model was produced specially for Quaker audiences.

In drawing attention to the different types of conflict handling modes '*Conflict in Meetings*' does attempt to focus on the reactions of the individual. However, overall the book positions itself clearly in Ury's (2000) 'third side'. The Quaker is to take the role of manager, resolver, healer, mediator, and is not expected to have to wrestle

with her own bad temper, irritability, resentment or dislike before doing this, let alone having strong views about the right and wrong in an issue.

Summary

Seven semi-structured interviews were carried out with people at the centre of the Quaker organization. They all accepted Quaker work in international conflict and relief as an integral part of the Quaker purpose. Experienced and authoritative, they described an organization without overt hierarchy. They saw Quakers as having a culture in which material moderation, silence and control of words and feelings were all privileged. Conflict in the organization is seen as regrettable with fear of hurt and damage to individuals and the organization. Preserving relationship takes precedence over right outcome. Despite commitment to the aim of conflict resolution, the interviewees were surprisingly unable to bring forward guidance about how this should be enacted within the organization. Theological and social beliefs about equality and the location of authority in the individual contribute to confusion when decisions and conflicts are handled corporately. Additional evidence to support these impressions is drawn from observing participation at Quaker events focusing on conflict handling.

CHAPTER 7 Grassroots Quakers : The Conscientious Core

This chapter will focus on material from the 25 interviews with 'Grass Roots Quakers' and draw on Field Notes of the same period. The intention was to explore the same topics as with the Key Informants, but with Quakers whose main experience was at the 'grass roots' of the organization in the ordinary life of the local meetings

Interview Method : Sample and data collection

In seeking participants for this group of interviews I hoped to get information covering a geographical spread. The participants would be from representative groups across a wide area, using local experience. These 'Grassroots Quakers' were drawn from 25 **Monthly Meetings** (Quaker administrative districts) in the North of England and Scotland. A body called the **Northern Friends Peace Board**, with representatives from all Monthly Meetings, covers this area. Its Secretary and Clerks allowed me to approach these representatives. I wrote a letter to them, consciously using Quaker style . (It was addressed 'Dear Friend' and signed 'In friendship', which is often used as a Quaker signature. I mentioned my length of membership, my current meeting and my university, but gave no other Quaker or academic information.) I asked these representatives to find me a person to interview in their area. I used the term 'grass roots Quaker', but then said 'by leaving the choice in your hands I hope to get a wide variety of people. Your choice can be any age or gender, not necessarily particularly interested in peace or conflict handling. They can be members or attenders but in the latter case should have been to at least five Quaker business meetings.' (See letter in Appendix A.) This method of recruitment was only partially successful, and in some areas I followed up with an approach to the Monthly Meeting itself, or by requests to my own acquaintances to identify a volunteer.

25 interview volunteers were produced from 27 Monthly Meetings approached. There were 16 women and 9 men (a similar gender distribution to the national figures). The volunteers were mainly aged in their fifties and above; there was one 46 year old and one 38 year old. The oldest contributor was 79 More than half of them had served as **Clerks** and half of them had served as **Elders**. They were very experienced, with an average of 24 years membership. The range was 1 year to 76 years of membership, with 17 with over ten years of membership. Though these people were willing to identify themselves as 'grassroots' Quakers, they

turned out to be the conscientious, load bearing people in the Quaker community. The approach had been through the corporate structures of the organization and these were the people who were aware of these and felt it their duty to respond. These were not 'congregational' Quakers (Dandelion, 1996b) who focused only on their own meeting.

The interview schedule (See Appendix B.)

The interview schedule for the 'Grassroots' Quakers was very similar to that used with the Key Informants, both in content and method of use. However, it was streamlined to four sections. The first section on personal details asked for information which would indicate the nature of the 'grassroot' connection with the organization. The section about the organization left out some previously unsuccessful questions about cultural metaphors. The section about conflict re-ordered some of the questions and tried to stick more closely within personal experience. The section about conflict handling added a question about gender and was more specific in enquiring about conflict procedures within the framework of the Quaker Business Method. In the last section I also added the 'animal typology' version of the dual concern model. This was printed on a separate sheet and I asked the contributors to read it and then talk with me about how they saw themselves in this framework.

Interview Process

The interviews were carried out in places chosen by the contributors, most often in their home, three times in their place of work, and once in a meeting house. With Grassroots Quakers I used a semi-structured interview schedule with prompt cards. These were small cards on which the questions from the interview schedule were written, in a different colour for each of the sections. These were updated and developed from the schedule used with the Key Informants (See Appendix B). Questions which had produced little response or puzzlement in earlier interviews were discarded, for instance a direct question about metaphors to describe the Quaker organization. The interviews varied a great deal in style depending on the needs and approach of the contributor. Some contributors were discursive, with particular points they wanted to make; others were neat thinkers who were content to respond fairly briefly to the interview prompts. However, the schedule was never abandoned. This produced a wide range of responses on most of the topics, which enabled comparisons and showed some trends. The average length of a 'grassroots' interview was 100 minutes (range 60

minutes to 142 minutes). Each interview was recorded onto one or two mini-discs. One contributor asked for a record of her interview and was supplied with a copy of the transcript, as she did not have the equipment to use a mini-disc. A one page summary of findings from all the interviews was sent to each of the contributors at the end of the series. Comments were invited, but response was negligible.

Analysis Process

The transcribed interviews were entered into the NVivo 1.2 programme for analysis. While waiting to become proficient with NVivo I had gone back through the transcriptions in leisurely reading, using the first stages of interpretative phenomenological analysis as in Stage One (Smith, 2003a). On the left hand side of the transcribed dialogue I marked any significant or interesting data; in the right hand margin I indicated any themes or groupings of ideas. These right hand markings came thick and fast at first but gradually diminished to almost nothing by the time I had reached the later interviews. These themes were marked onto index cards, and then sorted into groupings of connected topics.

NVivo 1.2 uses electronic help in the basic tasks of qualitative data preparation, coding, and formulating memos. It can proceed to more sophisticated exploration of the data using search tools, and present findings diagrammatically using the Model Explorer, though I only played with the latter function (See diagram on p 130.) Throughout I was fortunate to have the guidance of Graham Gibbs in person as well as in print (Gibbs, 2002). Using NVivo I was aware of the sequential process of making an analysis. First the words of the contributors were imported into the programme, secondly these were coded into categories using the node system, thirdly memos could be written drawing out patterns and distinctions in the data. Finally an overall analysis linking data and theory could be formulated. At any stage in this process it was very easy to locate and check an item in the earlier stages.

Findings

The process described above of building to theoretical analysis from the voices of the contributors runs the risk of obscuring the voices with the interpretation of the writer. In this section it is my intention to use the voices of the contributors as much as possible. Inevitably in the process of selecting quotations I mingle and impose my interpretation on that of the contributors. The extracts serve as

evidence that my interpretation is connected with the contributions in the interviews. Recognising those limitations I will explore the information from the 25 'grassroots' interviews under the following headings

- 1) Attitude of the contributors to the research topic
 - a) General Approach
 - b) Alternative Viewpoints
- 2) What is Quaker conflict about?
 - a) Definitions and Issues
 - b) Processes
- 3) How is Quaker conflict handled ?
 - a) Avoiding Conflict
 - b) Corporate Conflict Management Responses
 - c) Role-Models and Recipe Knowledge
- 4) Constraints, conventions and rules.
 - a) Being UnQuakerly
 - b) Speaking out on Conflict
 - c) Silence

1 Attitude of the contributors to the research topic

a) General Approach

Among these contributors conflict among Quakers seemed to be regarded as regrettable, difficult or problematic. While there is some acknowledgement that in theory conflict can produce creative results, in practice only one contributor sounded at all convincing when he said he usually saw it as an interesting challenge (G15). All the Quakers interviewed wanted to take part in the research project because they felt change was needed. The level of interest was probably biased by the way the sample was recruited using the Northern Friends Peace Board and announcing the topic. However, there is no evidence that other 'grass roots Quakers' do not wish for change on this topic. Field Notes record several individual Quakers who encouraged me in my work, but then said something like 'when will you be ready to tell us how to do it then?' A prescription was hoped for.

Quaker conflict was expected to be very hurtful to individuals and commonly resulted in someone leaving the group. This expectation of hurt came across very clearly in the process of setting up and starting the interviews. Without exception the contributors required to be strongly assured of their anonymity, speaking of a fear that they might say something that would identify and hurt other people. Bringing accounts of Quaker conflict into the open was dangerous and threatening. After the interviews had taken place I was told of one Monthly Meeting [FN] that had not felt able to take part because it was 'too small and too sore', and did not want to expose itself. However, the example of conflict given which had caused the 'soreness' was typical of those described in the interviews.

The people who contributed interviews were in effect self selected and ostensibly willing to co-operate, but showed ambivalence about the extent of co-operation. Some were keen to give accounts of difficult experiences, glad of the opportunity to talk about something which they felt they could not talk about elsewhere. For a few this was an off-loading or letting off steam occasion which felt to me like a counselling session, for others it was a chance to reflect on something about which they were troubled or puzzled or where they hoped for change. Despite this willingness, several contributors were cautious and consciously withheld some information, acknowledging this as they did so. Some had already discussed with others (for instance a group of Elders) what they could feel free to talk about. Many of the contributors had made notes before the interview to remind themselves of points they wished to mention. Some followed up after the interview with letters, either developing points they had made or enclosing items such as letters exchanged in the argument cited in their interview.

b) Alternative viewpoints

Within the 25 contributors there were seven who added a different point of view. They were aware that their own attitude to conflict had changed and developed. Though they worked within the Quaker ambience they were also aware that there were other approaches to conflict, which they sometimes found more satisfying. These were people who had had some experience of counselling or personal therapy, either receiving it or giving it, or had been trained in a system of self-examination in another religious tradition.

'Before I did the counselling I became aware that I gave mixed messages, people didn't understand that, I came over as aggressive rather than assertive.....on my fiftieth birthday I treated myself to a thousand pounds worth of counselling. And I am remarkably different since then. That was the best thousand pounds I've spent to get rid of a whole lot of crap...from years previous and just let go of it. I'm thoroughly laid back, ordinary and so on.' G6

'during my counselling course, which was quite intensive, lots of these things were unravelled for me. That was quite helpful. I'd run away from any kind of conflict rather than face it for quite a lot of my life... it has changed a lot'.G23

These people felt that learning to examine themselves and their inner feelings had made them more comfortable in experiencing conflict, and that Quakers could usefully 'pick up' this skill from the counselling world.

Another alternative view came from comparing experience within the Quaker world and outside it. Though there was very little complaint about Quaker methods, except the time they took, there were occasional glimpses of how things were done elsewhere. These were not all bad: in union meetings, staff rooms or supervision groups there was a degree of confident outspokenness which was quite acceptable to the Quakers involved, and in which they even took part. The actors were not *'bothered about their relationship with the other person'* (G22). The relationship could be relied on in tackling a common problem.

2. What is Quaker conflict about?

a) Definition and issues

Conflict among Quakers is located in the shared corporate life not on the fringes of the organization. Personal disagreements were not quoted as examples of conflict, which was seen as involving several individuals, groupings and factions. Most of the contributors gave accounts of conflict which did not greatly involve themselves; it was 'somebody else's conflict' which they observed. The reasons for conflict fell into only a few categories. Theological differences were accepted easily and not challenged. The issues which frequently provoked unavoidable conflict were practical specific questions where there could only be one answer, often a sum of money. Such issues were about change to meeting houses, or employment of staff. However, these and other starting issues were soon lost sight of, and the argument would become about how to be a 'proper Quaker'. Identity conflict was clearly discernible from the early stages of disputes. It

prolonged and enlarged some instances into large and distressing webs of tension and recrimination.

Though I had explained in the letters to the contributors that the research was into conflict among Quakers I had deliberately offered no more information. If asked how I defined conflict I tried to turn this back to the contributor, saying I would be interested to hear about whatever they thought came under this heading. If pushed, which was rare, I used Schrock Shenk's (1999) definition of 'differences plus tension'.

Contributors defined for themselves what they considered to be conflict in their own experience, referring mainly to incidents within the Quaker context. Usually these were disagreements that came to the attention of the local group at least, and often arose or were handled within a meeting of the group. There was only one account of a disagreement between two individuals which did not involve others, and which they cleared themselves (G23). Most of the other contributors were not aware that they had had conflicts with individuals; what they remembered and instanced were occasions when carrying a role had taken them into a particular position of conflict. There was one contributor alone (G11) who commented how strange it was that he had never had a disagreement with another Quaker 'because it is normal for people to take up different positions'. Most other contributors seemed to think a low level of inter-personal conflict was natural to Quakers.

Although it was hard to find accounts where the contributors saw themselves as being in conflict they were well aware of conflicts which had happened round about them. From the 25 contributors 27 more or less complete stories emerged of incidents or continuing processes which they described as conflicts. In addition to these there were many examples of behaviour or exchanges where the whole story was not given.

The NVivo node 'Conflict – Examples' collected the detail about the instances of conflict which were described. The most frequent reason for conflict (10 mentions) seemed to be issues about 'how things should be done' focused on Quaker procedures and meetings. For instance these included inappropriate behaviour (canvassing before a meeting), opposition after a meeting had taken a decision, and issues about the role of the Clerk and the meeting. These were

initial reasons for disputes but there were others which fell in this category where the initial reason had almost been forgotten but the continuing saga about correct process, or indeed negotiating Quaker identity, had gained a momentum of its own. The message sent between opposing and estranged individuals or factions was 'You're not being a proper Quaker'. The original issue may have been cognitive, but it was identity conflict, about ideal Quaker behaviour, which prolonged and postponed an outcome¹.

This applied to the four 'big issues' which came into the catchment of the research. I use 'big issue' to describe a matter which arises within one particular meeting but then swells and occupies the attention of overseeing meetings, possibly with intervention from national level. Four such items were told to me in the 'key' and 'grassroots' interviews. One was described by a person who had played a peripheral role in it; the second by a 'gatekeeper', an interview contributor and a research colleague; the third was described by five different contributors (1 Key Informant and 4 Grassroots) from five different angles of involvement; the fourth was described by three contributors (1 Grassroots and 2 Workshops) and several other people not within the research project but in ordinary Quaker life, my observing participation. These 'big issues' came to my notice through the interviews; they were not generally publicly known, or if they were they were only referred to discreetly. Though the causes of these 'big issues' could be claimed under one of the common reasons cited below the length and difficulty of the acting out of the conflict soon became focused on how to be a 'proper Quaker'.

After the 'proper Quaker' examples there were 8 mentions each of issues about wardenship, and changes to the meeting house (i.e. relocation, sale, development). The topics which provoked unavoidable conflict were those which required group decisions on practical matters, often where a specific figure of money had to be agreed within a time limit. Disagreement on theological matters does not often require a contract to be signed², and therefore diversity can flourish at length. If the whole Quaker group is to be held responsible for something specific and practical there is no room for diversity.

¹ See Chapter 4 p53 for the distinctions between cognitive and identity conflict.

² The exception to this was the decision whether Quakers should agree to join the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland, taken at Yearly Meeting at Aberystwyth in 1997. Tensions about this decision continued for several years but became focused on the way the matter had been handled, thus putting the dispute into the 'how it should be done' category.

Six contributors mentioned conflict with the meeting after a relationship breakdown; this was related to the meeting's perceived failure to comfort or respect the perceived different status of partners within the meeting, not to disapproval of the split or siding with either partner. Unacceptable spoken contributions in meeting for worship were mentioned in detail five times, but much more often in passing. Issues about the ending of membership, either on the initiative of the member or the meeting, were well known, as was hassle about the behaviour of young children in meeting.

b) Processes

How did these conflicts work themselves out? Or, were they resolved or not? Different people in a dispute would give different responses. One thing did become clear: conflicts take time. A situation referred to by a K participant in 2000 or a G participant in 2001, which seemed insoluble then, might be told about again by an E participant in 2002 or a W participant in 2003 when it appeared to be coming to an end. There were no quick fixes; conflict had to be lived through. As the conflicts became more about being 'proper Quakers' as much attention was given to process and relationship as outcome.

In attending to process contributors often referred to a need for openness, or how openness had been missing. The 27 examples which were presented as a coherent or nearly complete story were examined to see if there was any connection between the 'open' or 'closed' way in which they were dealt with and whether resolution or clearness had been reached. 'Open' was taken to include occasions where those involved felt they had participated and been responsible. 'Closed' was when there were complaints about secrecy, misplaced confidentiality and lack of information about what had been going on. There were 23 accounts where there was enough information to hazard a judgement. All except one of the eight 'open' examples had moved on to a position of clearness, where the participants were willing to let the issues go. 13 of the 15 'closed' examples were still rumbling along at the time of the interview. Of course this reflects the way the narrators have constructed their accounts, a more distanced estimate might show these to be purely individual viewpoints. Nevertheless the subjective construction is important. The contributors certainly felt that openness was positive and likely to hasten a good outcome. Resolution or letting go of conflict is associated with openness and sharing for all concerned. Confidentiality

or secrecy, seen as power in the hands of a few, cuts across the Quaker belief in equality and 'that of God in everyone'. Contributors wanted each person to have the possibility of input and carrying responsibility.

3 How is Quaker conflict handled?

Those within the Quaker organization expect it to have less conflict than other similar groups. When tensions arise they are frequently not recognised, ignored, 'walked around' without exploration, or in an optimistic scenario recognised and worked on very early so that they do not grow into conflict. When conflict is acknowledged it is experienced as surprising, even shocking and distressing. The articulate and educated contributors shared a reluctance to speak authoritatively about what to do in conflict. They presented themselves as fumbling and lacking in confidence to deal with conflict. Procedures and techniques are known about but relatively rarely used and are only of limited effectiveness. The community convinces itself it has relatively little conflict by inhibiting the expression of anger, which is 'unQuakerly'.

a) Conflict Avoidance

There was no doubt among the contributors that Quakers had something valuable to offer the wider world at community and international level, where their efforts at conflict resolution were uncritically evaluated as very positive. Because of the belief in expertise in this field there was a feeling that somehow Quakers themselves ought to be able to cope without disputing or to resolve conflicts swiftly and easily. However, there was, sometimes reluctant, acknowledgement that disputes do arise. More often it was felt that they were evaded, either by intelligent foresight and alternative action, by the process of '*walking round it*' (G15) and not exploring the differences, or by accommodation and giving in before a confrontation is reached. 'Sweeping under the carpet' was an often used phrase, but although recognised as a Quaker habit, there was doubt whether it was more common among Quakers than other groups. K2 argued that when there was a really bad conflict the Quaker community handles it well, but this is not supported by the grassroots accounts of the second 'big issue' over nearly ten years.

Below are some examples of the ways in which Quakers said they may avoid conflict. This can be by not recognising it, or calling it something else. G4 with a

lifetime as a Quaker and recent experience of a big issue could not remember conflict.

'Not in a sense where there's division and hatred, no, I hope I'm true here. One tends to forget about the bad things in life and remember good ones. I'm not conscious of such things. I'm conscious of knowing there's been difficulties between [people] but I haven't actually come across something.'

G4 had admitted there were things that he did not intend to tell me about, but it seems he was also not telling himself about them.

It was common for Quakers to accommodate to the group. G7, a person with high artistic credentials had done this.

'I reluctantly agreed, against the majority. I thought it was the design of the other ones that was needed and I didn't feel strongly enough. It was not a perfect decision, but I felt I was standing out against unnecessary expense, that was all.'

G5 also had a plan within her area of expertise, but finding opposition from a powerful, centrally very responsible and respected Friend, redefined it as

'a minor thing and I just let it go. I never did it. But I did do it a couple of years after she died.'

Contributors accepted that conflict avoidance was common both within and outside Quakerism and that it could happen inadvertently. G9 was not comfortable with this.

'I believe most of us have a knowledge of when we're ducking something. We kind of do it so quickly we don't notice. It's almost like you've swallowed a bad taste. And we don't even want to notice that we've swallowed it, but I think many of us do know.'

G15 described what he saw as a typical Quaker way of behaving which he called 'walking round' conflict.

'the conflict is about what colour to paint the bathroom and there's one faction that wants to paint it beige and another faction that wants to paint it grey, then rather than actually deal with the conflict a third party will say let's paint it red and then you do that. It avoids what the original, it doesn't deal with the conflict, it just goes round it, takes a third way.'

He contrasted this with the thorough exploration of the merits and needs of differing positions which he experiences in his daily work.

All the contributors responded in some way to the animal typology version of the dual concern model of conflict handling³ found in *Conflict in Meetings*. Only one disliked it and enquired what the point of it was with some asperity⁴. All the others were willing to talk their way through it. Contributors were not asked to place themselves in one type for all time and many of them recognised that they behaved in different ways under different circumstances. Overall the owl (the collaborating problem solver) was most highly commended 'an owl is obviously what one would like to be'. G 17 The fox (compromising) was often mentioned, and acknowledged as a personal attribute but not so highly commended. Several people were cautious about compromise, which they regarded as a bad, or at least second best, thing. Turtles and other avoiders were often observed in the characteristics of others, sometimes, but less frequently, among the contributors themselves.

Here G3 reflects on her own experience and position.

'I started off as a lemming, because I had no confidence to be anything else. I've never been an ostrich, though I'd like to be. I'm very much an owl – I have been a lot- I still am a bit of an owl. Sometimes when there has to be a fox that's the only thing that's going to work. I'm not a teddy bear. And I'm not a shark. I have taken a recent decision as far as I possibly can to become a turtle. Since my run in with the [Elders] I've really backed off. I probably won't stay that way. I'm sort of distancing myself. I don't want to get involved in anything. A little bit of recovery time and I've got to think my life through. I've made a decision at the moment to try and reclaim some aspects of my life that I've given up, as I was so busy serving Friends. I thought I'm 70 I must draw a line under this. [talks about other aspects of life] I find being a turtle quite helpful, but really I am more of an owl. I try and see all round it. It's one thing when it's somebody else's conflict- you can stand back – even though you're involved and feeling other people's hurt – but when it's your own conflict it's something very different.'

³ The dual concern model outlines five approaches to conflict handling: competing, compromising, collaborating, accommodating and avoiding. (See Chapter 4 for full detail) Mediation UK equates these with sharks, foxes, owls, teddy bears and turtles. *Conflict in Meetings* adds lemmings and ostriches to the representation of avoiding.

⁴ Though I did not reply at the time I later realised that its value is in how it directs the attention of the actor to their own part in the conflict, and also gives them to a vocabulary to talk about it.

Here G3 shows the overwhelming commendation for the owl strategy, but is unusual in perceiving that this is more a mediator's position than a protagonist's. Like most of the contributors she rejects teddy bears and sharks equally and grudgingly admits the necessary effectiveness of the fox compromise. Her espousal of the turtle position follows several bruising years of trying to be an owl in a 'big issue', though she attributes this change to more personal experience, 'the run in with the Elders'. G3's distinction between 'somebody else's conflict' and 'your own conflict' is crucial to understanding how Quakers experience conflict. The recipe knowledge is clear how you should behave in somebody else's conflict – you should be an owl. 'But when its your own conflict it's something very different' and there is little constructive guidance.

Do Quakers think it matters if they avoid conflict? Do they really think this is the best way to do things? G23 articulates the view that this is in not line with the rest of Quaker thinking and sketches out an alternative

'it's highlighted in Quakerism, within Quakers, because of the expectations of being honest and speaking truth to power. And all these other phrases that we glibly come out with, and when we get down to the nitty gritty this is what it actually means. It means actually saying what you really think and honestly and it could be hurtful but I've got to say it anyway. I don't mean to be hurtful but for us to move on we've got to clear the air. There's no point in sweeping it under the carpet, and I think there's a lot of that in this being frightened of emotions bit for me, well what would happen, well I might get angry or I might get upset or tearful or whatever. People are afraid of that so they don't do it.'

b) Corporate Conflict Management Responses

Compared with the clarity of the 1931 Book of Discipline, where a short but authoritative chapter was devoted to the practice of arbitration, 21st century Quakers are confused and ignorant about what can or should be done when conflict arises. The Book of Discipline offers some scattered guidance, but few contributors were familiar with this. They had little experience of most of the methods of conflict resolution claimed by Quakers, and what they had often disappointed them with its ineffectiveness. Often they felt that arrangements had been made in such a way that they were not fully aware of details. They did not feel competent to explain to others what should be done.

If avoidance had failed and conflict had flourished the contributors had seen the following responses. Local Quakers could be appointed to work with the problem; clearness meetings were set up; worship sharing was brought into action; mediation was offered or arranged; appeals were made to Meeting for Sufferings. Many of these events were not fully known to the person giving the account, partially hidden behind confidentiality. Several people commended clearness meetings but did not have direct experience of one. G24 instanced a clearness meeting called by the meeting, not an individual, which was useful. G14 gave detailed information about a worship sharing occasion which involved most of the meeting, and was followed by an appraisal meeting. Mediation was rarely used in the experience of these contributors; there was one example of this being supplied by one Monthly Meeting to another. G12 (an experienced mediator) felt that members often regarded this as too 'professional'; they thought that Quakers ought to be able to solve their own problems naturally. One very salient point was made by G12, that although there is often talk about getting help from 'outside' in arranging something like mediation, that always refers to outside the local meeting, but never outside the boundaries of Quakerism. There were two experiences of 'commissions of enquiry' set up by Quaker national bodies; opinions about the effectiveness and helpfulness of these varied, and knowledge about the process was felt to be withheld.

Several meetings, or groups of meetings, had standing arrangements to respond to conflict, or the contributors thought they had. Two Monthly Meetings had small ongoing groupings; one was described as a 'listening group' but the contributor knew little about it; the other was drawn from Monthly Meeting Elders and Overseers and its existence was publicly noted at the beginning of each triennium. One Monthly Meeting had a committee which offered advice (including on legal matters), perhaps more like a Citizens Advice Bureau than a conflict resolution group. Another Monthly Meeting had a disputes resolution committee, but there had been no referrals to it for the past ten years. Only one Monthly Meeting was developing a Conflict Resolution Group during the time of the research. After difficult times in this Monthly Meeting it had been decided this group was needed for the development of best practice. This was to include training Friends in the Monthly Meeting and to offer intervention when called on to assist in the resolution of a dispute, In its first year it had four referrals, one of which was requesting training. It later organised training sessions and demonstrated how it would work, using role play.

Three contributors told me about the existence of the **Yorkshire General Meeting Conciliation Committee** but seemed unaware that it had been laid down for at least 10 years. Field Notes record how the question of conflict resolution came to Yorkshire General Meeting in October 2002. In the **Yorkshire Book of Members 2000** it stated that if any disagreement arose which could not be resolved within the local meeting the General Meeting Clerk or Assistant Clerk should be consulted, in order to seek the right way of moving forward. With the preparation of a new Book of Members the Clerks said that they did not feel equipped to hold this responsibility and asked either to lay it down or transfer it to someone else. The Finance and Trusts Committee said they were willing to undertake this responsibility, although there were two queries from the meeting⁵ about whether they were equipped for this either. The responsibility was transferred as suggested. The whole item took between five and ten minutes. It was set in a day when the two main speakers, using perhaps three hours of the General Meeting's time, were on the subject of conflict resolution on international matters. Though there were conflicts in the General Meeting there was no referral about conflict to the committee in the following twenty two months; the system was not used.

c) Role models and Recipe Knowledge

The interview contributors found it easy to recall people whose conflict handling they admired. By exploring these methods of conflict handling it was possible to elicit some of the 'recipe knowledge' for Quaker conflict handling. The data from the interview showed several different models or 'recipes' for how to be a conflict manager. The most common, but least detailed, instructions were for quiet 'shock absorbers'. More guidance was given for the 'active questioners' and 'quiet diplomatists'. Two unusual examples depicted the ideal experience of a participant, not manager, in a conflict; the disputing pair were imagined in a fine balance, joined together in a dance, with a mutual understanding of the discipline in which they performed.

The largest group of descriptions was of what G11 termed 'shock absorbers'⁶. They carried a distinctive atmosphere of operating '*very quietly and very calmly*' (G17), '*she never gets disturbed about anything*'(G21) '*can be a listener without*

⁵ These queries came from myself and another Friend.

⁶ See also the quote from K4 on P? of Chapter 6

getting in a turmoil' (G7) 'trying to take the heat out' (G19) 'non judgemental, an aura of trust' (G23) G16 spoke of someone who

'seems to me to be very calm, really calm inside, to rely on something that's very deep and strengthening, so that the whole of her exterior presence and attitude and behaviour can be concentrated on defusing whatever is going on. And that I greatly admire.'

Listening is seen as the main activity of the 'shock absorbers'. *'Someone who can be a listener' (G7) 'being prepared to listen while the ranting and the raving goes on and then taking that apart' (G19). G4 commended listening but realised that it was not an end in itself, it was to achieve 'standing in each other's shoes again – that's the answer'.*

The next group is the active questioners⁷, Here is an account from G18

'now this is in an academic context – but it was a Quaker who had done the alternatives to violence thing. And there was a huge eruption of conflict in a conference, and he was able little by little in the questions, by the way he phrased the questions, and in the way he proceeded to bring the prime antagonists close together, and he did that just by asking very sensitive and careful questions that was respectful of both of them. And I thought, hahaha, I'd like to do that, that was wonderful, brilliant.'

As the examples of active questioners so far have described Quakers working in non-Quaker contexts, I will add a Quaker working among Quakers, from G5.

'she could pick up little bits from here there and everywhere and ask quite difficult questions. I'm not saying it didn't cost her a bit to ask them, but she appeared to just be able to ask them without worry, but I'm not saying she didn't feel right chummed up inside, but she could just ask the right questions sometimes. She handled things very well.'

A third common experience is the 'quiet diplomatist', who talks as well as listens. *'She would sit quietly and kind of pull the ends together...she just pulled out of the melting pot the things that were eternal' (G7) 'a lot of very quiet work talking to people trying to make them understand' (G19) G3 says*

'she never appears to be doing anything but she does. She talks to people, she talks to this person and she talks to that person. I

⁷ See also the quote from K2 on P99 of Chapter 6

was in conflict with [elders] recently and she was talking to me and she was talking to [the elder] who had sparked off the conflict and was explaining to me what the other person was trying to do, and actually I could see that but I just didn't want that particular solution, because I couldn't work with it but could offer her another solution. So [she] was going between the two of us. She was also giving me a lot of incidental advice. She didn't appear to be –she was being objective to both sides, but I found her very supportive. I should imagine the other Friend did as well.'

G11 provided a view of some non-Quaker conflict managers '*they had a terrific freedom of thought and dared to think the unthinkable and get their minds round the situation*'. All the examples above are of conflict management, not participation in conflict.

There were two examples which were notably different in that they depicted the conflicting couple as a unit, as partners in a joint activity. From G9

' They manage to hold a balance between holding on to their integrity and respecting the other. It's so simple in sentences and hard to live. About respecting themselves, equally. And respecting the other and you can watch them do it. And they do not deny or dilute their opinion or their principle and the other person feels honoured and respected. It's magic when you see it and it's rare.'

G 15 uses a vivid metaphor from a Tai Chi exercise called 'pushing hands'

'it's like this, a two person exercise you have, and when it's working well the two people meld together so that you can't really tell who's pushing and who's yielding, there's only the contact.....if you make a true connection with the other person the conflict goes away...it's like a dance, it doesn't get rid, it's an interplay, it's like play, because human beings need to play with each other so it becomes- you use the other person's energy so that you take it when there's something coming towards you and give it back to them with perhaps something else added.'

This is an example of shared discipline⁸, which takes precedence over the needs or wishes of the individuals. It is probably how Quakers should behave, accepting one discipline rather than arguing over which version of the discipline is correct.

⁸ I use the word 'discipline' in the sense of a professional discipline, an accepted set of guiding principles. In this case it is the discipline of the form of the martial art.

Finally there was one mention of firm, assertive, and *'suitable'* behaviour by a Clerk in controlling *'an extremely inappropriate speech'* (G20), an acceptable use of authority.

4. Constraints, conventions and rules

Quaker organizational culture is one of moderation. It avoids extremes and is temperate in conduct and expression (Oxford Concise Dictionary). It also moderates, in that it renders interactions less violent, intense, rigorous, and vehement. Sometimes discernible in the rules or guidelines of the organization, conventions and constraints are also embedded in the recipe knowledge. Quakers may be influenced by these without full awareness. The process of moderation lessens the vehemence of expression of emotion, especially anger; it also tempers expression and rigour in the use of speech; it privileges silence in order to assist these processes.

a) Being UnQuakerly

The most useful data about achieving moderation came from the responses exploring the idea of being 'unQuakerly'. Like the Key Informants the Grassroots Quakers were all familiar with this phrase, but the strongest thread which came out of their ruminations was that it was unQuakerly to be angry, something often associated with conflict.

For instance

'if I was being angry about something I'd say to myself oh that's not Quakerly' G24

'someone has said oh that's rather unQuakerly, giving the impression that somehow as a Friend you mustn't display anger, or irritation, or temper. Be always very cool and calm – something I find rather hard at times' G14

This may be learnt growing up in a Quaker family, Here a middle-youth woman remembers what she learnt

'it's unQuakerly to show anger, and it's unQuakerly to have an argument, and its unQuakerly to wear lipstick' G20

The connection between anger and unQuakerliness may still be taught, as this male parent realises

'but we might well say to our kids, I wonder if my mum ever said this to us, if you don't tidy your bedroom I'm going to come and do something very unQuakerly to you'. G13

In a Quaker context G10 expressed an anger which was justified, and which changed things positively, but he still regretted it.

'they were discussing racism in, I forget whether it was the police the prison service or whatever, and concluding that it was not a terribly important issue. And I sort of erupted on them, rather to my astonishment and theirs. And there was a prolonged silence after that and then the discussion continued in quite a different frame, but I should have put it in a different way [laughs] it was not the most tactful of things to do.'

b) Speaking Out on Conflict

Though Quakers have a tradition of plain speaking⁹ there is little evidence of this from the contributors. In addition to not feeling free to feel or show anger, the contributors were also cautious about speaking out. They described Quakers as tentative and diffident, and did not expect confident speaking out. They did not approve of people taking an authoritative stance or offering advice, especially with regard to conflict handling. G18 was not alone in feeling

'if you're asking me could I advise I think my answer is I'd be very very..... I think I'd be allergic to someone who thought they could.'

This hesitance in taking a firm position and expressing it was particularly noticeable when (as above) contributors were asked if they could outline simple instructions about how a good Quaker would handle conflict. Like the Key Informants they were unlikely to draw on relevant extracts from Quaker literature¹⁰; they also felt that perhaps there was no particular Quaker view on this, that they would not wish to appear to be in a position of authority, that they would not know

⁹ See *Quaker Faith and Practice* 12.01 " Plain speaking is a longstanding Quaker testimony. It is not only that we hold a witness to the value of truth but also that straightforwardness saves us from many mistakes and much time wasted."

¹⁰ One contributor did draw several examples from the New Testament.

what to say. Six stressed the importance of listening, two would 'go into counselling mode', nearly all thought they would ask more detailed questions about any conflict. Two suggested praying about it. Overall the replies were hesitant and confused in presentation. The one exception was G7. He appeared not to suffer from the common need to self deprecate. Elsewhere in the interview he wryly, but cheerfully, described himself as 'slightly belligerent'. Here is his suggestion, unusual in its clarity.

'The first thing you must do is on your own sit down and become that other person. Think of what it is he or she is demanding of you, or trying to do, and think about his/her motives, what it means to him and her, and turn the whole thing round so you can see it from the other person's standpoint. Now how unreasonable is that? Are you still sure yours is the only answer to the problem? And then with that insight that you should get from that gently choose the right moment to talk to this person, not argue, just talk and sort of ask questions. Ask for his point of view, I've been thinking about what you said, is that what you meant? Is this what your motives were? And that is usually a great help actually. If it's more violent than that you know there's a real threat in it, then look at your own feelings, are you being too stubborn? If you know that the person is utterly wrong, try and discuss it with a third party. And it may be there's no solution. But I think the important thing is to get away from your own standpoint and try to see it from the other side of the fence.'

Many of the other participants mentioned one or two points in this outline, without developing them into a coherent whole, but they were very reluctant to appear as if they actually knew anything.

'I probably wouldn't give advice in a situation like that' G15

'I'd find it very difficult to be specific about that...I would try not to hand out either Quaker or any other kind of [answers] there and then'.G16

'I'd need to make sure that the person knew I was doing this just as a friend with nothing in particular to say how you would do it as a Quaker' G20

'Oh glory! In reality I would run a mile, I think, I probably wouldn't, of course I wouldn't, but I might want to.' G9

This reluctance to speak resonated throughout the responses. There were many occasions described when something had happened with which the speaker or someone else was uncomfortable. As interviewer I often asked 'Did anybody say

anything about that?' and usually the answer was 'no'. Dissatisfaction disappeared into a pool of silence. Words were not used and empty silence filled the gap. K1 had complained about the silent response he had received, but then failed to take his own advice and say what he thought.

'I used to say things there and it went down like a lead brick, deathly hush, and it didn't get into the minute, and you'd go down to the dining room in the basement and anything up to four Friends would come to your table and say 'Oh 'X' I did agree with what you said' and I had to practice in front of the bathroom mirror not gnashing my teeth and saying 'why the so and so, so and so, didn't you say so?'

There can be negative and semi deliberate use of silence. What is not said contributes to the episode. Where things are said and not said is important, as in K1's example above. Several contributors commented on the difficulty of what was not said and views which did not come to the surface

'some were left unexpressed, which was perhaps harder than the ones that were expressed. I think there was a lot of frustrations about the way it was handled'. G5.

'PM does in some way restrain you from expressing your real feelings' G24

Some of the frustration may also reside in the Clerk of the Meeting. If dissenters will not bring their bodies or their views to the decision making meeting, what can the Clerk do? G 10 was aware of the problem.

'Now the difficulty about this from my point of view was that the dissident faction never appeared at Monthly Meeting, except on one occasion, on the very last occasion, when one of these Friends appeared. We knew they were unhappy but if you are conducting a meeting the convention is that those who are present arrive at the right decision for that meeting'.

Absence is a way of being disengaged or even hostile to the process which is rarely confronted. One contributor (G11), with experience in dispute resolution, pointed out that it was impossible to resolve disputes if the participants did not 'accept the jurisdiction'. This can be by accepting the rules of mediation or engaging with other Quakers using the Quaker business method. There are several examples in the data where groups or individuals overtly or covertly disengaged from 'the jurisdiction'.

c) Silence

Silence is the predominant characteristic of Quakers in the UK. It will appear at nearly every gathering of Quakers, even if for a few moments only. It requires nothing except a quiet mouth, but aspires to a still mind. It can be practiced as a simultaneous spiritual act and political gesture in public places¹¹. Could it be argued that Quakers are in fact 'against speech'? In a poem of this title Fanthorpe, (2000) herself a Quaker, having described 'Quakers, clever as fish in a soundless dimension' concludes that some forms of speech are 'the great protectors'. But in life when things get difficult, or conflict looms, Quakers often prefer silence to words.

Silence can be used as a 'security blanket' said G18. The impression that silence is often used as a cover, and people do not really know what underlies it was frequent, although the participants rarely raised the question. One way of regaining control of a situation is to have 'a few minutes silence', but there is rarely an explanation of what is meant to be happening, or what has happened in that silence. G23 sees it as *'several minutes silence to reflect on what's happened so far, that's always a useful thing.'* G14 was more purposeful and saw it as a time to *'stop thinking about what I want, [to think] what is for the good of everyone'*. However, the commendatory but slightly mystified experience of G8 was more common

'it really got quite unpleasant and a Friend got up and said I think we need to have some silent worship at this point Friends, and it was amazing to me how everything began to sort itself out.'

It is common for Quaker events, however small, to start with 'a few minutes silence'. [FN] This serves to remind everyone that this is a Quaker event and they are supposed to behave like Quakers. If the silence is omitted Friends may feel uncomfortable, (see Ch 11 p179, in the workshop). G15 suggested that we start the interview with 'a customary silence' as he felt the need to centre after a busy day. He was the newest member to offer an interview, and thus placed the process clearly within the Quaker tradition.

¹¹ As in 'peace vigils'. See article in The Friend January 2003 on meeting for worship at Menwith Hill.

According to the ideal of Quaker Business Method this is not only external silence, but internal silence. A Quaker should be waiting for leading, not reviewing her arguments and polishing her opinion. G12 drew attention particularly to the position of Clerk

'since I've mostly been clerk of something all the time I've always had to quite often not give my opinion anyway. I have opinions but I've not been able to have them openly for years and years. It's my job to listen to all the others and be fair and see that they all get out.'

Though they might not have expressed it so clearly, half the contributors had had the experience of being clerk, and probably retained the concern for the process of the meeting even if they had given up the job.

Summary

Data was collected from 25 semi-structured interviews with geographically representative 'grassroots' Quakers and field participation. Frequent causes of conflict for Quakers were identified and contributors' assessment of their experience considered. Most of the conflicts described were 'somebody else's conflict' in which the informant was observer or manager, not protagonist. A culture of being 'Quakerly' was revealed, where avoidance of conflict is encouraged by authoritative guidance and recipe knowledge. It includes little overt emotion, control of anger, and limited speech expression. The contributors were hesitant and lacked confidence in talking about and dealing with conflict. Their experience of Quaker processes for resolving conflict was limited, though they could identify examples of people who followed the recipe knowledge admirably.

CHAPTER 8 Edge Quakers: Mending the World

Stage 3 : Edge Quakers

The interviews with the 'grassroots' Quakers had shown that these people were in fact the conscientious core of the Quaker organization. Though geographically separately based they nearly all actively supported the national Quaker system and carried responsibility in it. The viewpoint of the local Quaker who was not involved in the regional or national organization, or who was uncomfortable in it or critical of it was missing. There are probably more of these people than the 'conscientious core', and it was necessary to hear their voices.

This chapter gives an account of data collection from 8 'Edge' Quakers. It draws on the interviews with them and continuing observing participation. The interviews were carried out between September and November 2002, when the UK government was preparing for war in Iraq in March 2003. The question of Quaker influence on the non-Quaker world may have seemed particularly pertinent at this time.

Interview Methods

Sample

The 25 'grassroots' Quakers in the previous chapter had proved to be far more of the 'conscientious core' than intended or expected. To hear the voices of the less involved, or differently involved, I looked for a different kind of Quaker. These were people who were on their way into the Society of Friends, on their way out of it, who occupied a particular 'niche' which was not part of the mainstream, or who had publicly expressed a viewpoint which was unusual. Most of these people were within my personal acquaintance, and therefore within easy travelling distance. The others were known among Quakers and easily contactable. I approached nine people who all agreed to be interviewed. However, one did not follow through with making an appointment. I did not seek a replacement as the viewpoint chosen was already represented. I wrote to these people requesting an interview, telling them why I had chosen them and giving them an opportunity to query being defined as an 'edge Quaker'. (See Appendix A)

One notable difference between the Grassroots contributors and the Edge contributors was their working status. Nearly 50 % of the Grassroots contributors were retired, a similar proportion to the Key Informants. However, the Edge

contributors were all working or available for work. None was directly employed by Quakers, though for some their work was an expression of their Quaker principles.

The Edge and Belonging

Six of the Edge Quakers were in membership of the Society of Friends. Two were counted as 'attenders' at the time of the interview. The meaning of 'belonging' was an issue which emerged from the varied interviews. For E8 this was a large question. Did he want to belong to this organization? Did the organization want him to belong to it? These questions were unanswered at the time of the interview. The other seven all felt they belonged in some way, but they had chosen the way in which they found their place within the organization.

Three attended meeting for worship regularly but also had niche experience (in a Quaker sub-group which was not part of the mainstream). Two were irregular attenders, two were fairly new to the Quakers (one of these with niche views), three attended their local meeting very rarely (two of whom had niche views), and for one a main contact was through a Quaker online discussion group. Some of the contributors combined more than one of these characteristics. The connection with Quakerism was carried by the extended family, or in a subgroup which exhorts Quakers to enhance one aspect of their life, or working with other Quakers in a specialist group with Quaker values, or carrying a particular responsibility which linked them to corporate work. Their sense of being a Quaker could thus rest in small groups nesting within the larger organization. The particular viewpoints included were: a publicly critical view of the Quaker Business Method; to be distinguished from the critical view of Quakers and Business¹ which was also present; Quakers viewed through the medium of the Quaker-B online discussion group; service in an organization with a Quaker foundation; professional experience in organizational systems; professional experience in conflict resolution. The last two viewpoints were deliberately chosen because they were relevant or essential to the subject of the study. The other viewpoints were found more by chance in that I had heard or read the people concerned expressing these views.

This confusion of information may be understood more easily in the following figure. The markers on the left represent the distinguishing attributes found among the Edge

¹ "A network of Quakers working in the private and public sectors in business and management who share a concern in promoting Quaker values in the world of work." Book of Meetings 2004

Quakers; the markers on the right represent the individual Edge Quakers. The arrows show how one person may have several attributes, and vice versa.

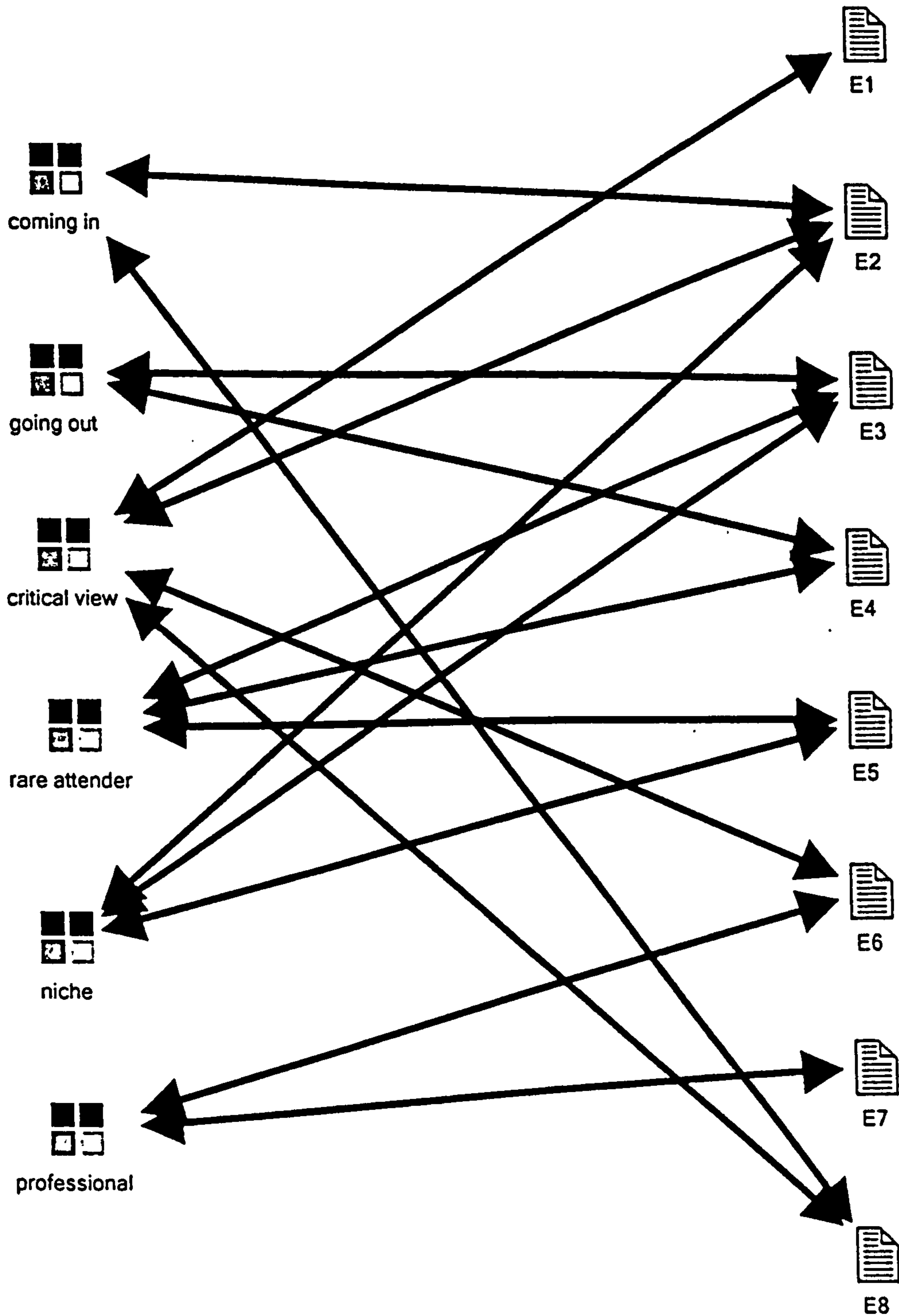


Figure 3: Attributes of Edge Quakers

Interview Process

One of the eight interviews was notably different in method and will be described below. Five interviews took place in the contributors' home, two in my home. The average length of the interview was 95 minutes; the range was 71 minutes to 107 minutes. As before these interviews were recorded on mini discs. The interview schedule was slimmed down from that used with the grassroots contributors, (See Appendix B) focussing only on their experience of being in Quaker groups and conflict inside and outside the Quaker organization. This was partly to reduce the length of the interviews but also to make me focus less on the practical aspects, in which the Edge Quakers may not have been involved, and more on the underlying themes. My prompt cards were marked to remind me to enquire about power and influence, 'ugly' emotions, expressiveness and speaking out. These were the topics where I needed the view from the edge.

The eighth 'interview' took a different form. E8 was a man in his early forties in his second short phase of sporadic attendance at my own meeting. He found it difficult to fit comfortably into the pattern of meeting life and was open about this. His spoken style was diffuse and sometimes unclear, but he offered critical written pieces to the meeting newsletter which were both clear and telling. I asked him if he would be willing to write in response to questions, as an alternative to talking. He agreed to do this. We then met together and discussed what he had written and he added a further written section.

The seven spoken interviews were transcribed and the eighth written contribution was added to them. These documents were entered into NVivo 1.2 and the familiar analytic process was followed.

Findings

Much of the Edge Quakers' contribution was congruent with the findings from the two previous sets of interviews. I will focus here on elements which were different or expressed more strongly, under the following headings: the image; experience of conflict; emotion; structures, business method and power; a new medium for conflict.

The Image

The Edge Quakers' connection with Quaker activity was very varied; some of them spent little time with other Quakers. Nevertheless they shared an image, a mental construction, an understanding, of what the Society of Friends was for. The Quaker

purpose was to 'mend the world'², or to change it. This was the dominant narrative into which they fitted their own personal story, and which nourished their attachment to the organization. Their Quaker identity rested in this common understanding. Lack of connection with the mainstream activities of the organization did not affect this understanding. Both niche Quaker and non -Quaker activities were seen as giving expression to this aspiration.

Despite the variable connection all six members counted themselves as Quakers, and shared the vision of Quaker purpose. E4 says

'So it's difficult to say exactly where I am. I pay my dues. I still think of myself as a Quaker. I would still espouse Quaker views in any discussion. But I'm fairly dormant, as far as both the small community of Preparative and Monthly Meeting and as far as Yearly Meeting goes.'

The important thing is that she still 'espouses Quaker views'. E3 tells us more what these are like

'Quakers look out onto the world in my experience. They may not always agree with one another but they look out onto the world and are very deeply concerned about what is happening. And nearly always attempt to do something about it.'

'there's this huge weight of history, of attempting to do your best in your relationships with the outside world, people and so on, and it matters that much more, in the Society of Friends than anywhere else. I'm not saying that's a bad thing, quite the reverse, it's a good thing. But there's an awful lot to live up to'.

Sometimes the past was viewed as more effective than the present in 'doing something about it'. These were E2's views

'[Barclays, Cadburys, Rowntrees] they actually went out there and did something, they perhaps did improve housing conditions or whatever in certain circumstances, but they actually went out there and worked according to their beliefs and put them into practice'.

Whereas now

'I look round today and think why are they so introvert, why are they so frightened of going out there'

² See Quaker Faith and Practice 23.02 " 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....." William Penn 1682

'I see no lobbying from the Quakers at all, apart from 'oh dear, oh yes, we'll think about this, we'll talk about this'. I do feel we should be up there with what's being decided behind closed doors'.E2

E8, from the very edge, having never expressed a firm commitment to Quaker ideals, also had this view of Quakers wanting to be seen to change the world. His experience was slightly different

' [Quaker] people around me seem to be busy busy busy professional people and some of them seem to want me to play a role in a play in which they minister to the poor'

He was aware of the ambiguity that it was not clear whether his role was to share in ministering or to represent the poor and be ministered to.

There was a feeling of frustration about the dissonance between the image of how Quakers should be changing the world and the reality of week to week experience.

See E7

'there is a difference between wanting to take credit for Quakerly things and actually being willing to make it your own. You won't find many Friends who don't support our work in prisons and with prisoners, but comparatively few, sometimes far too few want to get involved'.

'in the general field of conflict handling, conflict resolution in Britain, everywhere you turn you bump into Quakers [lists 8 examples of involvement of Quakers in conflict resolution projects]. British Quakers have been very involved, and so have the Americans, in developing the craft of good conflict handling and yet it always surprises [me] how little has rubbed off on the everyday dealings of Quakers with one another'.

However, E3 is quite clear that though Quakers' task is to influence the world for better they do not use the standards of the world about what is better. He speaks of a meeting house which survives unchanged in a commercial development

'It's appreciated by the people who live and work there. It may not be appreciated by the people who want to build on the land. But then it was almost like we've got two fingers up to them. Never mind the money. We're doing something here, and the very fact that we're in the middle of this, that people do come and eat their sandwiches here, and people do come and poke their noses into the meeting house, which they wouldn't do if we had a nice modern meeting house on the outskirts of town, where it's much cheaper and so on. Means that

we're being effective, so never mind the money. That's the Quakerly attitude, that's the obstinacy, yes.'

The Quaker organization which sets out to mend the wider world may also perceive itself as already in a mended state³. The idea that the Quaker organization is a 'peaceable kingdom' (Isaiah 11,6-9) has many strands. The American Quaker artist Edward Hicks painted several versions of this peaceable kingdom where the lion and the lamb lie down together. A copy of one version is displayed in the entrance hall of Woodbrooke, the Quaker Study Centre (FN). Scott (2002-3)⁴ suggests that the animals acting in this unnatural way are meant to symbolise the transformation which takes place when the kingdom exists. The animals in their wild state represent the faults found in humanity; these faults have to be tamed if people are to live together peacefully.

Another version of Quaker Utopia, in which there are few negative aspects, is to be found in *'The Fires of Levana'* (Davison, 1982) performed by the Quaker Youth Theatre. In this story young people have to leave Levana and spend a year in other provinces to learn about power, sex and despair. This experience is unavailable in the Quaker province.

Experience of conflict.

Not all the Edge Quakers had direct experience of being in conflict, or of close observation of it. Some of them were not closely involved enough to be aware of tensions, nor were they often in the business meetings where these were acted out. E8 made the point

'class, employment status, family personal backgrounds and circumstances play a part in relationships between people who attend Quakers, just as much as elsewhere, but I don't know that these issues are brought out into the light and frankly discussed.'

All these issues are relevant, but he was right that they are not often frankly discussed.

³ For a full discussion of the theological grounding of this belief see Dandelion, B. P., Gwyn, D., Peat, T. (1998) *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming*, Woodbrooke College, Birmingham.

⁴ In her introduction to the Proceedings of the Quaker Theology Seminar 2002-3.

The four who had no trouble identifying occasions of conflict instanced the same sort of arguments which had been proffered by the grassroots Quakers. There were four examples about 'doing it right' often in the chosen niche, three about 'practical matters' (meeting house development and employment). There was one example, starting with unacceptable ministry, of how a meeting had used its Elders and Overseers and a variation of the clearness process to work through difficulties over a period of years. To me this was an example of good practice although not described as such. Though the process was not comfortable for anyone, no-one had left the meeting or retreated incommunicado and one or two small changes had been noted. Leaving either the room, the local meeting, or the Society, was a common solution to conflict.

E4 had left a meeting after conflict. Some years previously she had had the experience of 'being ostracised by her own meeting'. This probably arose out of a difference of view about how she should have undertaken an administrative task on behalf of the meeting, but she was not clear about this and had never understood why it had escalated. She had been unable to find out what the real complaint against her was, despite sessions with the responsible people in the meeting. However, it was not the intricacies of process or negotiation which formed the centre of her story, but the emotional weight of it. E4 had been extremely upset by her experience, and indeed for some time after it. She felt that the people who had once been her friends had no way of coping with this.

'They basically just listened to how I felt about the thing, watched me cry, watched me howl, watched me keen, sat in two chairs in my living room without wanting to come and put their arms round me or anything. People who I'd considered my friends, and then left.'

The expression of her emotion was just another instance of her failure. She left the meeting. She is now very aware that people who undergo the experience of conflict need a great deal of support, and sees this as the responsibility of the particular Quaker group involved.

Another unusual contribution came from E5, with a heavy load of public service, some of it Quaker and some of it secular. He says of himself 'I can be pretty robust'. He particularly wanted to tell me about a current secular conflict he was involved in. This was a highly complex story in which 'for the first time ever in thirty years I am impotent'. E5's story wove between local history, personal likes and dislikes,

regulations, group pressures and rules, ethical and philosophical points, public policy, power structures and constraints of his changing roles. It took 15 minutes to tell, and was obviously absorbing a great deal of E5's attention at that time. As I told him 'this is by far the most complex and intricate account of a conflict' that I had been given. But in the same interview he also spoke of smaller conflicts in Quaker settings which he had not bothered to pursue. In one he thought 'life's too short', and in another he had left the meeting and taken up his niche position. It seemed that his investment in the local community was stronger than his investment in Quaker community. He did say that he would feel it keenly if he were left out of the geographical community, but the one hour a week Quaker community was easy to leave when there was a disagreement. It was *'not a genuine community as I understand it'*. E2 also commented on the lack of frequent social contact *'you don't have a coffee machine to gather round, do you?'*. She thought the lack of opportunity for easy talking added to difficulties in conflict handling.

One of the issues raised was that 'boundaries' are unclear amongst Quakers. In disputes among Quakers, it is not always clear who should have responsibility or information. What is the authority of the individual, the sub group, or the wider group? The ethos of equality suggests that each person should have the same authority, but the need to protect the vulnerable with confidentiality works in the opposite direction. E6 explores this

'you can say that there clearly is a boundary that just surrounds the people who are participating in the conflict, and that everybody else is in the environment of that system, well is outside it, there's quite a bunch of people for many conflicts. They're outside of the system but have an influence on the people within the system....the more narrowly you can draw the second boundary, the boundary of people who are directly involved in the situation of handling the conflict, the easier that is because then you've got fewer relationships to worry about, fewer impacts to take into account.'

E4 also contributed an example of lack of boundaries, or overlapping roles. She could have consulted the local Quaker conflict resolution group, but the person who she saw as her main opponent was already part of that group, which inhibited her.

The Edge contributors were perhaps more aware of tensions within themselves than the grassroots contributors. They merged less into the overall ethos. However, the tensions within themselves did not make them better able to handle arguments.

'this really comes to the heart of what I have to say, in Quaker circles the person who creates conflict is in the wrong. And frustration and anger is my lot, because I want things changed, because I want things done differently, because I want things done better. But the person who challenges the status quo in Quaker circles in my experience faces personal encouragement, but structural discouragement. Which leads to frustration and anger in my case'.E1

Emotion

These contributors agreed that the Quaker culture did not accept the expression of strong emotion, especially ugly emotions. E1 communicated with me about appointment details on a specially selected postcard which showed a statue of a 12th century Japanese warrior armed and with extremely belligerent body language. E1 described the warrior as 'wonderfully angry' and likened that to how he felt. However, more telling to me was the fact that the statue had either been created with hardly any mouth, or had been damaged to appear so. In either case, however angry the warrior felt, this anger looked unable to emerge through his mouth. My contributor had not noticed this. All the Edge contributors concurred that the organizational culture required Quakers to control their anger.

'and it's even fine to say that you're angry, but it's not fine, or it's not fine in the sense that people won't like it or won't like you, if you exhibit anger'. E6

E4 had also emphasised how she found the expression of distress had been unacceptable in her meeting. Another contributor told how once she and those she loved had been in extreme danger (as a result of involvement in Quaker peace work). She had been overcome with ugly emotions and ugly language towards those making the threat, but she offloaded this onto a nun she trusted. It had never occurred to her to speak to a Quaker about these feelings, because she did not think they would cope. Field notes also record another Quaker with ugly experiences who felt she could not share these until she was nearly 80, because she had found the other Quakers could not handle it.

Structures, Business Method and Power

Edge Quakers were willing to reflect on power among Quakers rather than stress its absence. It was not in individuals but in the structures, the systems, the corporate life. If individuals were seen as influential this was because they were able to use the

structure and facilitate group process; they spoke on behalf of the assembled and diverse group not on behalf of themselves.

Apart from the two contributors who could also be described as mainstream Quakers, the contributors found themselves often frustrated by the Quaker Business Method. They were not particularly well informed; some had not attended many, or any, business meetings. This did not stop them complaining about how business meetings were run. The main difficulty was held to be the slowness and inactivity

'the size of the meetings, spending all afternoon in a room full of 50 people and speaking once just isn't how [I] operate.' E1

The perceived length of time given to Quaker decision making was not worth it when placed among other competing demands and rewards in their lives. The mainstream experienced Quakers also queried methods more constructively. E6 speculates about how the group avoids looking at its practice, and wonders how many people really take the 'orthodox' understanding. He is talking about the phrase 'discerning the will of God'

'My sense is that it's not a particularly held view, but that it's regarded by a lot of the people who don't hold it as a kind of orthodoxy.....it seems like a neutral phrase [but it] can have embedded within it some assumptions, and that the assumptions point to a kind of, to a theological position that probably isn't widely held nowadays, but because the phrase makes some assumptions not holding that is seen as the individual's own problem. Rather than something that's an issue for the whole society.'

Power was envisaged in the corporate context of meeting together. E1 thought there was power in the process itself, the power of inertia

'the power that I see is the power of inertia, and it is actually a power of our structures and our decision making and the communal culture, so it's actually a very diversified power structure.'

'it's in the group process, but it's something that is shared and hopefully understood that it's not just within one individual'.E4

But how do you get to make a difference in this diversified power structure? E1 was quite clear that length of service and availability, rather than ability or spirituality, got people listened to. He wondered why Quakers with talent or experience in the outside world appear not to put this at the disposal of the Quaker organization. Are

they not asked, or do they decline? Several of the Edge Quakers recognised the contribution of the 'weighty Friend' as a form of power. This is how E3 described it

'weighty Quakers need not necessarily be clerks or anybody else. They tend to be people, in my experience anyway, who have been involved in Quakerism for a long time, so that the ethos has sort of seeped in, whereas people who perhaps have not been in contact with Friends for so long who are less deeply involved tend to be the ones, there are exceptions, tend to be the ones who get all hoity toity and I'm as guilty of that, so yeah there are people who are stabilising influences.'

'they're people who think for quite a long time, before saying anything, generally don't say very much, and they sort of wade in as it were with very carefully chosen words and phrases, that take account of everybody's's perspectives, and doing their very best in general to be fair, and not necessarily providing an answer, but finding a way forward for things to go.'

But Edge Quakers were not interested in being 'weighty Friends', if they got frustrated they opted out.

A New Medium for Conflict

One important alternative method of Quaker communication and conflict described was the unmoderated internet discussion list, Quaker-B. This was the chief source of connection for one Edge Quaker. Some users of the list would probably query the term 'discussion'. Newcomers receive a set of guide lines explaining how the list should be used which suggests that it should be like an 'online' meeting for worship, with reflection before posting a contribution and all contributors sharing in eldership. However, E6 found it *'fantastically fractious'*, and many agree [FN]. However, its persistent users do sometimes reflect on how the nature of the medium affects the content of the communication.

This was one space in which there was no doubt that there was sometimes conflict between Quakers.

*'on line people go back and again and again and again. And that's the worst thing about it'
'there was a debate over gender identity...a lot of it seemed very very nasty indeed'.E3*

E6 adds to this negative view

'there's rows and they're almost like a textbook example of a positive feed back loop because they just get worse and worse and worse and everything that someone says feeds into the row, and there's no way of breaking into it'

But E3 also finds it possible to use Quaker- B constructively.

'But we can always find some common ground to enable our discussions to continue forward. I've never met a Republican, by and large right wing Quaker before. And it's odd. And he comes in for an awful lot of flak. And I've given him some of that flak and he's given it to me. But we can still communicate with each other. That's actually been rather good.'

Summary

The eight Edge Quakers shared an understanding that the Quaker purpose was to 'mend the world'. They identified with the espoused theory that the organization is already a 'peaceable kingdom' in which the wild animals of 'ugly emotions' are already tamed. However they were aware of dissonance between Quaker expectations about conflict, their own vivid experience among Quakers, and their non-Quaker lives. They queried the power of inertia in the Quaker organization, but often opted out from involvement.

CHAPTER 9 Discussion: Tensions in the Peaceable Kingdom

This chapter outlines the main findings of the first half of the research project then links these to relevant theoretical frameworks. The findings concern: Quaker Conflict; Quaker Organizational Culture; and Quaker Identity. The theoretical frameworks applied are: conflict handling models; theories of action and change; 'the shadow'; and identity formation.

Introduction

It is suggested that the general public, if it knows Quakers exist, think Quakers and conflict just don't go together. They think Quakers try to resolve other people's conflicts; they don't have conflicts themselves.

My research shows that Quakers do have conflict among themselves; that when it happens they are uncomfortable and embarrassed because it disturbs their self image; they avert their minds from it, even before avoiding it. This is best explained by looking at the organizational culture. The shared beliefs say that Quakers live in a 'peaceable kingdom' where there should be no conflict and the aim is to mend the world. The message to the individual says 'ignore conflict among Quakers, don't let it spoil the bigger picture'. If conflict does occur it usually turns into identity conflict, about the proper Quaker way of solving a problem. The 'proper Quaker' way in conflict is treated as a question for the collectivity. The shared identity is more important than the recognition of the individual. It is more important to find and use the 'proper Quaker' way as a group, maintaining solidarity, than to pay attention to the needs, wishes, or suggestions of an individual.

Quaker Conflict

My research shows that Quakers do have conflict among themselves. When it does happen they are uncomfortable and embarrassed. It is important to them that there should be unity and harmony in the group. This is sometimes at the expense of finding a good or right outcome.

The interview contributors showed me two different pictures of conflict in the Quaker organization, which co-existed and were not always mutually exclusive. Firstly there was a calm organization where there was little or no conflict. Secondly there was an organization where, embarrassingly and shamefully, there was conflict, which could be long-lasting, hurtful and unpleasant. The conflicts which did exist had particular

characteristics which marked them out as Quaker: the relationship was prioritised over outcome; restraint moderated vehemence. The result was conflict 'aversion'.

Unity: Preserving the Relationship

The most significant characteristic is that a unifying process is more important than reaching the right outcome. For example, though the Society of Friends is a religious organization there were few accounts of overt tensions about differing religious beliefs, though great diversity of belief was acknowledged to the point of pride. It is accepted that each person's spiritual experience is unique and valid for them and must be respected. This united approach in validating individual experience is valued more highly than trying to find a common formula to express belief. The way in which the difference is worked on, how it includes or excludes participants, is more important than coming to the 'right' decision. Co-existence without overt conflict on this topic is now possible, which rather surprised some contributors with long memories¹. However, the emphasis on the process of preserving relationships is notable in all the conflicts described to me.

The subjects which did cause overt conflict were practical matters, where it was necessary to come to one decision and then implement it. These were often matters where it was necessary to agree a specific price or plan. Examples were changes to the physical premises of the meeting house, or issues about employment, particularly wardenship. In these there could be no diversity of answers, or failure to reach an answer. Other less practical matters could cause difficulty because of the misunderstanding that there is freedom to do what you like in a Quaker meeting. (It is common to hear that 'Quakers have no rules', or even 'Quakers do not obey rules'.) There are however expectations, guidelines or conventions, not least concerning behaviour in meeting for worship. Unacceptable spoken contributions in the meeting for worship often became snagged on the invisible barbed wire of communal disapproval. These caused tensions and difficulties, but were less overt conflicts than the practical matters, conducted through indirect and private conversations. The discovery that unity is not easy and good relationship is difficult to preserve was often painful to the participants.

¹ In the 1970s and 1980s there was fierce contention between Christocentric and Universalist Quakers, at all levels of the Society, which caused great anxiety.

For Quakers conflict causes dissonance and discomfort. The two pictures of Quaker collective life, one calm and one disturbed by conflict do not co-exist in comfort. The existence of conflict challenges the Quaker group image of a calm community. This questioning challenge was rarely seen by the contributors as an aid to creativity or innovation, but as an embarrassing sign of failure and a cause for shame.

Contributors spoke as if they were betraying family secrets when talking about conflict in their meetings. Despite the dissonance between the aspirations of the organization and weekly experience in the local group the aspiration receives far more attention, (time, speech and written material) than the local behaviour².

Restraint or Vehemence

The second characteristic is the restraint with which any conflict is conducted. The ethos and style commended by the Book of Discipline is joined by the Quaker 'recipe knowledge' to produce a slow, quiet, measured, hesitant approach to argument or even discussion. On the rare occasions when there was a flare up of sharpness the contributors found themselves shocked. In non-Quaker life, for instance in local politics, they accepted 'slanging matches' cheerfully, but among Quakers the same behaviour was upsetting and alarming. In their own meetings Quakers can only deal with quiet messages. If the message is delivered noisily it adds to the discomfort. Attention is focused on quietening the message not understanding it.

Another aspect of restraint is perhaps more accurately described as constraint. Much interaction between Quakers is considered to be 'confidential'. Confusion about what this really means often adds fuel to any conflict fire. The interview contributors felt too much confidentiality usually contributed to a negative experience in conflict. They preferred openness, and putting things on the table, though this was more rare than restraint, keeping feelings and information out of the public domain. Information can be controlled by constraint, but style is also subject to control. Morgan's (2004) experience produced an orthogonal model of Quaker conflict handling with one axis between restraint and vehemence³ to highlight this tension.

² See the behaviour of Yorkshire General Meeting in Ch 7, when plans for dealing with local conflict took five minutes, and consideration of contributions to international conflict took three and a half hours.

³ The other axis runs between honesty and mendacity. A fuller discussion of this model is found on p154.

Aversion not Avoidance

The two characteristics outlined combine in a particular style of response to conflict, which I describe as aversion.

Among Quakers there is general acknowledgement that they avoid conflict. Many Quakers in casual conversation about the research corrected me about my use of the term 'handling' conflict; they told me I should use 'avoiding' conflict in this context. The implication was that Quakers do not handle conflict, they avoid it. However, there is no pride in this and individual Quakers have often said 'hope you're going to tell us what to do instead' to me. The writers of *Conflict in Meetings* agreed that avoiding is a Quaker strategy. They augmented the avoiding turtle from the dual concern model with two more avoiding companions, the lemming and the ostrich, to provide more methods of avoidance. I suspect the intention was to provoke realisation of and thought about different ways of avoidance, and possibly by so doing to challenge them.

However, I would argue that Quakers do more than avoid conflict. They often do not reach that stage. They practice conflict aversion, which obviates the need for avoidance. In conflict aversion they turn their eyes and minds away from occasions of conflict, with a slight edge of distaste. Thus they protect themselves from the uncomfortable knowledge that conflict exists in their community and they themselves might have to find the courage to be involved⁴.

Another aspect of conflict aversion is shown in the lack of familiarity with recommended methods of conflict resolution. There is a range of procedures suggested for Quakers to handle conflict; most of these can be found using Quaker Faith and Practice or by contacting experienced Quakers at Friends House. However the contributors reported that these were not well known in their meetings and were rarely used. When these procedures were used there were few accounts of helpful outcomes. (Positive accounts of such methods included two 'clearness meetings', both of slightly unusual form, and a meeting review.) The procedures, such as mediation, were rarely requested and without a structure of authority in the group could not be imposed. This whole area related to thinking about conflict was full of discomfort and feelings of inadequacy.

⁴ Conflict aversion and avoidance are different from conflict prevention, which might involve early attention to any small differences and active steps to deal with them without the negative connotation associated with conflict. This may use the term 'problem solving'.

Organizational Culture

To understand conflict aversion it is necessary to look at the underlying assumptions which Quakers use when they are together, the organization culture. What is the image which they use of themselves? What is the picture created by the firelight on the wall of the Quaker cave? What is feared outside the cave? These questions are at least partially answered when Quakers talk about being Quakerly or unQuakerly. Recipe knowledge (Ch 3, p41) about how to behave can be discovered from both these phrases and what they encompass.

The contributors talked little about one aspect of organizational culture: the use of power. Aversion is also practised on this topic. However they were quite clear that they, and other Quakers, espoused equality, and resisted notions of power and hierarchy. They bristled at the idea of obedience, and sometimes even 'discipline'. Only a few acknowledged the powerful effect of the Quaker structure and method, where all innovation and individual action is supposed to be tested in the judgement of the collective. Some individuals may be judged to be 'weighty Friends' but the contributors described them as able to draw the needs or wishes of the participants together with the tradition and to find a way forward towards a decision. They were seen as facilitators of the unifying process rather than leaders.

Being Quakerly: Espoused Theory

Being 'Quakerly' is acting as if the community is a peaceable kingdom, a Biblical image, in which the wild animals of ugly emotions have already been tamed. The contributors believed that, as a group, they were concerned about conflict, they wished to resolve it and reduce its incidence. They, or their representatives, had expertise which was often contributed to the resolution of conflicts in the wider world. They supported each other in ways of disassociation from military activity like conscientious objection and tax withholding. This is part of the purpose of having a Quaker organization. To them it seemed to follow that their own community should demonstrate this commitment and expertise by having little conflict, or resolving it quickly and successfully. Quakerly behaviour should not generate conflict. This was the espoused theory of the organization. This is what Quakers said and thought their organization was like or should be like.

Being 'UnQuakerly' : Theory in Use

It is 'UnQuakerly' to express strong emotions or words, to act without the approval of the group, or to think about power. So it is unQuakerly to have conflict, which usually involves these activities.

Theory in use about UnQuakerly behaviour can be inferred both from what the contributors said and accounts of what people did. Regarding conflict it told Quakers that, despite their espoused duty to promote conflict resolution, among themselves it was better to avert their minds from conflict, to keep out of it personally, to pay scant attention to it or the processes by which it might be resolved, to construe it in terms of individual deviance or delinquency rather than group responsibility, and generally to push it (and its emotional concomitants) under the 'carpet' or out of individual and public awareness. 'Unquakerly' vehemence and loose emotion, ambition, exerting influence or strategising, or unchecked individual initiative are all elements which may be found in conflict, and which met disapproval in the accounts told to me. They all disturbed the unruffled surface of Quakerly calm.

The use of strong emotions and words was not commended in the Quaker culture. The aim was to moderate these, render them less violent. But even moderated articulacy was viewed with doubt among Quakers. The best course was silence. This included silence in which you wait to know what, if anything, it is right for you to say, or silence in which you listen. It is hard to go wrong with silence among Quakers. Several people mentioned a postcard joke, suitable for sticking above a work-station, 'I'm a Quaker. In an emergency please be silent.' Listening, a variation of silence, was often commended as a method of conflict handling for individuals, but for effectiveness it needs to be active listening⁵. Collective silence is meant to be an opportunity to reflect, to place individual needs in proportion with the needs of others, and to offer opinions to the searching effects of the light of God. It is possible that some Quaker silent listening is really a variant of 'social loafing' (Plous, 1993), doing nothing in the silence? A posting on Quaker-B suggested it can actually carry a non-verbal hostile message⁶. Very few contributors stressed the active articulating

⁵ Active listening is taken to mean more than just hearing. The active listener will summarise what they have heard and check with the speaker that their understanding is correct, thus indicating that they wish their understanding and empathy to be accurately based.

⁶ Tom Kielty on Quaker-B on March 27/8 2004 suggested that Quaker jargon like 'deep listening' can mask the message 'I disagree with you but can't explain why and would like you to quit disagreeing with me and/or go away'.

aspect of listening. If they do it is usually with the role of mediator in mind rather than that of conflict participant.

Quaker Identity

Identity Conflict

Quaker conflict usually turns into identity conflict, which is about values, feelings and relationships. However practical the original cause, if conflict persists it turns into arguments about what is the proper Quaker way to do things. What is the proper Quaker way to spend money, decorate the meeting house, speak truth or act fairly with each other?

For Quakers, persistent conflict, lasting for months or years, is rarely task centred or decision driven. The task may be achieved or the decision made but the conflict grinds on, with appeals for the decision to be revisited or comments made about the process. This is particularly pertinent in the 'big issues', the Quaker conflicts which involved several clusters of Quaker groups. The original cause reached at least partial conclusion, but the ripples of complaint, anger and unhappiness continued to move outwards and inwards ruffling the surface to storm. For instance the whole matter may be referred to 'outside', a central or superior grouping, and new visiting intervenors appointed. The continuation of the conflict was often about the methods used in the early stages. The arguments for an outcome might be expected to centre round Quaker values, as shown in the testimonies. There were usually some enquiries such as: is this simple, equal, truthful, open, just or fair, peaceful and environmentally sound? However, more significant and long lasting were queries about the values specific to Quaker process, concerning authority and unity. Was this the 'proper Quaker' way to do something? Often this resulted in niggling about detail of Quaker business method rather than consideration of the broader ethical values.

Arguing about the 'proper Quaker' way is a clear example of identity conflict. This is the kind of conflict which does not respond to stimulation, unpacking, expressing, debating; indeed stimulation can make it worse. There were few examples of good practice in ongoing Quaker identity conflict. (One was a meeting review arising from a difficulty.) More commonly as the contributors told their stories they revealed a negative spiral. Uncertainty predominated. Skilled conflict negotiators were not used. Authority and control of process was not made clear, or was contested.

Bodies were set up to resolve things but could be laid down before they started work and not replaced. Confidentiality boundaries were assumed or invented but not explained, and rankled. Individuals and groups declined to enter the resolution process, or quietly opted out. Outcomes could be undermined for many years. Yet despite all these typical problems contributors noticed with puzzlement that some Quakers hung on to their grievances with great tenacity; they were really reluctant to let go of the argument about how to be a 'proper Quaker'. Why might this be? Perhaps if they have to cede their image of 'proper Quaker' to another they are left with nothing, and their own image and identity will be homeless.

Quaker Identity: Collective and Singular.

What is a 'proper Quaker', especially when in conflict? As well as looking at the organization we have to ask how Quakers see themselves as individuals, and as individuals connecting to the organization. The problem is that they don't look at themselves, especially when in conflict. The 39 Quakers interviewed found it difficult to put themselves into the picture of conflict. They could observe conflict among other Quakers but that was 'somebody else's conflict', they did not see themselves having a part in it. They were not there in the middle of it. They were surprisingly uncertain about what they themselves should do in a conflict. Some of those involved in counselling or therapy were a little more confident, but they shared the awareness of personal dislike of conflict.

Quaker attention is supposed to be on and mediated through the group life, the shared experience. There are no leaders and possibly no followers. The individual journey to the 'peaceable kingdom' is often a lonely one. Once there each person is an equal and ordinary Quaker and both hopes and is expected to be Quakerly like the others. As one knowledgeable Quaker said ' 'I' is rather rare; indeed 'I' is rather unQuakerly.' (FN) It is more Quakerly to use 'we' and to talk and think collectively. The personal and intimate experience engendered in a quarrel has no place in the public life of Quakerism, where the ordinary Quaker does not mention such things.

However, conflict cannot be practised alone and in private. It sits uncomfortably across the public and privatised aspects of Quaker life. Conflict is often not recognised until it is in the public 'Quaker time' and subject to the collective culture. However, individual imaginative self-reflection is needed for conflict resolution, in order to 'stand in the other's shoes'. Self reflection and expression of an individual position may add to the experience of dissonance in the collective and is therefore

not encouraged. Contributors were well aware that they would be accused of 'rocking the boat' unnecessarily if they spoke out.

Theory: Utility and Relevance to the Findings

One question at the inception of this project was: does individual experience or collective culture have more influence on conflict handling? This indicated three main areas of inquiry: conflict handling, organizational culture and individuality.

These three areas structured the literature review and then the interview schedules. What insights can the theories in these fields bring to explain the peculiarities of Quaker behaviour in conflict handling?

Conflict Handling Theory

One of the difficulties in appraising conflict handling theory is that there is no discrete body of knowledge which applies itself just to the understanding of conflict. Most major models are entwined with value bases which have constructed conflict in a particular way or propose theories of action to deal with, manage or resolve, conflict. This confusion of values and data is clearly acknowledged by Galtung (Ch 4 p49). Perhaps because of this his meta-model of the conflict triangle is very useful as an analytic tool for understanding any conflict. Its level of generality is such that it can encompass many other models as tools to be used in particular circumstances. Although generated in the conflict resolution setting, it is also able to stand alone to analyse an existing conflict without falling into prescriptive methods.

The Galtung conflict triangle outlines three main areas: contradiction connecting to structure; attitude connecting to perceptions; and visible behaviour. Within its wide overview it points attention to the particular and specific within any instance of conflict. Working through the various subheadings relating to these three areas will illuminate any conflict, where it is very likely that some aspect which does not fit with the prejudices of the thinker will have been forgotten. If applied to conflict among Quakers it immediately shows that most current attention is given to behaviour and relatively little to structure and attitudes. I applied this model to one of the 'big issues' which was recounted to me by several contributors. Although my information was still far from complete, it appeared that the focus had been on the contradiction, establishing what had or had not happened, what should or should not have happened, and what should or should not be done next. There had been little attention to the structure, the authority relationships and underlying values enacted without reflection, and the nature of the contradictory incident in its local context. If

Galtung's model had been applied from the outset much more information would have been available to the protagonists, and different areas might have been explored.

The model which is most commonly known among Quakers who are not conflict handling professionals is the dual concern model. This model is outlined thoroughly in Ch 4, p51. Coming from the setting of organizational studies, it falls in the behavioural aspect of the Galtung triangle. It focuses on acts of co-operation, coercion or conciliation, but does not take account of the context/structure of the setting or the internal workings of the individual. It proposes that a conflict is underlain by two sets of interests or concerns, each of which motivates each protagonist in varying proportions. The first concern is for the separate interests of the protagonists. These interests will be shown in the outcome; one person will get more or less of what they want or need. The second concern is for the relationship between the protagonists. Will they still be on speaking terms, in an employment relationship, or still a Quaker at the end of the process? The significance of the relationship will vary according to the structure in which it exists. The interaction between these concerns produces five positions describing conflict handling strategies: competing, compromising, collaborating, accommodating and avoiding. In personal development exercises in organizations individuals are invited to locate their own style, or combination of styles, in order to reflect on its effectiveness(Kilmann, 1977, Xicom, 1986).

The main usefulness of the dual concern model to Quakers is that, as in business organizations, it encourages them to look at their behaviour and style of conflict handling, which they do not do easily. It also gives them a vocabulary to start talking about it. However, this is a limited approach to the understanding of conflict, as it implies interaction is mainly governed by the behaviour of individuals. So much Quaker conflict is about identity, the negotiation between the individual and the collective, the question of how the organization should act in order to satisfy the aspirations of the individual, that this model has very limited application. More attention also has to be given to a heading from the Galtung (1995) model, the structure and social context, which includes the assumed values of any organization.

This last point echoes long-standing criticisms of the dual concern model. It claims to be context-free and cannot take account of social structures and power balances underlying the conflict. Thomas (1988) struggled to link it to value systems, social

pressures and power structures, but conceded that the model only supplies one part of the picture of a conflict. The model also only operates in the here and now; it does not take account of individual psychological history, disposition or expectation, although there have been attempts to relate these to the model (Antonioni, 1999). The five strategies exist separated from their owners, described by Nicotera (1993) as misleadingly portrayed without emotion.

Though the dual concern model claims to be context-free there are assumptions inherent in it which do not fit the Quaker context well. Firstly there is the inbuilt notion that conflict will be symmetric, that two protagonists are roughly equally matched in power. They also are assumed to share an overarching framework of values; examples are often set in a profit-oriented framework, where win-win is both possible and desirable. Although it might seem so at first glance, this is not congruent with the Quaker culture. Conflict is rarely symmetric; there is usually a heavier weighting with the group balanced against an individual or smaller number, and win-win is seen to be the maintenance of the relationship within the group, not distributive portioning out of resources or rewards to the satisfaction of each.

Van de Vliert and Prein (1989) suggest that most people reduce the dual concern model to two strategies of competing or not competing (rolling the four non-competing strategies together). With their strong cultural preference for avoidance, Quakers may see it in terms of avoiding or rolling together the four strategies for getting involved in conflict. This indicates that this model is not useful when trying to understand the difference between Quaker conflict handling and that of others. Aversion takes Quakers off the edge of the diagram, and outside the model.

However, there is one aspect of work arising from the dual concern model that illumines the puzzle of aversion. The dual concern model has been used to distinguish the kinds of disagreements which respond to the stimulation of conflict from those which do not. Tjosvold (1997) has suggested that cognitive disagreements, those which are fact based and task centred, become fruitful when conflict is allowed and encouraged. This will produce creative and innovative responses and therefore a better outcome. However, the other side of this finding is that increased argument and debate in identity conflicts, about values and relationships, is likely to be counter-productive and make conflict worse without solution. This is useful information to apply to Quakers, who find it difficult to treat any conflict as merely task centred and swiftly move on to question and argue about

their identity. This suggests that Quakers should not be encouraged to argue except in the very early stages of task-centred conflicts, and offers one explanation why Quaker conflict is experienced as so intractable.

As Quaker conflict is mostly identity based, it is useful to consider the conflict resolution models which claim to be particularly suited to this aspect of conflict. These are the ARIA model (Rothman, 1997) see Ch 4 p55, and narrative mediation (Winslade, 2000) , see Ch 4 p56. These models are used both in situations of profound international tension and division as in Israel and Palestine and domestic altercations around family life. Their credibility comes from serious conflict resolution practice, rather than management training exercises. What they have in common is that they work in all aspects of the Galtung conflict triangle. They give attention to the social structure, the personal experience of the individual, and how these interact to produce meaning and then behaviour. If an Israeli and a Palestinian are to work together it is necessary to look at the personal experience of each, but also how this is shaped by and relates to the wider context and social identity. Intertwined social and personal narratives shape identity expectations and both have to be explored; this is equally applicable to Quaker conflict.

In the few instances of successful collective Quaker conflict handling it appears there have been opportunities for 'openness' and the telling of personal stories. The main protagonists have been encouraged and willing to talk about their understanding of events and their own reactions to them. But in the many accounts to me of downward spiralling identity conflict, people have not felt that exploring their own stories would be acceptable. This may be because it requires protagonists to take centre stage and to become aware of their own experience in conflict, to express it and spell it out. The ARIA model specifies the recognition and expression of antagonistic feelings. This is not congruent with the Quaker culture. On the whole, individual Quakers prefer not to see themselves in the centre of the conflict, but in a helpful role on the edge of it. They construct themselves as mediators and healers, not embattled fighters. Until they can tell their stories from the first side which starts the fight or the second side which fights back, as well as the third side which offers professional help, they will not be able to benefit from the useful techniques in narrative mediation.

Evaluating the use of these models arouses the difficulty mentioned previously about distinguishing between conflict and conflict resolution. Is a model useful for

understanding how conflict arises and continues, or is a model useful in the way it can be applied in conflict handling or resolution? All the models make a contribution to understanding conflict, though Galtung's conflict triangle is much more thorough and comprehensive than the dual concern model. The narrative based methods fit within the Galtung model with the need to give an expressive account of the structure. In application to Quaker conflict handling the models have different strengths and limitations. The dual concern model offers the individual a vocabulary, but is very narrow in its focus. Galtung's triangular analysis is much more informative for understanding but requires exploration of all facets in more depth than the Quaker practising aversion is likely to give it. The reflexive models of ARIA and narrative, both of which might appeal to Quakers, require self reflective process which does not fit with the current Quaker culture on conflict. Aversion from conflict does not encourage, or permit, reflective awareness of the self and the context for the self, which is necessary to develop narrative-based processes. Is there a way in which Quakers can learn to be self-reflective and more open to narrative-based methods of conflict handling? This was explored in the next section of the research project.

The dilemma of always feeling compelled to position oneself in Ury's (2000) third side (Ch4,p48) inhibits the early steps necessary for using self expressive or narrative methods of conflict resolution. This is clearly expressed in Robert Frost's lines

I am a liberal

I mean so altruistically moral

I never take my own side in a quarrel.

Until individual Quakers discover what their own side is they are unlikely to be able to benefit from effective methods of conflict resolution.

The model of conflict handling which gets nearest to casting new light on specifically Quaker conflict handling is Morgan's⁷, which was generated in the Quaker context. It addresses questions in Galtung's 'structure' and 'behaviour' headings. It offers two axes describing behaviour: one from honesty to mendacity and one from restraint to vehemence, and invites positioning of conflict incidents.

⁷ This model was described in a posting on Quaker-B in mid 2004, followed by personal communication 7.10.2004

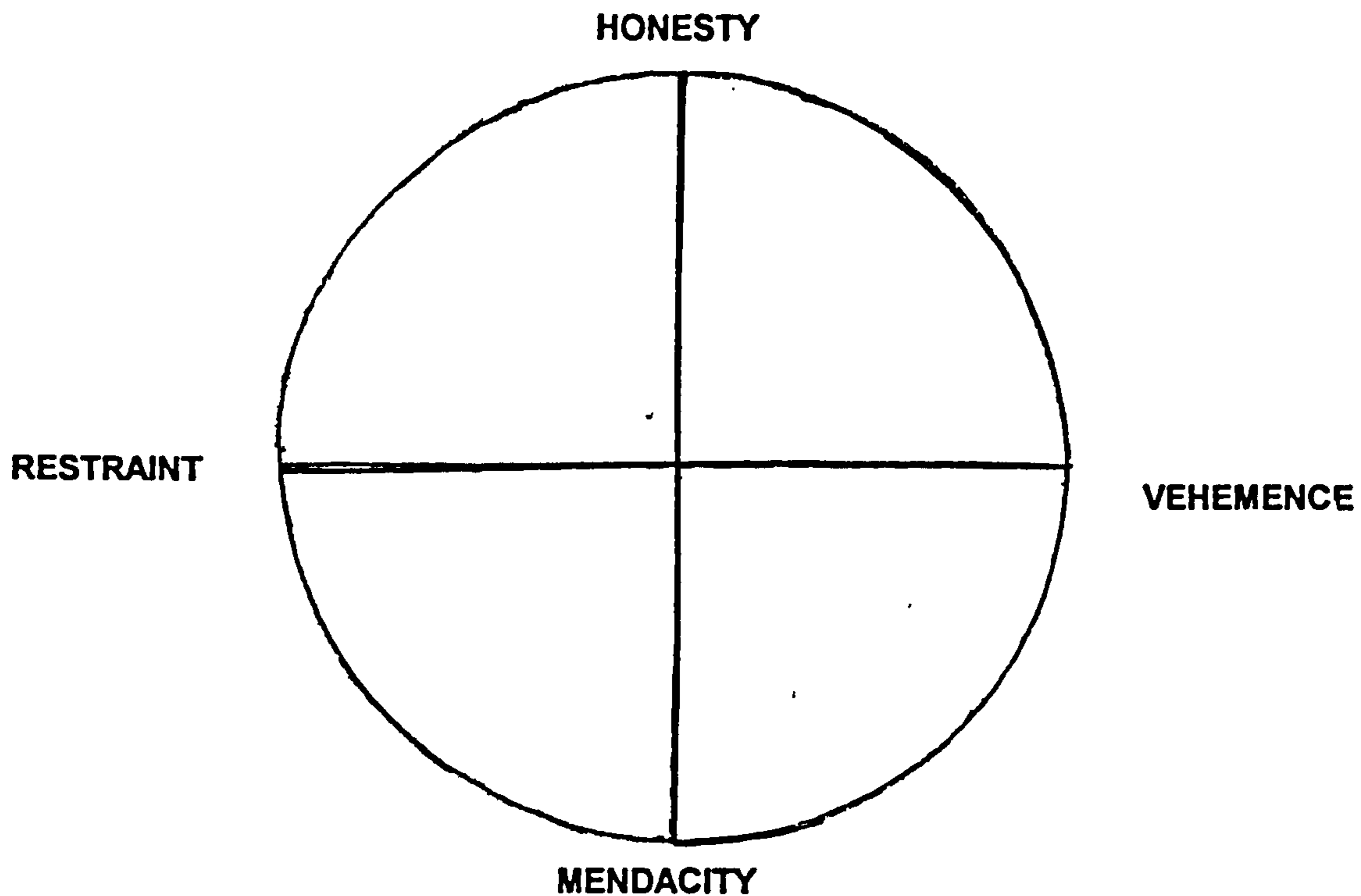


Figure 4. Morgan's model for Quaker Conflict

This orthogonal model includes attention both to the specific context, the Quaker culture and the way it construes conflict, and the individual and the strategy or style they adopt. It contrasts espoused values in the Quaker context, honesty and restraint, with qualities which are unacceptable to Quakers, vehemence and mendacity. While honesty and mendacity are constructed as good and bad in roughly the same way by most cultures, restraint and vehemence are not. Their opposition is a peculiarly Quaker polar construction. Morgan's model points to a clear strategy for achieving success in Quaker disagreement in Quaker terms, restrained honesty. However, her own experience has been that this resulted in more concern about the outward form of harmony than the substance of justice. The Quaker collective turned in on itself and presented a solid front which excluded the aggrieved person and did not accommodate to their needs. Therefore Morgan herself chose to adopt the course of vehement honesty. She deliberately expressed her view in language which was strikingly different from restrained Quaker language⁸. This was probably not effective in achieving justice either.

⁸ For instance, she referred to her opponents as 'arseholes'.

The Morgan model is very useful because it provokes thought, and challenges Quakers to re-examine their assumptions and behaviour in conflict. However, it has a relatively limited applicability, because there are so few Quakers. Developing similar models with the members of other organizations would be a useful exercise in appraising the organization's conflict handling culture.

The main models of conflict handling and resolution are disappointing in what they can offer to the explanation of conflict aversion. The 'proper Quaker' does not actually get into the conflict except as a mediator. It is necessary to inquire what is distinctive about the Quaker organizational culture which produces 'the proper Quaker' in order to seek further illumination.

The Quaker Organizational Culture and Conflict

Insights from organizational studies are about shared systems and collective processes. The position of the individual within the collective processes will be considered later. These collective processes can be very powerful, although that is rarely acknowledged among Quakers. The culture, habitus or background informs the meaning of social experience (see Ch 3 p40). The Quaker 'habitus' or culture encourages Quakers to work towards unity and preserving relationship within the organization, to avert their minds and eyes from instances of conflict, and not to speak out, definitely not to speak vehemently. Recipe knowledge is part of the culture, by which these messages are transmitted. It is useful in showing the content of the theories of action (see Ch 3 p41).

The culture is powerful but the very words power and hierarchy provoke a bristling reaction among Quakers. They are very alert to any suggestion that their individuality might be impinged upon, and they might be told what to do. One man no longer kept company with Quakers because 'they're each like their own pope'. Quakers reject 'power to' or 'power over' (Lukes, 1974) invested in individuals or small groups. The 'weighty Friend', whose label indicates influence, does not push their own point of view. They articulate the needs of the meeting and relate this to a possible way forward linked to Quaker values. However, the power that does exist is in the meeting, in the collective, spread through the whole organizational culture. This can be the power of the status quo, the power of inertia, the power of no decision (Lukes, *ibid*), the power of the shared image of how Quakers should be. But it can also be more dynamic and exert pressures as communications are exchanged. This

understanding of power as a dynamic negotiation of identity (Dyrberg, 1997, McNiff, 2000) has yet to reach Quaker collective consciousness. However, the power of the system and in the system shapes Quaker conflict handling.

Power can be continually negotiated within the system without people being aware of it. Influence can be exerted by individuals and groups in private and in public. Knowledge is power and the culture of Quakerliness can be used to control knowledge, or the dissemination of information about what is happening in a conflict. In conflict situations the boundaries of knowledge and information are drawn up. The word confidentiality is used to control who learns what, and indeed anyone is allowed to withdraw behind it. At times it seems that privacy is the ultimate Quaker value. In some circumstances it can be used to veto new negotiation of collective identity; it is said an issue cannot be discussed in public because it was originally linked to personal circumstances which should remain private.

The limitation of knowledge about conflict links to Morgan's (1997) suggestion that some organizational cultures are like psychic prisons. That is prisons without bars but where the restraints are in fact chosen by the prisoners. He gives the example of the story of Plato's cave, where the inhabitants prefer to watch the pictures cast by the firelight on the wall of the cave than explore the reality of the wider world outside. Quakers often choose a closed system of values regarding their practice; if you don't think it works that's because you don't understand it properly or don't share the values⁹. It could be argued that Quakers prefer their image to other people's reality. Their culture tells them this is acceptable.

However, it may be acceptable but it may not be comfortable. The existence of conflict challenges the Quaker group image. This questioning challenge is rarely seen as an aid to creativity or innovation, but as an embarrassing sign of failure. There is a discrepancy between the aspiration, the flickering picture on the wall of the cave, and reality or other images outside the cave. This could also be described as dissonance between the two images and provokes a reminder of Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1964). This theory maintains that if you believe one thing and then experience something which disconfirms it, you experience discomfort which has to be lessened. This can be achieved by renewed commitment

⁹ This is exemplified with the Quaker Business Method, which can only be appraised by accepting its basic premises. Its aficionados would say it cannot be judged in comparison with other methods of decision making.

to the original belief. In the original study of a group which expected the end of the world on a given date (Festinger, *ibid*) the discomfort that it never came was assuaged by renewed and ardent promulgation of the original belief. Quakers espouse the image that they are committed to conflict resolution, but when they are embarrassed by the eruption of conflict in their midst they can sometimes assuage this discomfort by re-iterating the commitment to mending the wider world and its conflicts. It is common to hear a Quaker ask 'why are we wasting our time on this little problem here when there are so many big problems in the world to be worked on?' The cognitive dissonance model is based in cognitive psychology and proposes a very tight predictive framework, which Quaker experience does not fit precisely¹⁰. However, there is some approximation between the model and the experience, and it is particularly useful in identifying the focus on assuaging discomfort which is a Quaker pattern.

The most useful tool for exploring Quaker conflict aversion is the work of Argyris and Schön on espoused theory and theory in use in organizations and the two related action models about how organizations learn and deal with change. Widely researched and well established in organizational studies, these analytical tools illumine the dilemma of Quaker conflict aversion very compellingly.

All organizations have espoused theory. This is the theory which is offered to explain or justify a given pattern of activity in the organization. The organization has given public commitment to this explanation. These are the things that the actors in the organization say or think they do or should do. The content can be found in authoritative resources of the organization. The Quaker espoused theory about conflict is described on p134. In addition to the espoused theory, all organizations have theories in use; these may not be written down, or even spoken, but are discovered implicit in the behaviour of people in the organization. People may not be very aware of what is guiding their behaviour and may not give a coherent account of these theories; they have to be deduced from the behaviour itself. The collective rules of the theory in use will govern some aspects of interactive behaviour; these are often concerned with communication and control, rewarding and punishing,

¹⁰ The model lists five conditions which must be present and subject to unequivocal confirmation or disconfirmation. Quaker processes are much more open to subjective interpretation. The model also posits the repetition of the same activity after the realisation of dissonance. Among Quakers the response activity after experiencing dissonance is slightly different. See Festinger, et al (1964) *When Prophecy Fails*, Harper and Row, New York. p 216.

positioning members in status and socializing new entrants. Quaker theory in use about conflict (see p 122) covers all these areas.

So for Quakers the espoused theory of commitment to conflict resolution and helping others to practise it, does not sit easily with the theory in use of averting the mind from their own conflicts. There is dissonance here, but Argyris and Schön go further than Festinger in suggesting ways to deal with the dissonance. They propose two models of deliberate response to this dissonance, need for change, or conflict. These two ways of responding, known as Model I and Model II, are characteristic of both collective and individual behaviour. However, Model 1 is more commonly found in everyday practice.

The response outlined in Model 1 is that of defensive reasoning, often over-controlling. It aims to justify the theories in use with attempts to protect both the self and the organization. It works on rational values about achieving goals, maximising winning, minimizing negative feelings. In effect, it preserves the status quo and does not query the basic goals or values. Any change or learning produced will merely adjust the basic structure, not alter it profoundly. This model is found in many or most organizations, and can certainly be observed in use among Quakers. This is the pattern which encourages early attempts at conflict resolution without unpicking the conflict.

The response outlined in Model II is that of productive inquiry. It is minimally defensive, oriented towards learning and encourages freedom and risk taking. It seeks valid information, internal commitment to free choice, with protection for the self and others in joint control. Most importantly it should re-examine the basic values and aims of the organization. If it does this it may produce profound change or double loop learning. It is possible for this to produce results which are dissonant with the original values, but this is not inevitable. A Quaker example from outside the conflict field is the thinking which produced *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* in 1963. Deep values were re-examined and new practice was possible. This project was started on the initiative of one or two individual Quakers, the work was done outside the formal structures of the organization, and only cautiously adopted when it was published.

Quaker behaviour regarding conflict, and its expression in conflict aversion, shows that Model 1 is being used. The theories in use are being vigorously defended and

the basic commitment to a particular view of conflict resolution is not queried. The recipe knowledge is going unquestioned. More radical questions like the meaning of the crucifixion in peacemaking are only raised in theology seminars (Scott, 2003) Few people are asking if they are happy with the image of the peaceable kingdom or if they should be seeking a new image which realises the basic values in a different way or if the basic values are still the ones they want. Fisher (2004) is one voice which asks for a more active vocabulary in working with conflict. His encouragement to be more assertive and passionate in dealing with conflict is however largely addressed to work in the third side outside the Society of Friends. Entering into Model II double loop learning among Quakers might result in a new image to place alongside the Peaceable Kingdom. Instead of a static picture, the happy ending already achieved, a new image might tell the story of the unfinished struggle to reach or build the kingdom. This story of the struggle might tell how Quakers turned towards conflict instead of away from it, how they learned to live with it and each other and created a community which could learn from how it dealt with conflict. This might then generate a whole new set of recipes.

The Shadow

Quakers sometimes acknowledge collective defensiveness but construe it somewhat differently. They prefer explanations grounded in therapeutic systems, such as psycho-analytic approaches.

One such insight into collective defensiveness is offered by Menzies Lyth (1988), though not well known to Quakers. Her research originally intended to explore why so many nurses left their profession. Menzies Lyth argues that it is the culture of the profession in the institution which causes this. Individual nurses start out with high aspirations to be helpful and caring, but the nursing community forms shared systems to protect itself against the impact of dealing with people in death and disease. These defence systems were the existence of procedural rules, the depersonalization of individual people, the focus on roles rather than personal distinctiveness, the obscuring of responsibility for decision making, the idealization of vocation and the avoidance of change. All these feature regularly in the accounts of Quaker conflict. So do decisions to leave the group without negotiation if the dissonance between the idealised image and reality becomes too much. This pattern of collective behaviour fits the Quaker culture well. The defence systems mask the contrast between the aspiration to mend the world and the failure to mend the

metaphorical welcoming notice board. The individual becomes depersonalized within the collective.

Menzies Lyth explains the development of this pattern of group behaviour in terms of Klein's (1959) theory of infant psychological development. This posits two opposing sets of impulses, libidinal and aggressive, or positive and negative. The infant struggles to control the negative impulses for fear of being overwhelmed by them. This experience can recur later in life especially when in emotionally threatening experiences. Whether the hypothesis of infantile splitting is verifiable or not, there is no doubt that Quakers together prefer to split off negative impulses. This merely gives an appearance of control, as the negative impulses still have influence.

Better known to Quakers than the work of Menzies Lyth is the Jungian notion of 'The Shadow'. *Jung and the Quaker Way* (Wallis 1999) has been described as 'part of the Quaker pantheon' and at times the shadow is referred to almost as if it is tangible. The shadow is largely out of collective consciousness; it consists of the unpleasant ugly thoughts and emotions that are not acceptable to polite society. It may vary according to the version of 'polite society' being referred to. Thus the 'Quaker shadow' may be different from the 'Anglican shadow' or the 'British middle class shadow'. Each individual may have a personal 'shadow' but the collective context will contribute to its contents. The contents of the shadow may be presented as the overwhelming and terrifying impulses experienced by the infant, or the wild monsters of the emotions which have been tamed in the Peaceable Kingdom.

However, for Jung

" the shadow is merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted and awkward; not wholly bad. It even contains childish and primitive qualities which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence, but – convention forbids!" (Jung 1969 p 78)

There are Quakers who would like to expose the contents of the shadow and free them to add vitality to the community. Kirkby (2001), who endured a sanitised and formal Quaker childhood, asks for more recognition of life's general difficulties as they occur among Quakers. Steer (2001) claims that Quakers have successfully excluded the 'warring, partying, deal making cheating, divorcing bit' and therefore 'because there is no real tension in the Society's collective life' 'our thin quavery voice from the world's side-lines urging people to "live adventurously" makes no impression on the world at all'. This is an argument for including the negative impulses in the collective life in order to make it more energetic and effective.

Tension in Identity Formation

How does the individual Quaker fit into the collective culture? Especially if it is not Quakerly to think in terms of I or me? Useful explanations are in an article by Bannister (1985) entitled *The Experience of Self* in which he considers two ways of constructing individual identity, based on Kelly's personal construct theory (1963).

Firstly identity is found by focusing on the common shared experiences in a collective. This is taken from Kelly's commonality corollary which proposes that 'each person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by other persons, and therefore his or her psychological processes are similar to other persons' (Kelly, *ibid*, p90) The point here is that not only do several people undergo a common experience, but they also interpret it in the same way; for them the meaning is common. If there is a lively argument and someone says 'We need a little silence' the Quakers will know what is happening and probably react with some commonality. A non-Quaker will think 'What are we waiting for? When do we take the vote?' The shared understanding creates the common identity.

The second method of constructing identity is by focusing on the differences between people¹¹, the attributes and experiences which make them distinct from each other. This is based on Kelly's sociality corollary which proposes 'the ability to play a social role with another is dependent on the extent to which a person can construe the construction processes of another' (Kelly, *ibid*, p95). The emphasis here is not on a role prescribed by the organization or society in which the actor lives but on a social process about how they understand and then interact with someone else. To quote Bannister 'in terms of our ideas about people's construct systems we may seek to inspire them, confuse them, amuse them, change them, win their affection, help them to pass the time of day, or defeat them'. In all these ways the actor is taking part or playing a role in a social process, but it is not a role that has a specific name. It is sociality and it requires open-minded attention and responsiveness to the experience of the other.

The co-existence of commonality and sociality poses a problem for Quakers. With limited Quaker time individual Quakers are less interested in individual differences than in having the common Quaker experience. They want to practice being

¹¹ This does of course depend on the person having achieved some sense of their own uniqueness. See Kelly's individuality corollary (1963 p55).

Quakerly, that is why they are there. So it is not surprising that commonality is privileged above sociality and the 'proper Quaker' way is sought. However for conflict resolution, sociality, often also characterised as the ability to step into another's shoes, is needed. If Quakers have not practised this they may feel at a loss to know the 'proper Quaker' way to do it. They are used to knowing how they expect other Quakers to behave, but they have little experience of focusing on themselves and creating a new interactive pattern in conflict. Sociality requires reflection on the self before reflection on the other (Lederach, 1999) and leads into complex patterns of communication within the self. Bannister's poetic conversation (Bannister, 1985, p4) between the self, the other, the imagined other and the pondering self is an example of this complexity, which might have been addressed to Quakers

I tell you that I am not angered by your behaviour
I know that to be a lie
I also know that if you think I am angered by your behaviour then you will
think that I do not love you
And I do love you
So I lie about my anger so that you shall know the truth about my love
(Perhaps I am lying to myself and I do not love you)

The next stage of the research focuses on the exploration of the self in connection with Quaker conflict.

Summary of chapter.

Conflict among Quakers is characterised by conflict aversion, by restraint and by the privileging of relationship above outcome. The Quaker organizational culture shapes these patterns by focusing on the image of the peaceable kingdom and avoiding awareness of actions which are not congruent with this image. Persistent Quaker conflict is identity conflict about values and relationships, usually seeking the 'proper Quaker' way. It is assumed that there is a known 'proper Quaker' way or collective identity, but little attention is given to singular identities which must interact for the purpose of conflict resolution.

Conflict handling theory is of limited value in understanding the Quaker attitude to conflict, as aversion prevents much involvement in conflict. The dual concern model, identity conflict theory and positioning on the third side produce more questions than answers. For explanations of why Quakers behave as they do regarding conflict it is more useful to look to theories of organizational culture and its power. The work of Argyris and Schön on theories of action and single and double loop learning is particularly helpful. This reveals how Quakers have their own version of the typical pattern which defends the status quo and fails to change it. Collective defensiveness is also explored using psycho-analytic theories in vogue among Quakers themselves. Personal construct psychology supplies insights into Quaker identity formation. Limited 'Quaker time' produces a preference for 'commonality' using the collective Quaker identity, but this may be counter productive for Quaker conflict handling which requires 'sociality' and the acknowledgement of reflection on singular identity.

CHAPTER 10 Turning Inward; From the Collective to the Individual.

This chapter records a pause to reflect and review more literature before embarking on the second half of the research project, which aimed to encourage self reflection. It considers ways of constructing the self; the reflective practitioner; and reflexivity and insidership.

Previous chapters have focused on how Quakers understand their organizational culture and how they enact and handle conflict, which they characterize as taking place in public and being worked through in the organizational framework. What is lacking is a picture and an explanation of how individuals see themselves participating in these events.

The Grassroots Quakers mainly presented themselves as spectators, or healers, of 'somebody else's conflict'. Edge Quakers presented a vision of the 'peaceable kingdom' working to mend the world; anybody who presented a dissonant view was likely to end up feeling to blame and unacceptable. Though Quakers pride themselves on their individuality these contributors came over as conforming to the rules of 'Quakerliness', The individual person was rather like a blank cardboard cut out Quaker, hidden behind role, responsibility and aspiration. But for conflict resolution imaginative self awareness is a necessary part of sociality, in order to learn to stand in the shoes of another.

Constructions of self

We therefore need to look more at how contemporary Quakers construct their idea of self. So far the focus has been on the common aspects of their identity, but we need to pay attention to the differences which contribute to individual identity. This may not be easy, especially if 'I' is rather unQuakerly¹.

This rather sweeping statement links with the way the self has been and is viewed in cultures which are very different from contemporary Western culture. In more collective cultures a person is defined by their place within that culture (Durkheim, 1893;1912). They are not expected to have individual needs or to express them. The interlocking expectations of the context do not encourage personal agency or self reflection. However, contemporary Western culture consists not of one context

¹ This is explained in more detail.in Ch.9 p148

but many for any individual, but there is also an implicit expectation that there is a 'self' which is distinct from all these contexts and which can query and shape the nature of its connection with the various contexts. The point here is not to demonstrate the variety of social contexts, which are different in the relative emphasis placed on social expectation and self, but to focus on the idea of a separate self and how it is used. Rosaldo (1984) argues that the opposition of an outer life shaped by mask, role, rule or context with an inner life of spontaneity, genuine feeling, privacy, uniqueness and constancy is a framework particularly used in Western culture. For some cultures this opposition is not part of the mental framework but it is echoed in the distinction between religious and spiritual (Yip, 2003) adopted by many Quakers (Gillman, 2002). The spiritual self is considered more authentic.

Deaux (1992) explores the difference between social and personal 'self' in detail. She describes one strand tracking from G.H. Mead (1967), through role theories to Goffman (1969) which includes multiple identities, an external focus and the possibility of frequent change. The social context shapes the individuality. A second, more psychological, strand is used by such thinkers as Erikson (1950); this proposes an identity that is integrated, internal and reasonably permanent. Here individuality interprets the social context. These two strands are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Very often they work in conjunction or in sequence. Kelly's (1963) personal construct theory suggests that an individual forms their personal construction of the world from their experience (which is of necessity social), and then uses those constructs to anticipate and interpret future social experiences. The hermeneutic spiral² (Osborne, 1991) tracks a path from social to personal and back.

Other writers emphasise the early formation of personal individuality before social ties are created. Kitzinger (1992) draws attention to the views of Sampson (1988) (1988) who draws from the context of the 'American dream' which suggests 'the social bond can be built only after the fully self-contained individual has been established'. Sampson(1988) queries the possibility of the fully self contained individual. The concept is characteristic of US social psychology which emphasises the potential of the individual rather than European social psychology which emphasises the social embeddedness of the individual.

² This term is used in disciplines ranging from theology to computer systems to indicate that after reflection one does not return to the same place in the hermeneutic circle. Time or the thinker has moved on and the context is not the same.

It is pertinent to explore this tension between social and personal formations of the self with regard to contemporary Quakers and their understanding of their individuality as Quakers. From the interview contributions and observing participation it is clear that many Quakers now see themselves as very self contained and distinctive individuals. In their 'journey' to becoming a Quaker they have left behind the constraints they perceived in other religious groups, they have come to a place where there is no creed and therefore they may believe what they like, and where the typical lifestyle is against the grain of the wider world. They are different by their own choice. It is now impossible to be a Quaker member without making an individual choice and decision to do so.³

In the past the total social context could also have been predominantly Quaker: family, education, employment, and religious community. Now the 'SQIF'⁴ is more common than the Quaker family; most Quakers cannot afford a Quaker school, others do not send their children on principle; there are no paternalistic Quaker firms and to work for Quakers is reported by the contributors as a form of masochism. Most Quakers spend only a small proportion of their lives with other Quakers or doing Quaker things. They move between several different or overlapping social contexts each week. This is the post-modern condition for others besides Quakers.

In 21st century Europe, and among the contributors to this study, moving between overlapping social contexts is a common experience. This may result in awareness of different aspects of self, or even, as described by Mair (1977), a community of self. People often speak of themselves as being in two minds; sometimes these 'minds' can be specified and attached to different contexts, for instance my 'social worker' self and my 'Quaker self'⁵. There are usually more than two in a community of self, and they may take different roles at different times.

³ This is in contrast with the procedure 100 years ago when application by choice was possible but the practice was that the offspring of Quaker parents would automatically become Quakers. At the time of writing it is technically possible, though extremely infrequent, for parents to apply for their baby or child to come into membership. It is already suggested (YM 2001) that this option should be removed.

⁴ SQIF is an acronym for Single Quaker in Family, used among contemporary UK Quakers.

⁵ This was a splitting which was commonly experienced by Quaker Social Workers at the time of the Orkney child abuse enquiry, when Quakers often took a view which Quaker Social Workers considered partisan.

“Some of these selves will be found to persist and others may be more transitory, some will be “isolates” and others will work in “teams”, some will appear on many occasions and others only on a few special kinds of occasions, some will be more “powerful” and others will give way to them.” Mair, 1977 p30

Similar ideas about different aspects in the self are found in Ford (1997), who relates these to important relationships in past life. Young (1999) consciously created an imaginary support community of the famous and virtuous to strengthen him in a difficult experience. Since he selected the virtues these must have related in some way to strengths and weaknesses that he felt he possessed.

Butt et al (1997) suggest that in the contemporary experience of the fragmented self, people also recognise something which they identify as their own individual self. This is the one that they are most comfortable with, where there is an absence of self consciousness and relaxation of self monitoring.

The relaxation of self monitoring is in contrast to many understandings of the self which focus on self monitoring as a process which is inherent in awareness of self. Mead suggested that ‘I’ is the part of self that perceives, acts, speaks and feels, but is not reflectively aware. In order to become aware of oneself, one must also see and experience oneself in the past tense, as ‘me’ (Crossley (2000), or create an analogue space in which ‘me’ can be observed by ‘I’ (Botella, 1997) But this vision of ‘me’ in retrospect or elsewhere will also be coloured by the feedback from other people, which makes it a social experience. Self monitoring can be hard work, as is the task of Kelly’s person as scientist trying to make sense and understand the world and oneself. The reflective or monitoring self may not be the most comfortable or preferred in the community of selves.

Quakers have particular views of the self, combining elements from different social contexts. Firstly I will give an example from Mack (1992) describing the interior processes of women Quakers in the seventeenth century. From the beginning Quaker women were allowed an unusually strong role in that they could preach in public and, like Mary Dyer, travel to foreign countries with their ministry and be hanged just as men could. But this was not a recognition of strength or ability in

their own selves. In fact they were required to put their own selves, and many of their female attributes⁶ to one side.

“Quakers and others recorded their attempts to apply the acid of self criticism, fasting and incessant prayer to their own bodies and personalities; to dissolve the habits, passions, gestures and little secret sins that made them who they were; to expose themselves as creatures without status, without intelligence, without gender; to become blank” (Mack 1992 p7)

The aim was disengagement from the self to provide a clear and empty space for the spirit of God to act. In early days this space was often filled with turbulent emotion, the physical quaking which accompanied spoken ministry.

However disengagement from the self continued into the eighteenth century as the aim, but left behind the turbulent expression of emotion. This was in parallel with quietist religious movements in Europe, but changed the nature of the Quaker meetings dramatically. Jones (1921) notes that in 1770 there were twenty two successive meetings for worship in Dublin, with only one spoken contribution to break the silence. This was common. The necessary preparation for the religious life was

“the repose of all one’s own powers, the absence of all efforts of self direction, of all strain and striving, the annihilation of all confidence in one’s own capacities, the complete quiet of the ‘creature’.”

Jones (ibid p 36)

A recent paper by Meads (2004) contrasts the view of self among ‘early enthusiastic’ Quakers and contemporary ‘liberal liberal’⁷ Quakers. The early Quakers tried to put aside their own personal life experience to become a vessel for God’s message. The focus was on an experience different from their daily selves. The liberal liberal uses some of the phrases from the seventeenth century, in particular ‘that of God in everyone’ and ‘What canst thou say?’ but the context and therefore the meaning and

⁶ There was another role for females, which required less putting aside of the self. This was to be a ‘mother in Israel’, organizing, supporting and caring for the members and ministers of the Quaker community. This was nearer the traditional female role.

⁷ ‘Liberal liberal’ is a phrase used by Dandelion to characterise UK Quaker theological culture since approximately 1980.

focus has changed. The liberal liberal according to Meads starts the journey within, from a 21st century personhood. Subjective experience is privileged 'final vocabulary'⁸ and cannot be queried. 'New Age' interpretations have seeped into Quaker understandings and the self is free, participating in freedom inside a group, not group discipline. For these Quakers, suppression of the individual will is much harder than it was for early Quakers. Meads suggests that this is why structured procedures such as Light groups, clearness meetings and some forms of Quaker business method are necessary to achieve discipline for the individual self.

For early Quakers, once they had discovered the Quaker experience, it acquired an objectivity to which they could form an individual connection. For liberal liberal Quakers, among pluralist religious culture (Berger, 1969), there can be no such objectivity. This applies to theological belief and private lives, but the Quaker business method is sometimes treated as if it has an objective reality and unquestionable justification.

I submit that these different historical views of self among Quakers have all left their mark and are to be found embedded in any Quaker gathering. Is it possible for the central activity of Quakers, the meeting for worship, to contain all these different personal views and work? The individual brings themselves to meeting, do they then try to empty themselves to become a vessel, or do they examine their experience and see where it leads? Or both? This is an unexplored area of confusion and misunderstanding that lies hidden beneath the silence. It is commonly acknowledged (Advices and Queries, Paragraph 2) that shared worship is beneficially different from private devotional activity but many questions are not even asked about how individuality fits into this. There is a paradoxical notion on self among Quakers. The individual must at the same time follow their own leading and submit to the leading of the group. They must be convinced by their own experience, but not act on this unless they have tested it in the group. Each person is 'unique, precious, a child of God' (Advices and Queries, 22) but in the Quaker view of God's family the self is for service not self-gratification or expression.

⁸ A concept introduced by Rorty to indicate values which are self evident and non-negotiable to the individual who holds them. (Rorty, 1989)

The Reflective Practitioner

What has this to do with the study of conflict among Quakers? Remember that it is suggested that sociality is necessary for conflict handling and self awareness is necessary for sociality. Schön's (1983) reflective practitioner is a model of applied self awareness. Schön claims that a quality of self reflection adds another dimension which makes any professional task more effective. This self reflection is about admitting uncertainty, placing knowledge and expertise in the context of the needs of clients or colleagues. The reflective practitioner (who can be found in practically any context) allows themselves to experience surprise, puzzlement or confusion in a situation which may be unique. They reflect on both what they see before them and their prior understandings which may have shaped their behaviour now. They think in terms of experimenting to generate a new understanding and a new course of action. This is a very different mindset from feeling that they should know the answers and impress the client with this. I began to ask how much Quaker conflict handlers could be reflective practitioners.

McNiff (2000) moves the focus from the reflective practitioner to reflective action research. She sees this as a process which integrates theory and learning embedded and embodied in real lives. Reflection on this life experience may generate new understandings and actions. As indicated above, reflective action research involves the loss of status derived from authority and certainty for the designated researcher. The researcher becomes a collaborator with others in working towards their goal. This may involve flexibility about what the goal is. It was difficulties and tensions in experiences of trying to use reflective action research in organizational and educational settings which caused McNiff to reflect herself on the nature of power. Organizational theories which speak about power are also discourses of power; they influence organization practices as practices of power. McNiff is quite clear that she herself is engaging in a discourse of power, how her power is generated and how she uses it⁹. How can this usefully be applied to Quakers, for whom 'power is not in our vocabulary'? Can reflection individually and together bring the power in the system more into visibility and audibility?

Reflection has to be differentiated from reflexivity. The Oxford dictionary defines reflection as 'to go back in thought, meditate, or consult with oneself, to remind

⁹ McNiff says " I am therefore challenging the dominant theory that requires people to take on the identities others create for them, and adopting instead a theory that says we are allowed to create our own identities." (McNiff, 2000 p110)

oneself or consider'. This process of retrospective consideration located in the self best describes what I was hoping to enable in the next stage of the project. For some it might turn into Schon's 'reflection in action', a continuing interior and exterior dialogue of an experimental nature.

Reflexivity and Insidership

Reflexivity is used with a specific meaning in the qualitative research process. McKay et al (2003) cite Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) definition

'reflecting on and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents. Reflexivity also means acknowledging the critical role we play in creating, interpreting and theorizing data' (p121)

Reflexivity is about the interactive and circular connection between the researcher and the researched. It justifies itself when it makes visible the construction of knowledge within the research in order to produce a more accurate analysis (Pillow, 2003) or when it shows just how 'contaminated' the epistemological process is.

There are, however, extra dimensions to explore when the researcher is also an insider to the organization and topic being researched. There is a possibility that in sharing some of the same mental frameworks there will be assumptions made that researcher and collaborators or subjects will use all the same constructions. Labaree (2002) refers to the dangers of 'going observationalist', of assuming that there is only one version or degree of insidership. The location of the insider is variable and re-negotiated throughout the research, or if it is not it should be. The anticipation of continuing as an insider after the end of the research project can also influence the research. Anticipated discomfort suggests that reflexivity may be benefiting the research. The tensions between varying degrees of insidership and multiple outsider positions, may create messy, uncomfortable and generative analyses.

I was aware of these considerations as I approached Stage 4 of the research project in the summer of 2003. The idea of a workshop had been planned from the start, and there had been some discussion of the nature of this event. Was it a focus group, an intervention or what? At that point my understanding of focus groups was

limited and I rejected that description, though it now appears that I was interested in both content and interaction between the participants which can be legitimately explored in focus groups (Wilkinson, 2003). I was clear that I did not intend to use the workshop to create change, though I could not deny that I would be interested in any change that resulted. The intention of the workshop was to gather information from collaborators, and to encourage a reflective process which would bring Quaker selves into the account or narrative, and fill in their stories. After the experience of Stages 1, 2, and 3, I perceived Quaker selves as misty, empty or stereotyped. I felt the need for more accounts from individuals who had experienced themselves in conflict.

One experience was crucial in structuring the workshop. Making the plan was greatly influenced by others who shared my insider position, but located themselves differently. I had identified two aims for the follow up period. These were

To obtain more information through the participants to see if this confirmed or disconfirmed my analysis of the organizational culture regarding conflict.

To set up a process which would yield information about increased self reflection in conflict handling.

By the end of Stage 3 my main interest was in the second aim. The Quaker 'pilot participant' for the workshop had reservations about the first aim, but my 'outsider' supervisors did not. However, the reservations recurred and I asked another group of Quakers if they thought it feasible for the participants to look outward into their meetings. I quote from my research journal:

" They exploded, from the gut feelings of themselves as ordinary meeting members. This was seen as likely to cause explosions in the local meeting, or alternatively that the Friends would act so that there was nothing to see for six months (and then it would explode). It would give licence to loose cannons in the meeting to indulge their

prudence and to air things outside the meeting which should remain in the family¹⁰.”

I accepted their verdict and changed 'through' to 'from' in the first aim for the follow up period. This minor change meant that information would be sought from the participants, about their own observations, reactions, thoughts and feelings. They were not required to act as a reporting conduit through which information about what was happening in their meetings would come. Had I 'gone observationalist' in accepting the views of colleagues? Probably, but I also felt as if I had been rescued from a methodological precipice, which had been invisible to me.

The main objective now was to seek information about increased self-reflection in conflict handling among Quakers.

¹⁰ Writing for myself, this phrase is probably an echo from my experience of working with sexual abuse where unpleasant secrets remain in the family.

CHAPTER 11 Collaborative Effort : Reflecting on Conflict Together

This chapter gives an account of the design and purpose of the workshop which was Stage 4 of the research project. It includes a record of the workshop, and findings related to this.

After the analysis of the data from the interviews the main objective was to seek information about increased self-reflection in conflict handling among Quakers. There had been a lack of focus on the self in contributors' accounts of conflict; often a stereotype seemed to be presented, or the self was omitted from the account. I hoped to engage with other Quakers in exploring this. In order to do this I planned a workshop which would present these findings, consider them together, and then offer an opportunity for self-reflection about Quaker conflict. Appendix C contains copies of publicity material, papers from the workshop and correspondence in the follow up period.

There were two aims for this stage

- To obtain more information from the participants and to see if this confirmed or disconfirmed my analysis of how the Quaker organizational culture works regarding conflict.
- To set up a process which would yield information about the effects of increased self reflection on conflict handling.

I was aware of tension between these two aims. The first required the participants to look outwards into the public context, but in doing so they were constrained by the need to respect the privacy of others. They did not want to be 'spies in the meeting' but to re-appraise their own experience in the light of the workshop. The second required the participants to look inward at themselves. In practice the aims were often inseparable.

One of the characteristics of co-operative enquiry (Heron, 2001) is that it is both informative about the topic under investigation and transformative of it. This was certainly applicable to the two aims above. The first aim was to be informative about Quaker conflict handling seen through the eyes of the participants. The second aim was to see whether increased self reflection about conflict handling produced any kind of transformation in the participants.

Being together in a group is an essential part of the Quaker culture, and unless an idea had been submitted to the group it has little validity (see QFP Ch 13). This probably shaped my plan that the last stage of the research should be a process of working in co-operation with a group of Quakers together. The interviews had explored conflict in the collective culture with individuals but produced a disappointing amount of information about the individuals themselves in conflict. Though I intended to offer a research workshop, the Quaker culture influenced its origin, its process and its outcome. I knew that unless the earlier work had been exposed to a Quaker assessment, it would be discounted. The effect of the Quaker conventions of communication on the process and outcome of the workshop will be considered below.

In addition there were probably personal reasons for working in group collaboration. My professional experience has mostly taken place in groups, teams, meetings, training sessions. In my experience this is where things happen and movement takes place. My own learning style benefits most from group exchange; for me solitary reflection is less productive of new ideas (Smith, 1988)

Leaving aside these two rationales for the workshop, which I gave little significance at the time, there was also a rationale from research method. In bringing people together I hoped to offer a different experience from talking alone with an interviewer. In talking to each other participants would hear many more views, be challenged to consider them, and possibly make some kind of co-construction. Being together would produce interaction and more varied data but it would also use the power inherent in any group. The presence of other people made the focus, and the response to it, more committed. The occasion was called a workshop; the intention was to suggest to the participants that they were to work, that their work was important as well as mine. It was not a conference, or a presentation, though some participants may have expected that. At times it used the techniques of a focus group, offering a stimulus, even a small schedule of questions, to produce interactive response (Wilkinson, 2003)

Heron and Reason's (2001), criteria for co-operative inquiry, working 'with' people rather than 'on' people sat congruently with the whole of this collaborative stage. Accordingly attention was given to managing the project and including the participants; there was focus on the validity of the inquiry and the responses of the

participants; there was interplay between reflection and experience in both the workshops and the pondering period; the participants were invited to be involved in research decisions throughout . More broadly the workshops included different kinds of knowing: experiential knowing through encounter [the participants met with each other and became researchers], presentational knowing through the use of expressive forms [the use of poetry and quotation by participants], propositional knowing through words and concepts [the workshop sessions and ponderings], and practical knowing-how in the use of personal skills [using themselves to interact with others and with the Quaker system in a political way]. There was a cyclical process of positing questions, deciding methods of reflecting, experiencing and reflecting, coming together to consider the reflections and then reflecting on the consideration. This was the framework for collaboration; the invitation was extended and accepted.

Publicity and Recruitment

In setting up the workshop plans were governed by what was possible. At one stage I had proposed a full weekend at the Quaker Study Centre, which would have drawn from a wider range of Quakers and given more time. However, this did not fit in with the criteria of the centre¹ and was not possible. Therefore I adapted to a day workshop, at no expense to the participants except their travelling costs.

The workshop was aimed at anyone who was interested in the subject of Quaker conflict. There was no intention of attracting any particular kind of participant, unlike the search for Edge Quakers. Though the subject was Quaker conflict I hoped the participants would have experience in other contexts, as there would be times when this would be useful comparison.

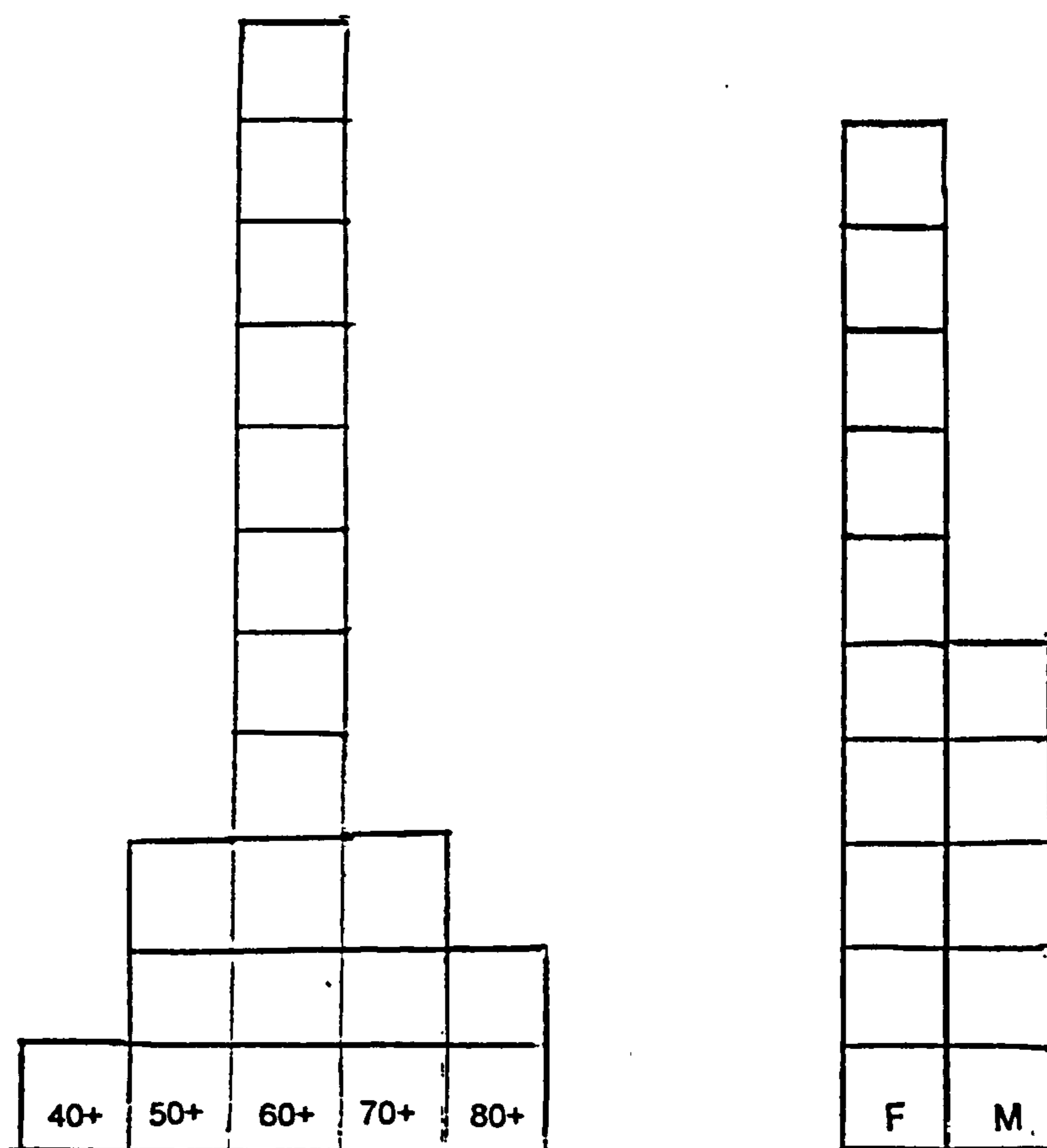
I placed an advertisement in *The Friend* in March 14 2003, with a follow up in July. This led to a further cheap entry in *The Friends Quarterly* in Summer 2003, and a free mention with contact details in *Quaker News* (Summer 2004). All these were distributed nationally. I also posted details of the workshop on Quaker-B online discussion group, which took it even wider afield (April 2004). Using the *Quaker Book of Meetings 2003* I sent flyers to all the local meetings in Yorkshire and its neighbouring areas. Some were treated as announcements; several were placed on notice boards. Attending the Yearly Meeting in May I carried flyers with me, and if an interest in my work was shown I gave the person a flyer and asked them if they

¹ It was explained to me that the centre could not ask people to pay to take part in research, particularly on a subject which might not draw many participants.

could find me a participant. The flyers said 'Researching into Quakers Handling Conflict'. I lost count of the number of Quakers who responded to this by saying 'you should have put Quakers avoiding conflict'

Most bookings came from the flyers, either hand distributed or mailed. National coverage produced enquiries, but probably only three bookings through the Friend. Some participants saw several different advertisements. McArdle's account (2002) of setting up a collaborative research project supports the idea that personal conversation is the most fruitful way of engaging participants. Six weeks before the workshop there were the full twenty participants enlisted, and subsequently a waiting list of five. (The advertisement, flyer, and subsequent correspondence with the participants are in Appendix C)

The participants were fifteen women and five men. Figure 5 shows age and gender distribution.



Workshop : Age Distribution

Workshop: Gender Distribution

Figure 5. Age and Gender Distribution of Workshop Participants

One participant was not a Quaker but had some knowledge of Quakers and was interested in the topic. One was a Quaker attender, very actively involved in her own meeting. The other 18 had been associated with Quakers for an average of 32.5 years, with a range from 70 to 5 years of contact. Geographically, fifteen of the participants came from Yorkshire, where I live and the workshop took place; three came from areas bordering on Yorkshire; two came long distances, from the Midlands and Bristol. 12 of the participants had met me previously. With four of these I was in continuing communication about other matters; we served together on Quaker committees and were otherwise in continuing relationship².

Compared with the previous contributors these participants were specifically involved with conflict resolution. Only three of the twenty described themselves as never having had responsibility for conflict resolution in either Quaker or other settings. Ten had carried such responsibility in Quaker circles and eleven had had professional or voluntary responsibility in non-Quaker circles. Quaker responsibility included such things as membership of a Monthly Meeting Conflict Resolution Group, or a General Meeting Conciliation Committee. Non-Quaker responsibility included work in the Probation Service, marriage counselling, work in the court system or with other public bodies. Their combined experience was indicative of serious commitment to the topic.

The workshop: September 20 2003

The venue for the workshop was governed by expediency: a Quaker Meeting House in Leeds, relatively central with easy access with reduced hire rates³. A group size of 20 had been chosen. I felt I could work comfortably with that size of group, it was large enough to provide a range of views and to give a remaining core if several dropped out of the follow up stage. This worked well in practice. All twenty attended the first workshop, sixteen took part in the pondering stage and nine attended the second workshop.

My intention was very clear that this was a collaborative research workshop, not a gathering of Quakers. I now wonder whether it is possible to make that distinction

² One of these was my husband. He did not see why this position should exclude him from an event which he was otherwise qualified to attend. This was made explicit to the workshop participants and we committed ourselves to limiting our communication about the research process and other participants.

³ At one point I had hoped to attach a microphone to the hearing loop and thus record the sessions in the fairly large room. However this turned out not to be possible. The only records of the day were my prepared material, the flip chart material of the participants, and all our memories.

when the venue and the participants were overwhelmingly Quaker. However, determinedly, I started the programme without requesting the customary few minutes (or more) of silent worship. As soon as it got to a point in the programme where free contributions from the participants were appropriate W8 asked why we had not started with meeting for worship. She clearly thought this was odd, not what she had expected, and wanted to say so. I explained that I wanted to define this as a research event not a Quaker one, and I had not wanted to set it in a Quaker mode. However, if they wished they could use the time left at the end of the afternoon for worship. All seemed to concur in this, and that is what happened.

It also needs to be asked how far the general Quaker culture, the moderate expression, the use of silence, the behavioural code in collective life, and the attitude to conflict impinged on the day. In considering this I compared experience of running workshops and training events with Quakers, with social workers and multi-agency groups. The September 20 group was particularly cordial and compliant compared with my other experience, leaving me questioning at the end of the day whether they had really been engaged, despite their assurances of appreciation. In retrospect it appears that the subject of conflict influenced the atmosphere. Apprehension was acknowledged and self discipline applied, so as not to provoke anything uncontrollable. Individuals in the group felt able to disagree with me, but did not often disagree with each other in the large group sessions. Spoken contributions were offered to the centre of the group, as in a Quaker business meeting, or worship sharing session. No doubt it felt natural and proper to most of the participants.

The programme for the day, (overleaf). was intended to move from the presentation of my work, through the participants' response to that work, through their contributions of their experience to focus on themselves and then to plan their future contribution. I planned for the weight of the responsibility to transfer from me at the beginning of the day to the participants at the end. My contribution would grow less and less as the day went on. In practice it did not feel like that. It was not till well into the follow up period that I felt most of the responsibility had been redistributed.

After introductions and reassurances about anonymity the first item of the day was to ask the participants to respond to a set of vignettes of Quaker conflict (known as 'The Five Dilemmas'), which they did by writing on a sheet listing the 'dilemmas' The

Table 2

**RESEARCHING QUAKERS HANDLING CONFLICT
CARLTON HILL MEETING HOUSE, LEEDS
SEPTEMBER 20 2003**

9.30 Coffee, tea etc available

10.0 Welcome, introductions, anonymity.

Session 1

What is Quaker conflict like?
Findings from the research so far.

11.15 Refreshment break

11.30 Session 2

Responses from the workshop participants

Session 3

Coping with Quaker conflict.
Methods, good practice, role models

12.45 Lunch break

1.45 Session 4

Ourselves and others
The group and the individual

2.45 Refreshment break

3.0 Session 5

Reflective Researchers
What do we do next?

4.0 End. More refreshment if required.

The only equipment you need to bring is yourself and something to write with.
Stuff to write on will be supplied.

purposes of the exercise were firstly to get people thinking for themselves, secondly to see if their responses were congruent with my analysis of the culture (which the participants were part of but had not yet had described to them), and thirdly to see how much these responses contained self reflection. Equally importantly the vignettes were to be used as markers for the personal position at the start of the process. They would be used again at the end of the follow up period to see if there was any change in this position. The sheets were collected in at the end of the exercise, then copied and later returned to their owners to be used if wished in the follow up period. There was little opportunity for discussion in the workshop.

My previous experience of the use of vignettes had been in training for work with child sexual abuse. The Open University training pack of the late 1980s used many of these little stories to make clear situations which at that time were hard to imagine. The Quaker conflict vignettes, referred to throughout as the 'Five Dilemmas' were, however, not hard to imagine. They were all drawn from the interview data, and clearly within the experience of most people in the room. The only complaint about responding to these vignettes was that there was not enough time.

The first input was my report of my findings from the interview data. This was in fact the focus for the morning, to which the participants responded in the second session. Supported by a series of handouts⁴ (see Appendix C) to which the participants could refer I gave an account of the main subjects of Quaker conflict (this was based on the material in Chapters 6,7 and 8), its progress and ways in which it appeared to be avoided. The main recipe pointers for handling Quaker conflict were said to be no use of power, no speaking out, and no anger. The participants raised some questions for clarification or mild disagreement. They were then asked to choose which of three statements was closest to their own position with regard to what they had heard. These were

1) I recognise this as the organization I know

2) Don't know/ sometimes

3) It's not at all like this.

⁴ These were supplied in folder which formed a record of the whole workshop, including all relevant papers, most of which are in Appendix C.

Fifteen chose the first statement, three the second, and two must have discreetly abstained. To me this suggested that there was some validity in the analysis I had offered.

The participants were then asked to work in four groups of five. The intention was that they should act in the manner of focus groups (Wilkinson,2003), and give free and interactive responses to a series of questions. Focus groups differ from some methods of data collection in that they encourage the exchange of ideas between the participants. The researcher is facilitator but the communication is mainly between the participants, including a range of communicative processes such as 'storytelling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge and disagreement' (Wilkinson, ibid p 185). The small groups may not have achieved all these modes of communication, but they did speak freely to each other with some liveliness. As facilitator to four groups I was available but not aware of all that was happening. The groups were asked to consider the following three questions

1. Are you content with this picture?
2. Have you any explanations for how we got here?
3. Would you want to change the picture? How?

All the groups produced flip chart sheet records of their responses; these were in the form of brainstorming not Quaker minute making, not everybody in the group had to agree with what was written. The responses were amalgamated under the question headings and are reproduced in their original form in Appendix C.

Question 1 – Are you content with this picture?

For Question 1 there was some doubt expressed about the use of the word 'content', but since no better alternative could be found, the groups allowed it to stand. In some cases it then appears to have been interpreted as asking whether this was a valid or accurate picture. In retrospect it might have been better to phrase that question as 'Is there anything you would like to add to this picture?' Several items

noted on the sheet indicated what was thought to be missing from the picture. For instance that there was insufficient acknowledgement of the creative aspect of conflict. However, it is not clear from the record whether this meant that the analysis did not acknowledge this, or that Quakers did not acknowledge this. The question may have been raised at the time, but the answer was not recorded. Overall the response to Question 1 was that the picture presented was rather negative because the avoidance of conflict is unhealthy, with consequences inside and outside the meeting.

Question 2 : Have you any explanations for how we got here?

There was little doubt about 'how they got here'. The tradition, the culture and the extrapolation of the peace testimony to verbal clashes were all to blame. However, there were mixed feelings about what kind of people they were: rugged or tender or nice or equal or self-satisfied. All these descriptions were arguable, and were argued.

Question 3 – Would you want to change the picture in the future? If so how?

In this section there was no shortage of ideas. Furthermore they were all linked to the same theme: better communication, more openness, talking about it, which all required more trust and more inclusiveness. The participants knew the ingredients required, but what was stopping them using them?

Each small group presented its responses to the large group and there was inquiry and discussion. It is a pity that no comprehensive record was made of this discussion. The responses were collated and circulated after the workshop (see letter of September 25, Appendix C) to form part of the basis for reflection in the follow up period.

In Session 3 I reported how the interview contributors had responded to instances of conflict. This included information about the methods used, an example of good practice (see G7 p124) and outlines of the kinds of role models (See Ch 7 p119) I had hoped that there would be information forthcoming about the participants' experience in these areas, but there was relatively little. This may have been another example of hesitancy and not wanting to appear authoritative. One participant did point out that active listening should be included among the methods; just listening was not enough.

The aim in the afternoon was to move the focus from the Quaker culture to the individual participants and eventually their own agency. In order to do this the participants were asked to make small self characterisations⁵. This was something I had experienced myself; its theoretical base is in personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1963). Its intention when used in full form is to provide a rich picture of the way a person construes themselves and their world (Burr & Butt, 1992). In asking the person to step outside themselves and write from an observer's viewpoint, their own construction of themselves becomes more visible. Androutsopoulou (2001) describes the self characterisation as a narrative tool. In this case two different self characterisations were requested: one was a pen-picture of the participant as seen by someone else when in conflict among Quakers; the second was of the participant as seen by someone else when in conflict in a non-Quaker setting. The first aim was for each individual to reflect back on themselves and the second was to encourage awareness that they moved in several contexts and were capable of behaving differently in these.

This exercise caused some puzzlement and resistant muttering. Feedback at the time indicated some people had found it difficult to move to the observer position, others had found they did not have enough time. One person spontaneously commented how very different his characterisations were, but this was not the case for all. The characterisations, or pen-pictures were added to the material which was to be photo-copied by me and then returned to its writer.

This introduction to the afternoon was followed by further reporting from the interviews, drawing out techniques and methods of conflict handling which had been found useful and acceptable in non-Quaker, or non contemporary Quaker, settings by the interview contributors. The aim of this was to try to get participants to think outside the Quaker culture. The Mennonite framework of mutual accountability (Lederach, 1999)(Ch 6 p101) and the obsolete Quaker arbitration instructions (*Church Government*, 1931) caught the attention of some participants. These were used by the interested participants in their later 'ponderings'.

⁵ Each participant was given a sheet with the instructions 'Please write a pen picture of yourself in conflict, as if it were written by someone in your meeting. It can include personality characteristics, behaviour, supposed thoughts and feelings or whatever.' Having done the next instruction said 'Please write a pen picture of yourself in conflict, as if it were written by someone who knows you in another setting, ? at work, a hobby setting, your family, whatever.'

The next objective was to open up ideas about the ways we form our identity within an organization. I presented two contrasting metaphors: the Quaker culture as the uniform Quaker hat, and walking in the well worn shoes of another, which was very varied and personal. Behind these contrasting metaphors were Kelly's (1955) corollaries of commonality and sociality, explored by Bannister (1985). To illustrate how common identity lays expectations on individuals I offered the participants two quotations which illustrated this tension. The first was a well known Quaker piece by Alison Sharman (QFP 20.75) which suggests there is tension between the expression of truth and love. The second was the poetic conversation from Bannister (1985, see Chapter 9 p162) between the self, the other, the imagined other and the pondering self about truth in expressing anger and love. This piece caught the attention of the participants and individual copies were requested. It also enabled me to explain Bannister's distinction between the self that screams and the self that ponders why it screams (ibid). The use of the word ponder seemed to appeal to the participants, and it somehow slipped into shared usage with reference to their individual work in the follow up, or 'pondering' period.

This led into the final session, in which in my mind the responsibility would be transferred to the participants. Together we made plans for the next six months. I suggested setting aside at least an hour a month to write down their reflections connecting their own experience to the subject of the workshop, then each time sending this writing to me for collation and analysis. A few questions, such as what would be relevant, or could handwriting be used, were raised, but the plans seemed acceptable. I asked them what questions they would like to use as prompts for their reflections. With some reluctance or hesitation they produced four questions.

- 1) Have you seen changing attitudes?
- 2) Have you seen transformation in meetings,(even if conflict is still there)?
- 3) How has this conference affected you and have you changed or has your response changed?
- 4) Has your awareness changed (and of yourselves in response to conflict)?

The term 'transformation' had not been used previously in the day, and no one queried what was meant by this. I wondered what was going on; this was a low level for customary Quaker nitpicking. The four questions which I had prepared earlier were also added to the list.

- 5) How has your experience of any conflict compared with what you heard in the workshop?
- 6) Where have you yourself fitted in this picture?
- 7) What personal resources have you drawn on in considering the experience?
- 8) Does your reflection about conflict produce a desire for change, either in yourself or in the culture?

I was asked what Question 7 meant. 'Personal resources' was meant to indicate mental frameworks and spiritual resources of all kinds, including the arts.

Suggestions of contacting each other in the interim period, or working with a partner, met with no enthusiasm, but the prospect of meeting again in six months did. I agreed to arrange this, as an opportunity for the participants to talk to each other about their experience. I also agreed to circulate their contact details. The response to the invitation to continue to work seemed almost too good to be real. All appeared to be acquiescing, with little sense of the difficulty which might be involved.

There was now twenty minutes before the planned finishing time and I offered meeting for worship, which was accepted with alacrity. I had my doubts about this. My experience in several Quaker workshops was that to put a quiet session or meeting for worship at the end of a day was to invite apparent withdrawal and somnolence. However, this did not happen. The silent worship was interspersed with three vocal contributions relevant to the day's theme, and I detected no somnolence. However, during it I realised that I had provided no opportunity for feedback or evaluation.

Hastily I provided a flip chart sheet and a pen and invited people to write any comments they wished before they left. Five comments were made, each very positive. However, I felt flat and still wondered how much people had been engaged.

My supervisors suggested that it was the Quaker culture of 'niceness', or my own 'nice' presentation which produced inhibition and a restrained and orderly atmosphere to the workshop, which felt like a lack of initiative from the participants. I am used to workshops both Quaker and non-Quaker which become resistant, resentful or rebellious. While I may not enjoy that I know I have to follow it through. I

suspect the reason for over-orderliness in this workshop was the subject. It attracted people who were almost professionals in managing conflict, and in managing themselves in public and Quaker public situations. Without effort they, and I, adopted the Quaker style of waiting in silence underneath the workshop form, and allowing others space to contribute. In addition their awareness of their own and each other's potential sensitivity regarding conflict subdued any intrusiveness which might have tempted them. I expected this and colluded with it, not pushing them to reveal any personal experience publicly and offering ample anonymity. The participants expressed relief about this. However, once again a Quaker workshop on conflict had not produced any conflict (cf Ch 6 p 101) but the feeling of lack of drive mentioned on one of the flip charts. This 'mirroring' (Mattinson, 1975) between context and individual or event, which threads through the hermeneutic spiral, is typical of collaborative action research (Charles, 2002).

Findings from the exercises.

The shared or public parts of the workshop have already been described. However, there were two important exercises, which the participants undertook as individuals in the same room. There was relatively little shared discussion about these exercises. The written responses were given to the researcher and then copies returned to their owners, so that they could be referred to during the follow up reflecting.

The Five Dilemmas : at the start

The exercise completed by all twenty of the participants at the very start of the workshop was the 'Five Dilemmas'. Here participants were offered 5 vignettes of Quaker conflicts which were typical of those mentioned in the interview data. At the head of the sheet they were asked 'How would you react? What would you do, what would you feel, what would you think you should do? Please answer as an ordinary person in the meeting, regardless of any role you may hold at the moment'.

Here is a typical response from W13. The only unusual point was that she acknowledges feeling aggrieved in dilemma 3. She would also have liked more time to make a fuller answer at the end.

1. There is a toddler who has reached the stage of being restless in meeting in the children's time. You find this unsettling and you know other people do. What would you do?

I would only find it unsettling if the toddler was unhappily restless (if this was the case I would talk to the parents) and suggest that the toddler could play in the children's room until the others joined for the children's class – the parents might like the support of another adult during this short time.

2. Nearly every week the same person speaks lengthily on a similar subject. Many Friends find this unacceptable. What would you do?

I would discuss the matter with the Elders, who I hope would discuss it with the Friend concerned.

3. A Friend who agreed to help you run the study group lets you down at the last moment with a poor excuse. What would you do?

I would feel aggrieved! Probably I would carry on and let someone else know how I was feeling. I am not very good at confronting someone directly with my grievances.

4. After meeting you hear two Friends in heated argument about whether there should be Friends schools or not. What would you do?

I would leave them to it at the time, but I might speak to each of them individually later, to find out what their deepest feelings were, and if appropriate I might talk to each of them individually and try to put a different point of view.

5. There are plans to make major alterations to the meeting house. You find your views are in a minority. What would you do?

Try and listen and understand – try to accept the sense of the meeting.

Like nearly all the W participants W13 rebutted the suggestion that she might feel personal irritation at the actions of a child. She was a little more negative than most in her response to the Friend who let her down; many of the other Ws envisaged unknown life problems which deserve sympathy and tender handling. She was in the mainstream response in reminding herself to accept the sense of the meeting, though she did not ask herself whether she might be mistaken⁶, which was also a common response

The accumulated responses from the participants clearly demonstrated the espoused theory, and to a limited amount the theory in use. Most of their answers seemed to

⁶ Quoting from the end of Paragraph 17 of Advices and Queries "Think it possible that you may be mistaken."

be responding to the question 'what should you do?' The outlines were socially acceptable in Quaker terms; they neither recognised or expressed much anger or related negative feeling. In a possible one hundred responses there were two mentions of feeling aggrieved, one of irritation, another of being cross, and one of anger which should be overcome before intervening. They did expect themselves to speak out, discreetly, privately, quietly, but nonetheless to speak to someone, whether opposition or ally, about the difficulty. They also recognised the power in the structure and were often willing to invoke, or pass the responsibility to, the Elders, or the Clerk, or the Children's committee. They were well aware of authority within the meeting and willing to request its help. The participants were partly aware that this was espoused theory, they hoped for aspiration. One person with an answer which did not fit into this pattern commented 'I really have done this'. He wanted to make it plain that he was working in reality not aspiration.

The Pen Pictures

The participants were asked 'Please write a pen picture of yourself in conflict, as if it were written by somebody in your meeting. It can include personality characteristics, behaviour, supposed thoughts and feelings or whatever.' The second instruction was the same except for 'as if it were written by somebody who knows you in another setting, work, a hobby setting, your family, whatever'.

The intention of the pen pictures was to put the participants into the position of looking at themselves, 'I' looking at 'me'. This was partly as a pattern for the self-reflective process after the workshop, but also to raise the question whether the participants behaved differently in different contexts, Quaker and non-Quaker. The participants were not comfortable with this exercise, neither the process, nor what they saw. Some of this may be attributed to poor explanation, but not all. Some had trouble in placing themselves as an observer, slipping from the third person 'she' into first person 'I'. Many people seemed to feel unhappy about what they were describing in themselves.

Some did present contrast in the pen pictures from different settings. W4 felt the two pictures of himself were almost completely different.

1 As a Quaker

I would be seen as a Friend to whom they could turn. Perhaps as a 'listening ear'. I would be seen as a conciliating Friend.

2. At work

Perhaps as too accommodating and lacking in forcefulness. Always looking for 'the good' in people and lacking the willingness to confront people. Wanting to run 'a quiet ship'.

Another contrasting view in different settings comes from W1

1. As a Quaker

When there's a conflict she's always keen to hear both sides and to discover the feelings this conflict [?raises] to each side. But actually she seems loth to get involved and tries to pass the buck to someone 'better qualified'. If appealed to directly by one of the parties involved, she is a good and sympathetic listener, but tries not to take sides.

2. In the Family

When there's a disagreement with one of the family she clams up, won't talk about it to any of us, least of all the one she's disagreed with. Either she's trying to pretend it doesn't exist, or she feels it so deeply she can't bear to talk (or think?) about it.

The family was a frequent second setting for the pen pictures with 7 choices. But it was noticeable that family life seemed to produce unsatisfactory responses to conflict or disagreement. All the examples offered were from mothers with adult daughters; several noted how unsatisfactory the daughters found it to have a mother with experience in counselling or conflict resolution. For instance, supposedly written by one of W3's daughters *"Do you remember when sister sent her that newspaper cutting about life with a Relate Counsellor and underlined the bit that said 'why are you always so bloody understanding?'"*

Another similar picture and response is given by W20:

'My mum is really annoying when we get into a row. She never seems to take stuff at face value, but is always asking really irritating questions like: 'Now what is this really about, darling?' If she doesn't do that she might act all upset. Sometimes she cries which is terribly unfair because then I can't go on making my point. She's a really unsatisfactory person to have a row with. Sometimes I just wish she would come out with something really nasty, instead of always trying to be peaceful'.

This 'trying to be peaceful' picture applies here in the family, but below W20 presents a different picture of herself among Quakers, unusual in that she goes under her facade and discovers 'ugly emotions'.

As a Quaker

When there's a conflict W20 does one of two things. Either she goes really red and tries to get out of the situation by making some feeble excuse. Or she goes very quiet, deadly, like a cobra unwinding itself before it strikes. Then she comes out with a long string of criticisms and reproaches mentioning situations I can't remember and don't want to. Then I realise that her usual calm and collected facade is just that, a shop front. Really underneath she's a viper.

The content of the pen pictures is very varied and was not the purpose of the exercise. However they did show characteristics of people in conflict themselves, rather than people taking on the role of conflict manager. They also succeeded in putting people into the observer position; in this exercise 'I' looked at 'me'.

Both the pen pictures and the 'five dilemmas' did succeed in connecting people with their own experience and setting this as the grounding on which they could build reflection.

Summary

A collaborative workshop was held with 20 self selected Quakers, many of whom were experienced in handling conflict. The findings and analysis of Quaker conflict handling from the earlier stages of the research were presented. The participants found these congruent with their experience. Exercises to encourage reflection on the processes of conflict among Quakers and the position of the self in conflict were undertaken. Participants agreed to undertake regular reflective writing on their own experience in conflict over the next six months, and asked to meet again at the end of that time.

CHAPTER 12. Pondering Alone: Constrained by Confidentiality

This chapter draws on the work which the workshop participants (the 'ponderers'), did as individuals at home alone, between September 2003 and May 2004. The letters by which I supported the project are found in Appendix C. A complete example of one participant's pondering writing is found in Appendix D. Though it was possible for the participants to contact each other between the workshops about their experience, I have no evidence that they did so. They did, however, communicate with me. They sent comments and questions about their work and sometimes referred to our shared experience in non-research life. This communication was included in the data.

The point of inquiry for me was how the 'ponderers' saw themselves in their involvement with Quaker, and other, conflict. As in the earlier stages, this was not easy information to obtain. Though it could be argued that the core activity of Quaker practice is a form of reflection on the self¹, and despite attention in recent years to the practice of journalling among Quakers (Skidmore, 2003), the process of writing about personal experience did not come easily to the pondering participants. Little attention was given to the mechanics of this at the workshop; it was assumed that reflecting and writing about reflecting would be familiar, or at least possible for Quakers. This was too optimistic. The ponderers found it hard to prioritise the time and energy, felt uncertain about what was required and inhibited about thinking about themselves and others. The result was that the range of the contributions was very varied; the contexts on which the ponderers chose to reflect were different, and it was sometimes hard to discern a process in which the writer 'I' reflected on the actor and interpreter 'me'. If this personal reflection was produced sometimes the writer felt they could not allow it to be made public; this was the case with a most lucid story of internal and external change from one of the ponderers.

These difficulties may not have been entirely due to the subject of conflict or the fact that the participants were Quakers. Homan (1997) explores resistance to the research process among other religious groups; open communication unaffected by espoused theory is rare. Hollway (2000) also suggests that the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched often produces resistance, reservations

¹ A personal communication from Eva Pinthus, Quaker theologian, told how the journals of the nineteenth century often reported the writer to have spent meeting for worship 'contemplating my latter end', which meant appraising their conduct with a view to final judgement. She felt it unlikely that many contemporary Quakers use the time in this way.

and inhibitions among the researched. This is endemic in the research undertaking, but was exacerbated in this case by the Quaker culture regarding conflict handling

It was noticeable that the energy of the group seemed to synchronise with the times and seasons of the wider world. Charles and Glennie (2002) wrote about the effect of the seasons on collaborative action research. In the Ponderers' case the seasons, and the social events associated with them, seemed in relationship with the waves of contributions. We started near the beginning of new school year, with good intentions, but these had been swamped under family commitments by Christmas. One or two made New Year resolutions but the miasma of winter still pulled everybody down, and contributions flagged. As the spring light grew and the end of the project came in sight, with the firm instruction to repeat the Five Dilemmas, there was renewed vigour and commitment. As the centre of the collaboration I too was affected by these changes, but also had a different responsibility to make the project work. We were all affected by the wide social context in which we lived most of our lives, by the Quaker context, and the research context.

The difficulties were exacerbated by unexamined uncertainty about what was private, accountable only to the individual, and what was public, in shared accountability with the whole group or even organization (Dandelion, 1996a) There seemed to be no doubt that there were these two kinds of accountability, but the boundary between them was not collectively defined. It was often marked, in the pondering data and outside it, by invoking 'confidentiality'. Anyone can do this and stop public discussion of an event. In the Quaker culture this is usually justified by care and respect and is an immensely powerful move. It can be used to pre-empt and conceal unacceptable negative feelings or judgements.

In reflecting on this myself it occurred to me that it might have been useful to have discussed with the ponderers a way of looking at these uncertainties about what is collective and what is personal. A diagrammatic way of looking at this might have clarified the process of decision making. The following grid (Fig 6) was useful to me in trying to understand where some of the boundaries lie. (The grid is taken from van Langenhove and Harré (1999,p131), who borrowed it from Vygotsky. If read in a clockwise direction starting in Quadrant 3 it has some similarity to Berger and Luckmann's process of the construction of social reality.)

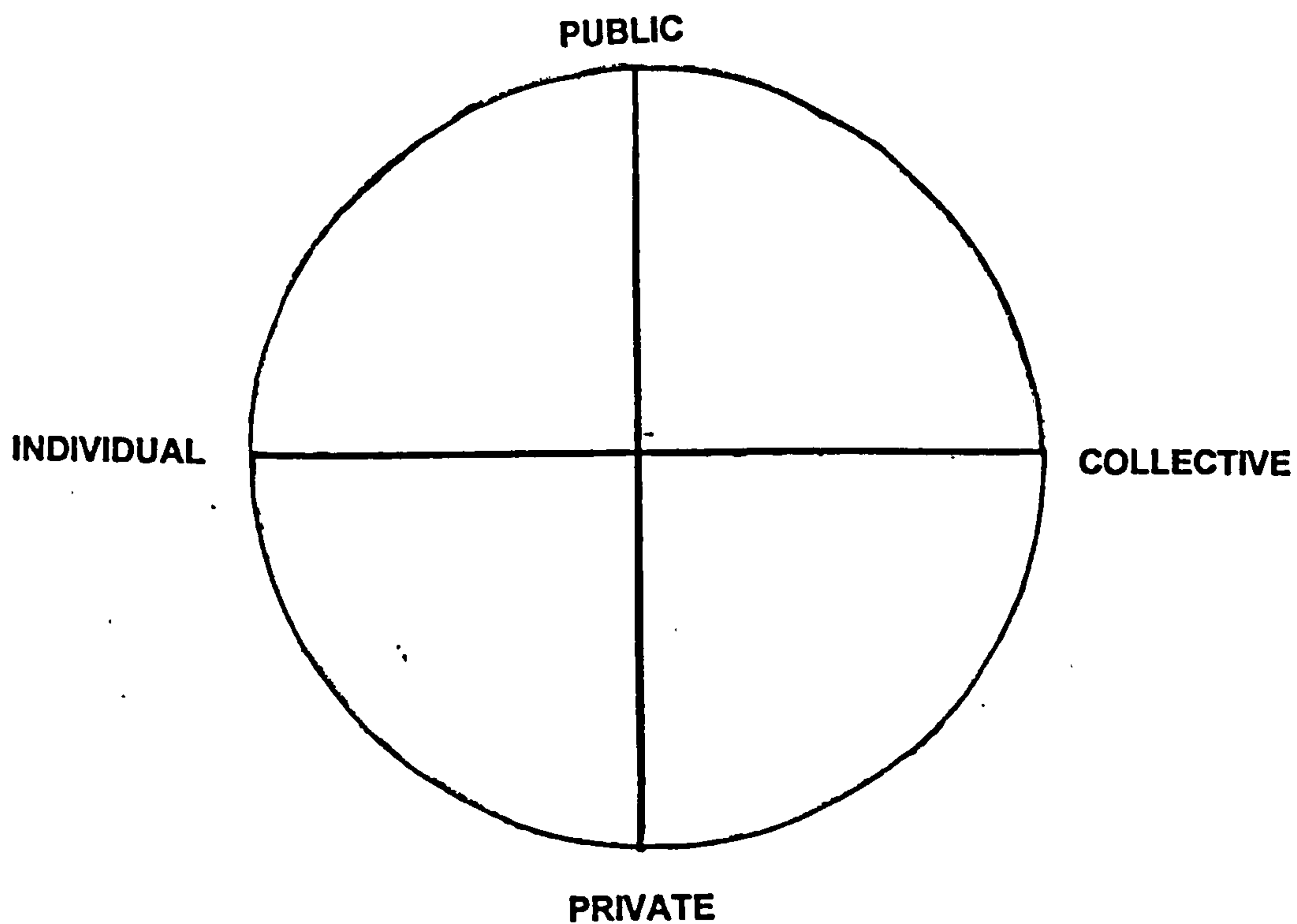


Figure 6. Locations for psychological phenomena
After Harré & van Langenhove 1999

The grid gives a two dimensional space with four quadrants: public/ collective, collective/private, private/ individual, and individual /public. The labels for the quadrants suggest that the constituent attributes can be combined in different ways. A clockwise progression through these quadrants for Quakers would produce the following placing of personal and social phenomena.

Quadrant 1 Public and Collective

This would contain the authoritative resources of the Quaker organization, the Book of Discipline and the espoused theory about conflict: the message to mend the world and live in the peaceable kingdom.

Quadrant 2 Collective and Private

This would contain the theory in use about conflict handling: behave as if there is no conflict here, and if there is do not make it public.

Quadrant 3 Private and Individual

This is the mystery area in which the untamed wild animals which are not ready for the peaceable kingdom are found. These are the ugly emotions which can enrage, offend and intimidate.

Quadrant 4 Individual and Public

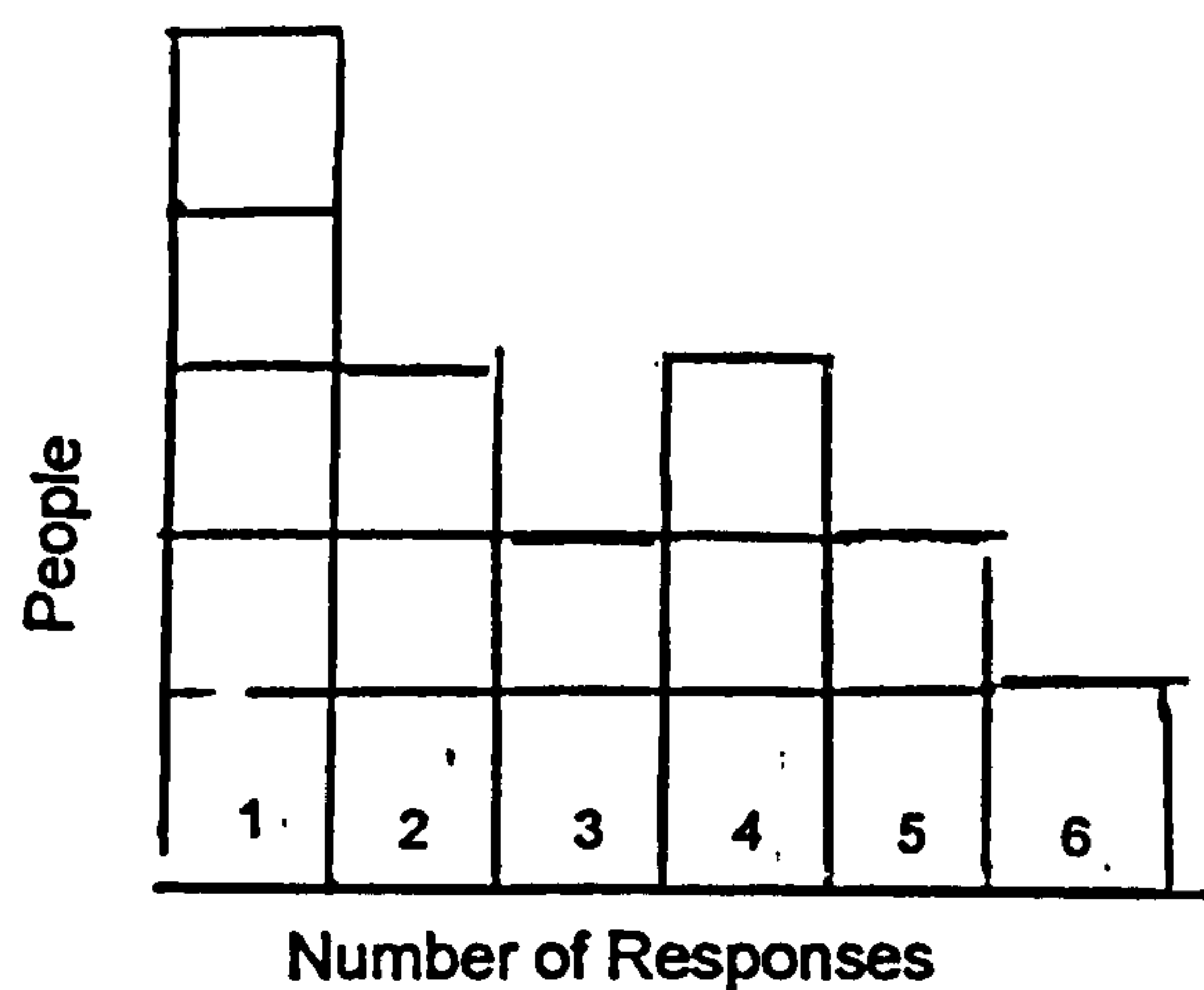
There may not be many Quaker conflict examples in this section. One which could be positioned here is the Greensboro' epistle experience (QFP 29.17) in which the individual wild animals learnt to live together and then told the world how they did it. The public story then belongs in Quadrant 1, Public and Collective.

Reading the work of the ponderers it was sometimes as if the grid lines between these notional areas were real difficulties to be negotiated. Sometimes the boundary could not be negotiated and the story stopped and could not move into the next section. The particular difficulty in telling stories for the research process was often in moving into the individual and public quadrant. This was where someone could be seen to be active, using their own agency rather than passive or compliant with the existing collective view.

Participation in Pondering

The reflections of the ponderers had originally seemed to me a small addition to what would happen in the workshop, but once the workshop had happened they assumed much greater importance and have given a great deal of rich data. In fact there is so much that the analysis can only look at the dominant themes.

There were 20 participants in the first workshop. Three soon decided not to write pondering material or left the project; one person intended to write but never achieved this. In all 16 people offered written reflections during the six months between September and March. During that time I sent five letters and other material to all the participants still involved. (See Appendix C) Figure 7 shows how many times the participants responded.



Pondering Responses – number per person

Figure 7. Written Ponderings – number per person

The contributions were varied in form, from e-mail attachment to handwritten, from a few sentences to a few pages. Covering letters from the participants sent with the reflections have also been used as data². The subjects reflected on were varied and thought provoking. This data cannot all be used in this study, but may well be returned to in subsequent work.

Looking outwards – 'I' reflecting on Quakers handling conflict

The material that the ponderers produced was rich and varied. Despite the intention not to be a 'spy in the meeting' there was no way they could report on their internal experience without linking it to their perception of the outside world. This section focuses on the ponderers' observations of the world outside themselves. They were aware that they were not to act as 'spies in the meeting' and were scrupulous in observing anonymity, sometimes to the point of obscurity. Limited quotation is always with permission from the writer.

Many of the contributions contained questions as to whether what they were offering was what I wanted. Some of the ponderers had doubts about what should constitute conflict, and whether they were aware of any in their own lives. Among the ponderers it appeared that the definition of conflict must contain the element that it is worrying

² One person, with whom I also share work on a Quaker committee, became very angry with me about an action I had taken to do with this committee which he considered high handed. He sent me a flaming e-mail about this and demanded that it should be included in the research information. We spoke on the phone and his anger had subsided. He agreed that we could proceed as I had suggested if a small addition was made.

it appeared that the definition of conflict must contain the element that it is worrying and unpleasant. The negative connotation was a strong pointer in identifying conflict. One fairly robust Quaker could describe an episode of interaction and say this is not conflict, this is enjoyable discussion. Another more delicate natured Quaker would identify the same incident as conflict, because they were fearful in that type of exchange. Some could even diagnose conflict³ when there was nothing to see or hear. Some had no problem at all in identifying what they should write about; it invaded their lives.

Four ponderers reflected on conflicts they were involved in outside the Quaker setting, offering several examples. These were in employment, voluntary organization or family settings. One of these was an example of an acerbic e-mail exchange as a variant of the direct communication recommended in the Mennonite Matthew 18 method (Ch 6 p101). Another was an analysis of overlapping role responsibilities. All other examples came from Quaker settings.

Doubt was expressed whether it was really worth the effort to deal with small matters in the meeting. If they could be left to drift they would probably pass over.

W17 We are not used to speaking our minds. And does it really do any good? Sometimes it just makes things worse.' However many examples of small conflicts, disagreements or issues were drawn from the life of the local meeting. These included lateness, lack of discipline (chatting) in business meetings, unfair allocation of responsibility, issues in co-clerkship, problems with impaired hearing. Those who instanced these had little doubt that they could be painful and needed to be taken seriously; these were examples of conflict.

An interesting example of identity conflict was produced. The question of the future use of Quaker International Centre was being reported at every level of Quaker activity during the research period, but one ponderer, who had been present at the final decision making meeting, added a personal view on how the process had been handled. His disquiet was transferred from the outcome of the decision, which he was prepared to accept (although disagreeing), to the process by which the decision had been arrived at, which he was not able to accept without making a strong case to

³ W17 disagreed with my assertion that there is little conflict about theological matters, that diversity is accepted. In her experience this difference is not openly expressed but is acted out. The meeting as a whole will agree to take part in ecumenical activities, but then finds that individuals are not willing to take part because they disagree with such activities. The decision is not subjected to argument, but people vote with their availability.

those in control that it should not be allowed to happen this way again. This transfer of focus to the process, to the 'proper Quaker' way to do things, turned it into identity conflict.

There were three accounts of efforts towards organization for conflict resolution in Quaker settings, in which the writer was mainly positioned as a conflict manager. These included: the work of a newly set up Conflict Resolution committee, a training day on conflict resolution organised by another Monthly Meeting, and the consideration of this topic by a group of Overseers. These were all described without giving me any detail about what kind of conflicts or people there were in these situations, though occasionally from the intertwined reflections the feelings of the ponderer could be gleaned. Papers and documents about how the groups worked, or information handouts from training days were often included.

One of these conflict management efforts with intransigent Quakers extended over years. The following are extracts from W7s 'ponderings' over several months.

1. *'My thoughts at present about Quaker conflict are that it is very difficult to deal with. I think this is partly because Friends are so reluctant to admit to hostile feelings, at least to other Friends*
2. *Some Friends are very unforgiving and seem quite unable to see their faults mirrored in other people (I know about beams and motes, of course and realise this is not new). They can be very upset when the situation is pointed out to them. Perhaps we expect too much of Friends, just because they are Friends, anyway I think we must keep trying.*
3. *The meeting on conflict that we held threw up lots of useful ideas but so far they have not worked with people who have become completely intransigent. We keep trying to think of new ways to tackle this and if we succeed I will certainly let you know.*
4. *Now for my final thoughts on the conflict situation I am involved with at present. It seems to me that unless Friends really want to resolve the situation there is little that anyone from outside can do. My colleague and I have tried numerous approaches (exhortations, meetings of various groups, repeated reminders of advice from QFP and Advices and Queries, individual talks with Friends on various occasions) but nothing works if the Friend(s) has/have entrenched views and are not*

willing to put the past behind them and move forward. I have come to the conclusion that only some external change in circumstances (someone's illness or death, perhaps, or a Friend moving to another meeting) is likely to change the situation. Nevertheless we continue with our involvement and hope that we may be doing some good. I know this must sound rather negative but a year's work on the situation does not seem to have produced any real results, though some Friends tell us the situation would be worse without us.

Another contribution from W11 mediating among Quakers in a different part of the country resonated with that dolorous catalogue.

'there is for some a strong resistance to letting go which I would like to explore. It seems almost necessary to provide an alternative activity to engross them.'

The question of what is conflict was applied to an account of a small meeting which had become aware of some tensions and then set up a review of its processes over several months. This account probably broke the rule about not looking at what is happening in the meeting, but could claim justification because it presented a positive outcome. It did give some detail about the way the problem developed and what some of the unidentified people felt, said and did. At the beginning of the story W8 was quite clear that there were disagreements and resentments underlying the difficulty, but she asked the May15 group 'Was this conflict?' By then there had been a positive outcome and she was no longer seeing it as conflict. No answer was given by the other ponderers but I am in no doubt that it met the criterion of 'difference plus tension' through most of the process.

A summary of the story follows. In a small meeting a routine matter was referred by Elders and Overseers to Preparative Meeting which '*opened up a fermenting suspicious attitude to Es and Os. An ill disciplined PM was the result.*' The meeting decided it would have a review, and that this would be organized by the meeting, not by Elders and Overseers. The first meeting was very structured '*we did not allow discussion*' but used focused questions⁴ and '*The undercurrents are coming to the*

⁴ For instance, name three things you would like to change.

surface including poor relations between certain individuals.' The next meeting was uneasy, one Friend had to be persuaded to stay. By the next meeting he felt that his frustration and inclination to temper prevented him staying; another Friend felt the atmosphere was not conciliatory and this prevented her staying. The first Friend came to the next meeting. Various feelings and events were aired, with flurries of communications and tears outside the planned meetings then *'Christmas has intervened and all seems calm. However, I feel sad that we cannot just talk to each other about our difficulties'*. Then *'the last two sessions were very satisfactory'*. There was *'a detailed sensitive study on ministry'* which was also described as a *'very frank session'* in which someone unexpected was *'very helpful though candid'*. The final session returned to the original question of the Elders and Overseers and *'the accusations of secrecy and being a clique were addressed'* and it was agreed to review the membership of the Elders and Overseers group annually. *'The open discussion seemed to have renewed trust where it had been lost and to have stopped rather unpleasant whispered questioning.'* W8 says *'so my solution to conflict is discussion, well planned, well minuted, well clerked and above all trustingly honest'*

This was called conflict when it was unpleasant and uncomfortable but not conflict when it was bearable discussion, though it was all part of the same process. In all the data I did not become aware of a positive term to describe this process. Change was rarely used and not in this context. Perhaps 'transformation', a term slipped in by W5, but not taken up, might have been suitable. There seems to be a need for a term implying hard committed caring work, not pleasant at the time, but purposeful and eventually rewarding. Conflict resolution literature (Ch 4 p56) suggests 'conflict engagement'.

Looking inwards

Quaker 'I' looking at Quaker 'me'

Only a few of the ponderers gave a direct account of their own internal experience. It was from these that I learnt how the constraint of confidentiality affected the contributions of the ponderers. They were very aware that they might be judged adversely if they did not respect confidentiality. At one end of the spectrum was the ponderer who justified including a sequence of disputatious multi – addressed e-mails saying *'this has already taken place in public'*. At the other end was the ponderer who felt bad just thinking alone about another person's actions in conflict. Most people did not want their thoughts revealed; it might upset other people, but it

would also upset them. This was a different kind of discomfort from the embarrassment of cognitive dissonance; it was the discomfort of guilt anticipating reproof. It was a form of internal conflict.

Struggling with the veils of confidentiality lowered by the participants I realised that I had stumbled on the Quaker rule about handling conflict: 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it'⁵. This was the theory in use about remaining Quakerly in conflict. The ponderers mostly did not feel licensed to look at what happened in their meetings, or even to know the details of conflict incidents. They certainly did not feel they could tell each other about these and talk freely on the subject. They agreed to tell the research process, but did this with so many anonymisations, reservations and caveats that it was difficult to know what had actually happened. Some were comfortable to reflect on their own thoughts and live with the doubts and discomfort raised. Many felt uncomfortable reflecting; either it was avoided by letting it slide to the bottom of the pile, or they felt they were doing something which they shouldn't as Quakers be doing. They did not ask about conflicts because the details were supposed to be confidential, they did not talk about them easily for the same reason, so they felt uncomfortable even thinking, talking to themselves, about them. There was a collective constraint on their private thoughts.

The following incident took place privately and was not to be shared with the other person concerned. It suggests that sorting out internal conflicting feelings can be more important to the writer than making change in the external world. Is this a variation of relationship being more important than outcome?

' just before I went into hospital I was annoyed by a colleague who interfered in a matter for which I was responsible, with unfortunate consequences. During the long, hot, noisy, sleepless nights in hospital I was thinking about this, and getting quite worked up about it. I thought it possible this person might come to see me in hospital, so I rehearsed in my mind what I would say to her – letting my anger out strongly with no beating about the bush and really telling her off. The next night I returned to the theme, feeling rather guilty and remembering I am supposed to be a 'conflict resolution' person. So I went through the imaginary conversation again in a deliberately calm and unemotional way- asking her to tell her side of the story, listening carefully and just asking a few questions for amplification. Well, in theory. But part way through I

⁵ 'Don't ask, don't tell' was prominent in the press in early 2003 as the ethos of the Church of England concerning homosexuality among its priests. Previously it had been said to be the ethos of the US Army concerning homosexuality.

suddenly asked "Why on earth did you do that?" The 'on earth' reveals a lot doesn't it, including the tone of voice.

In the end she didn't come to see me, and I haven't seen her since. I have done my best to repair the damage done, and I am much calmer about the whole thing – partly perhaps as a result of having let off steam earlier. I don't think I will mention the matter when I see her again.'

A different perspective came from W6. She had been part of a specially appointed conciliation group, which had not completed its task and been laid down by its appointing body. She found reflecting on her internal feelings was not enough, she needed to do more in interaction with others, but was prevented from doing this by the power of inertia in the system, which had taken her role away from her.

From November

'It is a huge relief to be released from the time commitment and the emotional drain of walking alongside people with intense emotions. But, on the other hand we were in the middle of a process. One side is happily getting on with life, while the other is out in the wilderness, eaten up with anger and resentment, alienated and disempowered, because they cannot organise a situation where they can get the people to whom they want to express their feelings, to listen. I therefore feel they are being let down by us and certainly by the meeting.'

Underlying any conflict are strong emotions, which reveal a multitude of human frailties, tender spots, vulnerable 'buttons'. At the stage of a conflict where these feelings are raw it is almost impossible to create a situation where people listen and take on board what the other is saying. In the current situation the wisdom expressed in that wonderful letter of George Fox to Lady Claypole, in which he says "Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts...when thou art in the transgression of the Lord...the mind flies up in the air and the creature is led into the night...therefore be still" seems very relevant.'

From February

'Looking back at my November ponderings I note that I expressed relief at the 'laying down'. My feelings have changed over these months. Yes, I was emotionally drained but even then I felt that the conflict had not been resolved and I am left with a feeling of emptiness, and unfinished business. There has been no 'closure'. I have nowhere to put my feelings of frustration, disappointment and yes, anger. One party is getting on with life relieved that the other has distanced themselves and are no longer ruffling the water – but to my mind that is not a resolution of the conflict, but simply an abuse of subtle power to block any further discussion.'

Though both these accounts looked inwards, there were two different focuses. One was inside the conflicting person and in the first example the important change took place there. The second was outside the person, in interaction with other people. In the second example there was an unsatisfied need for change there, but 'don't tell' or 'don't talk about it' prevented further movement.

For some the difficulties inherent in the pondering process were very uncomfortable. W12, one of the most conscientious ponderers, wrote

'Furthermore, through keeping my ears open, I picked up changes in attitudes among the group of Friends involved without having to question people directly. This helped me as I pondered on my own reactions to the Friend in question...I suppose I still feel a bit guilty about dissecting the character and behaviour of our Friend, without her knowledge.'

W3 put it even more strongly. After stating her hesitation about expressing a personal view about a '*very time consuming and unpleasant*' conflict situation she added

'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!'

The guilt and discomfort expressed so clearly above were typical of the participants' attitudes. Though they had agreed at the workshop that the level of anonymity used in quoting from the interview data was satisfactory, contributions still came to me marked 'in strict confidence', and with various added caveats about quotation⁶.

Looking Inwards for Inspiration.

References to prayer, God, spiritual practice had been noticeably infrequent in the interview data. I wondered what it was that the Quaker in conflict used as a mental reference, with what did they compare themselves, what frameworks did they use in their heads to help their understanding? Therefore I had put a question about 'personal resources' in the list of prompt questions for the pondering period (see Appendix C). By this I meant mental frameworks, ways of understanding people,

⁶ Consent was obtained for the use of all quotations. A few minor alterations were made to ensure anonymity. One conscientious ponderer sent five pieces of writing which formed a developing story with change both in the outer and inner world. However, it would have been difficult to anonymise this and reluctantly she asked for it not to be quoted.

sources of guidance, personal religious or spiritual practices. Only a few ponderers wrote on this topic. One or two referred to practices which could be understood as forms of prayer; more referred to published texts.

The most commonly quoted source of helpful guidance was Quaker Faith and Practice, including some uncommon quotes⁷. One person referred several times to the experience and writings of George Fox. Adam Curle, a Quaker conflict resolution expert, was invoked, as were the methods of the Alternatives to Violence Project. The William Penn or Mennonite outline based on Matthew Chapter 18 was mentioned. There were inclusions of psychological theories, or ways of interpreting people's behaviour that arose from these. Some ponderers felt that exploration of individual differences in terms of early life experiences yielded explanations about why people behaved as they did, though it was not clear what followed from that. I found an absence of stories about conflict from which inspiration, or even warning, could be taken.

Coupling this lack of personal resource material with the veiled accounts from the ponderers it occurred to me that Quakers do not tell stories about their own conflicts. Quakers neither use stories about their own conflicts nor tell them. The theory in use 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it' tells them not to. As Kline (2002) points out the typical Quaker story is of a solitary journey, not of relationships, interaction or battles. Battles may have taken place but have not become well known stories because they cannot be told according to the theory in use. The consequences of this lack of story will be discussed in the next chapter.

Summary

Despite good intentions the participants found it very hard to record their reflections. However, the total response from the participants was ample and varied, providing a plethora of data, but only a limited amount of reflection on the self in conflict. There was uncertainty about what 'conflict' included. In practice it was almost anything which was negatively connoted by the person using the term. There were examples of frustration about inability to achieve change, and one account of working to achieve change, or resolve conflict, over a period of months. There was also uncertainty about the boundaries between private and public, collective and individual. The participants felt unable to make some aspects of their accounts

⁷ W10 asked 'Whatever happened to those Friends who "can seem rather brusque, without the conventions of flattery and half-truths"?' (QFP 12.01)

public in the research process; they were constrained by their perception of the demands of confidentiality.

These difficulties revealed the theory in use, the Quaker rule or maxim about conflict in the organization. This was 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it'. The participants were unable to ask about conflicts because that was 'spying'; they were unable to tell about conflicts because that contradicted the espoused theory that there was no conflict; if they thought about conflicts privately they felt uncomfortably guilty.

CHAPTER 13 Reflecting Together Again

This chapter contains an account of the second workshop after eight months. It includes participants' reflections on the process, feedback on the Five Dilemmas and 'Definitely Don't' exercises, and specific topics brought to the workshop by participants.

The second workshop – May 15 2004

On September 20 the participants had been offered a chance to come together again at the end of their 'pondering' and had quickly decided to do this. However, as there was little hope of finding a date to suit all it was chosen arbitrarily by the vacancy of the Carlton Hill Meeting House. Several people found they were not available on that date, so the group which came together for a half day session after eight months was smaller, ten people including me. The purpose of the meeting was so that we could talk over our experience of being co-researchers, taking whatever questions arose. The second workshop was different in atmosphere from the first. I had fewer aspirations for it, and perhaps the participants had some sense of achievement.

There were some advantages in the smallness of the group. We used a smaller room and were able to record the session on mini-disk. There was more space for each person to contribute, and it felt as if they had actually taken most of the responsibility from me. In this second workshop, the transcript ran to 31 pages. On 18 of those pages I made no contribution except occasional input like 'would anybody else like to respond to this?'

Before the session the participants had been asked if there was anything particular which they would like to happen in the session, or if there were items which they would like to bring forward. They had also been asked at the end of their pondering to reflect on the experience of taking part in the research, which some of them had already done in writing. Two people asked to discuss specific topics. Another had written asking me for advice about a particular conflict she was involved in. I had obtained her permission to put this to the group (she was unable to attend) and ask for their response.

Sharing experience

The afternoon started with a short time of worship, as was clearly the expectation of the group. As the main aim of coming together was for them to exchange their experiences we began with a 'go-round', in which each participant responded to the

question 'How did I find being part of this process, and what do I want to get from this afternoon?'

Some participants answered with accounts of what they had observed outside themselves, but others included their internal experience in their response.

*'I felt a bit threatened at first when we were asked to go away and do some work in our meeting at home, because I couldn't sort of envisage dealing with any big problems which arose in our meeting. I didn't even know that there were any really, but when I began to think about it I pinpointed a small annoyance which several of us had commented on, and began to follow this up month by month, and in the end I got quite fascinated by it and was interested in my own reactions, things which I had perhaps dismissed fairly quickly to start with, Susan's comment about pondering. I kept thinking what does pondering mean, and really trying to dwell on something, think through something rather than dismiss it. And I found that very interesting I got quite deeply interested in it in the end....'
'W12*

W13 'the more pondering I've done the more I've realised that we need to ponder on this issue, because there's a very simplistic feeling I think among Quakers about making everything ok, rather quickly, and that is obviously not possible. And there's a sort of a sort of developing conclusion that I've come to is that you can't just resolve things when outsiders think they should be resolved. Sometimes people actually need to hold onto conflict and keep revisiting it because it is such a deep life experience. It's like any of the other life experiences birth, death, marriage, wonderful things and you have to keep looking at it and seeing what you can learn from it and you can't necessarily just make it ok. I had a very sort of superficial view I think at first and I'm coming round, pondering on, this aspect of conflict I think. We need to live with it probably.'

W6. 'and the promptings to reflect forced me to look at my feelings, my perceptions of what was going on. And one of the things that I realised about myself was that I was meant to be in the middle as a mediator, but I was absorbing the pain and the hurt and the conflict, not saying it to anybody, but tending to take sides within myself. This can't be right, and so to ponder about this was really very helpful, and I think for me this is where God and the spirit comes in. We're not doing this, we're not mediating being Quakers on our own, we are being prompted by the spirit, but it needs us to be constantly aware of that. I think the other thing that I've been aware of, and it was something which was mentioned at the first meeting, that Quakers are not very good at it, dealing with conflict among themselves because of their self image, because of our self image, and indeed because of other people's perceptions of us. And it's true [she laughs] I found it very much as a mediator that Quakers do not like to acknowledge that there is a conflict.'

The quotations are examples of stories about the exploration of the self. The participants then wanted a matching story from my perspective. I reported from the point of view of administering the project, how many had responded and how, and what it had felt like to be the administrator. I had found the load heavy and worried about them far more than the interview contributors. When they had told of being in tears, worrying or suffering doubt I had felt concerned and as if it was my fault.

The Five Dilemmas Again

I also reported back to the ponderers about the exercises which they had all completed: the Five Dilemmas. They had first completed this outline right at the beginning of the workshop. At the end of the six months pondering everyone still in the project had been asked to make a response to the vignettes again, without looking at the first effort. I had compared the two sets of answers before the second workshop. The purpose of the repetition of the exercise was to see if there was any change after the period of reflection. As it turned out the content of the two sets of answers over time was very similar. People went for the same solutions and even used the same words and phrases. Specifically I had been interested to see if the attention to the self increased. I had looked at the answers in detail, scoring them under headings of attention to self, attention to 'the other' and attention to the system, on checked paper¹. It appeared that there was some increase in the attention given to the self after the six month period, and even more increase in the attention given to 'the other'. Overall there was a thirty percent increase in the amount of attention given to the three viewpoints. It looked as if more viewpoints were being taken into account the second time round; the ponderers' horizons had widened.

This counted 'hunch' that the breadth of responses had increased considerably over the six months was put to the participants. They were unconvinced that there was any change. They were aware of the similarity in content of their responses across time but unaware of any change in the breadth of their responses. They attributed the fact that their responses appeared to have increased in number to the different conditions in which they had done the exercise. On the first occasion there had been

¹ Each participant had an icon with five squares going upwards (one for each dilemma) and four squares going across (one for self, one for the other, one for the system, and one for unclassifiable). An answer which said 'I would feel I would ask the offending person.... I would expect the elders of the meeting... and I would watch the television' would score one in each of the four boxes. When all five dilemmas had been scored each person had a distinctive silhouette to their icon, and a numerical total with a maximum of 20.

limited time; the second time they had done it at home at their own pace. This is obviously a very important factor.

This rejected 'hunch' that the range of responses had increased may not have been profitable but it did give rise to an interesting example of how the group worked. While talking about my scoring system one member of the group asked a question: if everybody had a mark on every possible square, how much would that come to? I replied it would come to sixteen times twenty. He then went on to suggest firmly that this was 400 (incorrect); the group and its facilitator took this up and used this figure in the next sentences. When transcribing the tape I heard that the correct answer (320) had been given immediately but in such a quiet voice that no-one heard. The owner of the quiet voice then watched the whole group follow an incorrect answer without correcting them. He was one of the people who at times wondered whether it is worth the effort to bother with the trivial problems and conflicts among Quakers. Was this lack of assertiveness due to Quaker culture, group pressures, neither or both?

'Definitely Don't'

In the pondering period it had been suggested by my supervisors that another approach should be tried to the Five Dilemmas, to reduce the 'espoused theory' or social desirability effect. The aim was an 'ironic' approach. When they completed the second round of the Five Dilemmas the participants were also asked to outline responses to any two dilemmas which would not be acceptable or recommendable. The question was no longer 'what should you do?' but now 'what should you not do?'. This had succeeded in producing answers with more energy, long lively good stories, which caused some laughter when shared. They seemed to be accounts of things that people had witnessed others do, or even that they had felt tempted to do themselves. They showed a side of Quaker life which the other responses had not revealed.

There were some themes which recurred very frequently as the sort of thing which should not be done. For instance leaving, or threatening to leave, whether this be from one particular event, from a local group or from the Society as a whole, was clearly viewed unfavourably. So was unnecessary complaining or gossiping to those not directly involved with the argument. So were personal ways of behaving like

sulking, being obstinate, becoming paranoid, angry, irritated or hostile and indulging in feeling rejected.

Below is a selection from the 'Definitely Do Not' responses, demonstrating the obverse of the espoused theory, from which the theory in use can be inferred.

The restless child in meeting

Definitely do not attempt to 'shush' the child yourself during meeting, frown disapprovingly at the child, or make your 'unsettled' feelings obvious by 'tutting' etc.

What to do about unacceptable ministry?

Definitely do not stand up when the Friend is speaking and say something like 'Enough is enough. You've told us about this many times before and frankly we are all bored with this subject. Please sit down and don't talk about it again.'

If someone lets you down

Do not tell the Clerk, and the Elders, and the Friends you meet in Tesco's, then say they are useless because they say you should speak directly to the disappointing Friend.

If there's an argument about Quaker schools

Definitely do not enter into the discussion with the two Friends telling them about how your great grandfather was a secretary to a Quaker School for 40 years, how all your family up to your parents and your sister and you went to Quaker Schools for several generations, how you enjoyed it and what good it did you. And generally behave like a tedious elderly reminiscer who hasn't thought about the changes and challenges that have arisen in the past 50 years.

If there are plans to alter the Meeting House

Definitely do not leave the meeting (body of people) in disgust. Do not try to 'pack' the next meeting on the subject with those with similar views. Do not stand to speak several times during the meeting where a way forward was being discerned. Do not go to the press with a grievance including naming and blaming others. Do not write unpleasant letters to the Clerk or attack him or her verbally or physically. Do not accuse people of being an 'in group' with power over others.

The impulsiveness of many of these acts was what caught the attention of the participants. W12 then spoke of 'the need for time and for patience to reflect and try and overcome these immediate spontaneous reactions of imitation and anger'. But

W10 followed this with 'one of the implications seems to be that strong feelings, almost of any type, are almost always going to be destructive and damaging, doesn't it, because of the way we appear to have classified it. Um, so that does seem to be the implication. I'm not sure that I'm particularly happy with it but it does seem to be what we are saying.'

Specific topics

Before the workshop all ponderers had been asked if there was anything specific that they wanted to bring up, so that time could be allocated to it. Three people had identified items they wanted considered.

The three items brought forward for more discussion by participants were considered by the participants with little intervention from me. This took up all of the second half of the session. The first was a 'sixth dilemma' from an absent participant. She had sought advice from me about this and I had asked her permission to put this to the workshop participants. It was treated with seriousness; considerable discussion and advice was recorded.² The other 'ponderers' were noticeably not hesitant in making suggestions about how this conflict should be approached. They appeared more confident than any other contributors within the research project.

W8 put forward her account of a meeting review; excerpts from her written account are found in Chapter 12. She was clear that her purpose was to re-iterate a theme (or as she said a hobby horse) about the necessity for speaking out which had been with her for some years in wide work among Quakers. A culture of Quaker niceness had grown up in her meeting, so that it was believed that Quakers should never upset each other by speaking directly. This had resulted in the suppression of resentments, which could have been described as conflict. However W8 described the process which followed as the prevention of conflict rather than its expression. She described a meeting review process over several weeks and provoked interested and lively discussion with the other participants. Issues about being 'nice' were raised and whether this process had really been a prevention of conflict, an expression of conflict or a calculated risk that conflict might happen and split the meeting.

² I sent the relevant pages of the transcript to the absent participant, but heard little about how this was received.

W10 then offered his item. He expressed mild disappointment that the process of being a ponderer had not offered him much stimulation and support in his New Year resolution to be more assertive and honest. He thought there could have been more group cohesion and wondered if anyone else was interested in this. No-one else expressed any interest and instead offered him personal suggestions for assertiveness. His main difficulties arose outside Quaker circles and he wondered whether Quaker issues were really too trivial to deserve much effort. This provoked lively discussion; some felt Quaker conflicts were a 'blemish' which invalidated the reputation of the organization. Others enquired if there really were large and painful issues, though this had already been clearly referred to in the group. Some group members who could have contributed on this point from personal experience chose not to do so. They were constrained by confidentiality.

As a result of this constraint I found myself telling the group of the 'big issues' and the way that they were not made public but mentioned to me in confidentiality from many angles. This led into discussion of how the work of this group had been constrained by confidentiality, and the making of guidelines for anonymity in my writing up. I agreed to seek permission to make direct quotations³.

This second group session was different in atmosphere from the first. There were obvious differences in numbers and size of room which may have contributed to this. It was also both more Quaker and less Quaker. It started with meeting for worship, but the discussion was livelier and less controlled. Those who were present had taken on responsibility as collaborative researchers. As such their experience had been both informative and transformative. They had produced a lot of information about their experience of conflict among Quakers and also a lot of information about their difficulties in doing this, which added to the understanding of its context. They thought their own approach to conflict, and action in it, had not changed or been transformed, nor had their meetings, but their awareness and thoughtfulness about conflict had changed, and might continue to do so. They were more reflective practitioners in conflict.

³ This followed an exchange on this subject with Professor Hearn at the Research Students Conference in April 2004.

Summary

Half the participants returned to a second workshop, in which they made a more active contribution. They reflected on the experience of the previous workshop and 'pondering'. They felt their own approach to conflict had not changed, although their awareness and thoughtfulness had increased. The inhibition of impulsive and expressive behaviour by the Quaker organizational culture was confirmed by the response to the 'Definitely Don't' exercise. The group considered three questions arising out of the reflective experience posed by its members; they were less hesitant than formerly. The two workshops and the interim reflections had produced much information, but only minor transformation.

CHAPTER 14 Narrative, Story and Quaker Conflict

This chapter will tell two stories: firstly the story of the research project, secondly the story of the use of the narrative approach in the project. The story of the research project is set in its Quaker context. It takes a case study approach; it is about one example of an organizational culture and how it influences conflict handling. It uses social scientific theory to make this picture clearer; it is not a contribution to theory. Its position in the wider academic context will be discussed in the concluding section.

The story of the research

The beginning was with the protagonist and the predicament. Two issues formed a predicament which challenged me, the protagonist. These were

- a) Quakers gave a great deal of attention to solving the conflict-related international problems of the world, but little attention to conflicts within their organization and often handled them badly. What were the reasons for this, and what were the implications of it?**

- b) In an organization which offers much individual freedom, the power of the shared culture appeared not to be recognised. How did this influence conflict handling?**

Positioning as researcher was part of the predicament. Methods of observing participation, interviews and collaborative inquiry mirrored the tension between the individual and the organization which exists throughout the Quaker organization. As researcher I needed the commitment and insights of the people within the organization; if these were lacking the research would have no credibility within the organization. I tried hard to listen but at the same time was aware of pressure to be an expert, supply an answer, or even a recipe. At times the overlap between the roles of researcher and observing participant was uncomfortable.

Attempts to resolve the predicament included 39 interviews (with Key Informants, Grassroots Quakers and Edge Quakers) and collaborative inquiry with 20 other self selected Quaker participants. The collaborative inquiry included a workshop, a period of reflection and recording by the participants and a follow up meeting. I followed all these with my own reflection and analysis.

The outcome of these attempts was a plethora of data about Quaker conflict handling, which had to be rigorously edited for clear presentation. Conflict within the Quaker organization is negatively connoted, and recognised by that negativity. Quakers avert their minds from it and hope to avoid it. When it surfaces it is subject to particular Quaker moderated ways of handling it, without expression of negative emotions. Whatever the original cause Quaker conflicts often turn into identity conflict about the proper Quaker way to do things, or to be. Despite their commitment to conflict resolution, Quakers are not confident in knowing what to do about it and make little use of the resources available. This is a predicament (an unpleasant, trying or dangerous situation) which most Quakers experience at some time.

The interviews confirmed this predicament. The contributors' interpretation of the Quaker culture about conflict revealed an espoused theory which enjoined them to mend the world and a theory in use which encouraged them to avert their minds from the existence of conflict in the organization. Consequently they found it hard to position themselves in conflict; they were usually talking about 'someone else's conflict' and their own position was depersonalized and obscured. The study lacked accounts of real people and their reactions within continuing conflict.

The collaborative inquiry attempted to produce more personal accounts, but discovered another predicament. Though the 'ponderers' had committed themselves to reflection and communication, they found they were inhibited by an unspoken rule about conflict 'If you want to be a proper Quaker don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it'. They tried to respect privacy, they tried not to talk about identified Quakers to others or the research process; they found they felt bad even thinking about such things. They had few stories about Quaker conflict to inspire them, and if they discovered new ones they could not be told publicly.

My reflection on these outcomes produced my thesis. The dearth of stories made it difficult for the Quaker participants to find a role, to make a choice between roles, to follow Fowler's (2000) process of asking 'what is my part in this faith story?' (Ch 3 p46) Without this resource they were stultified in their response to conflict. Their responses were immobilised by the theory they had willingly espoused and the theory they used but were hardly aware of. The final unanswered question turned out to be: how could Quakers tell more stories about conflict, so that they became aware of alternative ways of responding and free to make their own choices among these?

One other strand of the story was the linking of two parts of my own experience; these were the disciplined subjectivity of the researcher (Bateson, 1988) and the position of observing participation (Torbert, 1991). I became more confident as a researcher, and at the same time my responsible tasks increased. At the beginning I had hesitated to connect the two aspects, partly to avoid influencing what I was observing. By the end this no longer seemed possible, and if the research findings had any meaning it would have been irresponsible not to make this known in some way. I give three examples of this interaction between the two positions.

Firstly the continued reflection on the social construction of reality began to influence my own interpretation of Quaker collective life. It changed my viewpoint when considering both the interpretation of formal structures, such as the RECAST process, and made me more aware of the social construction of underlying ideas and beliefs. I became aware that among Quakers I had moved towards the social constructionist viewpoint, and that I was hearing and responding to the same vocabulary in both research and Quaker worlds. 'Non – realist' was a word which appeared in both contexts. I was aware of the nascent debate between non-realist and realist Quakers, and wondered whether this will soon earn the title of conflict. .

The application of my findings in the context of participation will become an increasingly exercising issue. An example of this occurred just at the end of the writing of the thesis. I was asked to serve on a group to respond to a complaint made to Meeting for Sufferings. This matter took place in the geographical area of one of the 'big issues'. A great deal of information had already been given to me under the anonymity rules of the research. I was quite clear that were I to appear in the group of 'independent' or 'unbiased' investigators I would not be acceptable to the subjects of that inquiry. Quite correctly they would have expected me to have formed views as a result of their communications with me, as indeed I had. Though the Quaker nominations group needed convincing of this ethical position I was quite clear that research ethics would not allow this. However, I had mixed feelings. If the problem had arisen in a part of England which the research had not touched, I would have been interested to take part. I had been told that such inquiries only occur about once every five years. By the time the next occasion occurred I might be too old. I also felt that my research should have something to contribute. Eventually I wrote to the senior people setting up the group, explained why I could not serve on it but offering a comment. I told them of my concern that the injunction 'don't ask, don't tell, don't even think about it' prevented learning within the community. I asked if this

message could be passed on to who ever constituted the group, so that they might bear it in mind as they worked and prepared a report. I received a very civil reply leaving open the possibility of communicating further with me as the situation developed.

The research has also affected the way in which I conform, or do not conform, to the Quaker culture. Another example is quoted, from the Monthly Meeting where I was acting as Clerk, with permission of those concerned. On this occasion I consciously broke the rule 'don't ask'. A report was delivered about a central meeting in which a transgendered person had spoken of her experiences and offered consultation to local meetings which might be experiencing difficulties with such issues. This was reported in some detail but no information was given who this person was or how she might be contacted; the reporter was following the rule 'don't tell'. No – one asked these questions. I sat at the table thinking that this was an example of conformity to Quaker culture and wondering whether to intervene. Eventually, my curiosity sharpened by awareness of the contribution of transgendered people to both creating and resolving conflict, especially online, I ventured to ask '*Is there any reason why we should not know the name of this person?*'. The reporter consulted with the people near her, and the rest of the meeting exchanged looks then decided this would be possible. The reporter revealed the name, to which I responded '*That's very useful, because she's local*'. The potential consultant lived in a nearby area and often crossed the border to meet with the people in that room. Confidentiality nearly thwarted her intention.

Connections – Conflict and Narrative

Chapters 4 and 9 considered models of conflict handling and their applicability to Quaker conflict handling. It became clear that more could be learnt about Quaker conflict handling by also looking at the organization's culture about conflict than by using conflict handling models alone. The narrative approach emerged as one way of understanding the organizational culture. The research therefore started with a focus on conflict and finishes with a focus on narrative. These two points of observation indicate the hermeneutic approach of the whole project, that particular incidents such as conflict events cannot be understood without taking into account the context in which they are set, which can be revealed by narrative content. However, the sequence of movement from conflict to narrative as theoretical foci in this study can be traced in more detail. It developed in parallel with the analysis of the empirical findings.

The theoretical models of conflict handling (Ch 4) each followed the hermeneutic path which tracks the connection between individual and context and back, but their routes were different. The first model considered, the one best known to Quakers, was the dual-concern model (Thomas & Kilmann, 1978; De Dreu, 1997; QHS, 2000), which concentrates on the habitual strategy of the individual in conflict handling. The proponents of the model admit that one of its limitations is its inability to take context into account. Its path is short and does not arrive at the context. The second model, Galtung's (1996) conflict triangle introduces the context, or structure, into the map for conflict analysis, while linking this to the attitude, or emotional understanding, of individual protagonists. This model argues for the need to include both context and individual, with varying emphasis according to the particular incident. It points a signpost to a hermeneutic path visiting both context and individual. The third set of models, the narrative based approaches to conflict handling, ARIA (Rothman, 1997) and narrative mediation (Winslade & Monk, 2000) go further in stressing the importance of the context. They would argue that the most fruitful way of understanding individual experience in conflict is by exploring how the individual interpretation arises out of both personal and contextual collective narrative. The context is crucial. The hermeneutic path visits and re-visits both context and individual but may spend more time with the context.

To understand why the conflict models are only of limited use in analysing Quaker conflict we must return to the contents of the Quaker context. We must examine the messages in the 'theories of action' and the images of the Quaker community and the Quaker self. Firstly there is the widely and firmly held assumption that conflict among Quakers is a bad thing and should be eradicated if it springs up. It may be acknowledged that the 'Peaceable Kingdom' is still only an aspiration, but the aspiration is not questioned but commended. There is no alternative image of a community in which Quakers could engage in conflict to their own benefit and the benefit of the rest of the world. Cronk (writing around 1990) offered the image of 'the meeting as a school for peacemaking'. Mennonites have adopted a similar view and give a great deal of attention to working on conflict in their congregations. However, there are messages in the espoused Quaker theory and the Quaker theory in use which prevent this reframing of conflict as a positive learning experience. Such experience would address the basic questions of human relationships posed in the need for spiritual community. But Quaker organizational culture prevents the re-examination of these fundamental questions with its need to perpetuate itself as it is.

The comprehensive triangular Galtung model (Ch 4 p 54) can be used to demonstrate how the Quaker organizational culture limits full exploration of conflict. Firstly the triangle offers for exploration the vertex of contradiction, which includes social structure with all its inherent oppositions and the incompatible goals of the contenders. If this is applied to the Quaker collective each of these two aspects has an embedded Quaker belief working against it. The structural oppositions are usually about power in some way, and Quakers require themselves to avert their minds from power as much as from conflict. End of first exploratory path. The incompatible goals of the contenders are also difficult for Quakers to acknowledge; they are told that there can be unity and they should be looking for it, and that this united relationship is more important than meeting different needs. The dual-concern model also fits into the Galtung triangle at this point; its exploration of different interests, based on a philosophy of the need to win, or even win-win, runs counter to Quaker belief in unity. End of second exploratory path.

Galtung's second vertex is that of attitude, which includes feelings, beliefs and will. The ARIA model (Ch 4, p 56) also stresses the need for the expression of antagonistic feelings. However, Quaker theories of action work against the expression of feelings. Calmness is required, vehemence or passion is not acceptable, verbal restraint is the style, and the maxim 'don't ask, don't tell....' limits the amount of information. End of third exploratory path.

The third vertex is behaviour, acts of co-operation and coercion, in other words acts of conflict resolution and conflict making. Here again the Quaker espoused theory limits exploration. Aversion from conflict makes it difficult for Quakers to acknowledge when there is conflict, and therefore to analyse the conflicting acts, including their own. They are not accustomed to focusing on the Quaker self. It makes them feel uncomfortable even to think about it. This then inhibits their use of the conflict resolution procedures which do exist and cloaks such endeavours under confidentiality so that there is no learning. End of fourth exploratory path. The Quaker cultural context has confined the exploration of conflict, both collective and individual.

The narrative-based models of conflict resolution (Ch 4, p56) draw more widely from social constructivism and personal therapy. They are more explicit and directive in emphasising the need for exploration of context and self at all levels of interaction, ranging from domestic dispute to intractable middle-Eastern politics. Context is

crucial, but it is the context which is significant to you and your conflict, ranging from what you learnt as a child in your family to the broader discourses embedded in your community, or communities. Quakers who feel they should not show anger could be encouraged to explore how much this is due to the relative influence of a familial injunction, an injunction from the Quaker context, or part of being British and middle class. They are not required to accept the espoused theory as the only meaningful interpretation but to place it in their own personal perspective. The narrative based approaches to conflict handling are therefore particularly relevant to exploring the overlapping, and possibly contentious, contexts of the 21st century Quaker. These approaches juxtapose the story of personal strategies from the dual-concern model against the stories of personal contexts and collective contexts contained in the Galtung model, and explicitly encourage exploration of the connection between them all. Any vulnerability to attack from the 'proper Quaker' trying to avert attention from the exploration can be riposted by quoting the frequently commended need to answer the question 'What canst thou say?'¹ A 'proper Quaker' must be convinced by their own individual experience, as well as open to being led as part of the group and following the group tradition.

At the same time as I became aware of the importance of narrative in analysing conflict, the contributors were sharing different versions of the collective narrative about Quaker conflict with me, sifted through their own personal editing. It began to appear to me that among Quakers there was too much emphasis on one part of the context, the collectively espoused theory, and not enough attention to the agency of the individual in conflict. It seemed as if the collective narrative did not allow non-conforming personal narrative about conflict to exist. There was one dominant collective narrative and very few alternative narratives or stories. In Quaker conflict handling there was a need to redress the balance between collective and personal; there was a need for the personal narrative to query the content of the collective narrative about conflict.

¹ With apologies to Licia Kuenning for using this phrase out of context and therefore mistranslating it, as so many Quakers do in the 21st century. It was originally used by Margaret Fell, in 1694 (QFP 19.07)

The Narrative Approach

I will now examine some aspects of the narrative approach, with especial regard to the interaction between collective and personal narrative. Inherent in this inquiry is the social constructivist understanding (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Plummer, 2001; Butt, 2004) of how people work to make sense of the social world, with an ongoing dialectical exchange between collective and personal.

The narrative approach is wide but fits within the qualitative approach. Quantitative scientific inquiry aims to produce laws which can predict outcomes, qualitative inquiry may produce narratives which use plot to produce a meaningful whole but which invite further interpretation and addition of further meaning. Sarbin (1986) proposed that human beings use a 'narratory structure' in their thinking; that is to say that they think, understand and interact in terms of linking past, present and future to give meaning or plot to their experience. The plot will use predicaments and attempted resolutions of these, which can include major plot structures such as those found in history and literature: tragedy, romance, comedy and satire (White, 1973). However, it is the process of making links which is important, events are not free standing; Husserl likened this to notes in a piece of music which are interpreted in sequential relationship (Crossley, 2000). Events are treated by those who try to understand them as linked to previous events or incidents; they are set in personal and social contexts in order to give them meaning. Thus the process of making narrative can be seen as attempt to find an organizing principle to make human experience coherent and communicable.

However, for narrative as a social science theory, there is no grand narrative like positivism, except the meta narrative that no such thing exists (Lyotard, 1979-86). The constant reconstruction of smaller narratives is a feature of post modernity. Czarniawska (2004) takes a pragmatic view of the use of the narrative approach, claiming no principles or criteria. She is willing to consider narratives as good or bad for the purpose at hand. However, she does consider the nature of the purpose at hand; she is quite clear that it is not enough to discover that narratives exist in given contexts, the task of the social scientist is to investigate the social consequences of the narrative. Narrative is a social process, a mode of shared knowing and a mode of communicating, which therefore has both social context and social consequences. A narrative can appear to be interesting when considered as free-standing, but is of much more interest and relevance when set in the culture, or part of a culture in which it evolved. It is then that the power of enculturation can be assessed; how did

this narrative grow in the culture, how has it changed the culture, and what has it contributed to the construction of public moral discourse?

Narrative is a term which encompasses many aspects of human experience not just stories. Barthes' (1977) widely quoted definition of narrative² includes many of these and it is important to note the pervasive character of narratives, that they will creep in almost unacknowledged. Descriptive accounts of events that aim at objectivity are not stories, although they may be narrative. These may form part of the espoused theory of an organization, which is part of organizational narrative. However, stories are different, often making no claim at being grounded in reality, but still carrying social force.

" Stories are narratives with plots and characters, generating emotion in narrator and audience, through a poetic elaboration of symbolic material. This material may be a product of fantasy or experience, including an experience of earlier narratives. Story plots entail conflicts, predicaments, trials, coincidences, and crises that call for choices, decisions, actions and interactions, whose actual outcomes are often at odds with the characters intentions and purposes." (Gabriel, 2000) p239

Narrative theory proves a useful tool in analysing varied experiences on the spectrum from monolithic collectivity to personal autonomy. In all of these power is inherent in the process of narration, but narrative itself can be used as a tool for renegotiation of that power. A narrative is at its most powerful when shared; as such it can be an index of community.

"The psychological sense of community can be indexed by its shared stories. People who hold common stories about where they come from, who they are and who they will or want to be, are a community. "

(Rappaport, 2000) p5

² **"Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting... stained glass windows, cinema, comics, news item, conversation." (Barthes, 1977)**

Sharing in the community narrative creates an accountability for the individual, both to the narrative and to the neighbours who share it. Rappaport proposes a three-fold narrative typology: dominant cultural narratives, reflecting societal views and accessible to all in that society, community narratives which describe accounts of life in a community, accessible mainly to that community, and personal narratives³. I would suggest that a term indicating the power status should also be applied to community and personal narratives; are they dominant or are they tentative? I will apply this rough framework to the use of narrative among Quakers, particularly with regard to conflict.

There are community narratives among Quakers which are shared and carry considerable power in shaping the collective life. Some of these are part of the espoused theory, like the narrative of the peaceable kingdom. Stories drawn from the past are held to be nourishing.⁴ These usually take the form of the individual journey through life, in dialogue with God. Community narratives about conflicts and human interaction are missing. An example may be taken from the use among contemporary Quakers of the letter from the Elders of Balby in 1656. This may be claimed to be a form of narrative. A few sentences are frequently quoted (QFP 1.01) *'these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by.... for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life'*. This often seems to be interpreted as a licence to ignore any rules or forms. These phrases are however taken out of context. They are not evidence of how liberal and kindly early Quakers were but a sweetener added after a very long and prescriptive epistle, the contents of which are now largely ignored by 21st century Quakers. The story of why it was thought necessary to meet together to formulate a set of rules is unremembered and untold. According to Moore (2000) the meeting at Balby was called by Fox for the elders of the North of England to look into 'the cause and matter of disorder, if any be'. This was soon after the difficulties with Nayler (Ch 2 & 4), which nearly split the Society. Now the story of the conflict has been buried, and no-one except a historian asks whether it existed, or what the disorder might have been. The popular version of Quaker history has erased stories of conflicts and created a dominating community narrative: among Quakers there were and are no conflicts. This is a narrative with some considerable power, even if there is little detail or story development; it requires courage to offer an

³ Salzer suggests that community narratives are discovered by drawing out common threads in many personal narratives. (Salzer, 1998)

⁴ This term was used by a Quaker in a meeting discussion group talking about the story of Elizabeth Fry. FN 2003

alternative narrative⁵. The attachment to the dominant narrative and the wish to preserve it can be frightening to someone who offers evidence of conflict among Quakers.

A counter narrative is just such a narrative, one which offers a different account, which may lead to conflict. One such counter narrative was the production of the Swarthmore Lecture by the Quaker Women's Group in 1986. The title 'Bringing the Invisible into the Light' clearly indicates the production of a counter narrative. It also produced considerable conflict, both in the Yearly Meeting when it was presented and outside it later. This was a story of women's experience which challenged Quaker men's view of themselves as benign or even necessary. Though this narrative was allowed into the light for a short time Shellens (2002) argues that its position and authority was neither established nor accepted. It was however a shared production. Though it consisted of individual items, the message of the lecture that a counter narrative existed was corporate, and supported much more widely than by those who merely wrote it.

Though Salzer (1998) suggests community narratives are discovered by the common threads in personal narratives this may apply on only some occasions; the connection between the two levels of narrative may be far more complicated. It is at this level that the question 'do I tell the story or does the story tell me?'⁶ may be most pertinent. Some threads of personal narratives may become public and join with others to form community narratives; other threads may respond to the already dominant narrative about what is acceptable or 'tellable' (Livesey, 2002) and remain hidden in privacy. This has often been the case for stories of individual distress⁷, among Quakers and in the wider society. Personal narratives about conflict can be told but, as at Yearly Meeting 2000 (Ch 6), they may not be well received. Livesey (2002) suggests that personal narratives are constructed with an audience and its likely response in mind. If the response is not expected to be favourable, the narrative may be shaped accordingly to make it tellable. Thus the culture, or the prevailing community narrative, shapes the telling of the personal narrative.

⁵ Two examples of counter or alternative narratives from research which suggest that Quakers are not as good as they think (Phillips, 1989 and Gwyn, 2004) have elicited disparaging comments in my hearing.

⁶ This question was asked to me, and probably many others, by Christine Horrocks.

⁷ Field Notes July 2004: An elderly woman Quaker said she had not been able to tell the distressing story of her early life until she was nearly 80. Before that she found that Quakers just could not cope with the horror of it, so she stopped trying to tell it for many years.

Plummer (1995 p17) makes the point that stories are 'social actions embedded in social worlds' even more clearly, by exploring sexual stories. The pattern of social production of stories does not relate only to sexual stories, but is much wider. However, the example of sexual stories which are told or performed, then coaxed into the public view for the consumer, reader or audience demonstrates the process very clearly. Stories of 'coming out', or more unusual aspects of sexual experience, have needed patrons, described by Plummer as coaxers, coaches or coercers, to bring them into the public view. This was because of the social constraints around the topic of sex; it was not something which was freely talked about. This has strong parallels with Quaker conflict; in Chapter 6 I noted that my interest in conflict felt like voyeurism. By writing about accounts of Quaker conflict I have coaxed these into the public view. If accepted, these stories may form part of a counter narrative. This will depend on the role of the interpretive community, the recipients of the research. Plummer (ibid) insists that

"story production and consumption is an empirical social process involving a stream of joint actions in local contexts themselves bound into wider negotiated social worlds. Texts are connected to lives, actions, contexts and society. It is not a question of 'hyperrealities' and 'simulacra' but of practical activities, daily doings and contested truths" P24

Rappaport (2000) suggests that the right to tell one's own story is an index of power and of psychological empowerment. The individual may feel not empowered to tell a personal narrative which differs from the community narrative. This would seem to be the case with personal narratives about Quaker conflict. Even if an individual dares to tell the story of their place in conflict it may not be accepted and will not become part of the community narrative. The collective narrative will disempower the personal narrative. The personal narrative may have to seek a new context, a new community narrative in which to be told and heard. Craib (2000) makes the point that some narratives are more self-serving than others; they are not just narrative they are narrative with a purpose. One purpose of the Quaker community narrative about conflict is to maintain the power of that narrative, even if that reinforces an unhealthy self-deception about conflict in the community. The imbalance between collective and individual agency is most marked here.

Positioning theory, agency and story

Positioning theory (Harre, 1999) is a theoretical thread in close connection with narrative theory which pays attention to the individual person and their passive and active responses to a storyline. It is very relevant to Quaker conflict handling without a wide range of narratives. Positioning theory developed from discourse analysis rather than the use of narrative. Hollway (1984) explained it thus

"Discourses make available positions for subjects to take up. These positions are in relation to other people. Like the subject and object of a sentence....women and men are placed in relation to each other through the meanings which a particular discourse makes available."

p236

Harré and van Langenhove changed the term 'discourse' to 'storyline'; it could also be changed to narrative. In the quotation above the discourse or storyline is about gender. In this study the storyline is about Quaker conflict and its handling. The act of positioning thus refers to the construction of meaningful personal storylines within an overarching storyline shared by storytellers and listeners. However, within a social exchange there can be different positions for different story tellers and movement from one position to another as different storylines are invoked and 'call' people into new positions. The triad of mutually determining elements includes the position, the story line and social force.

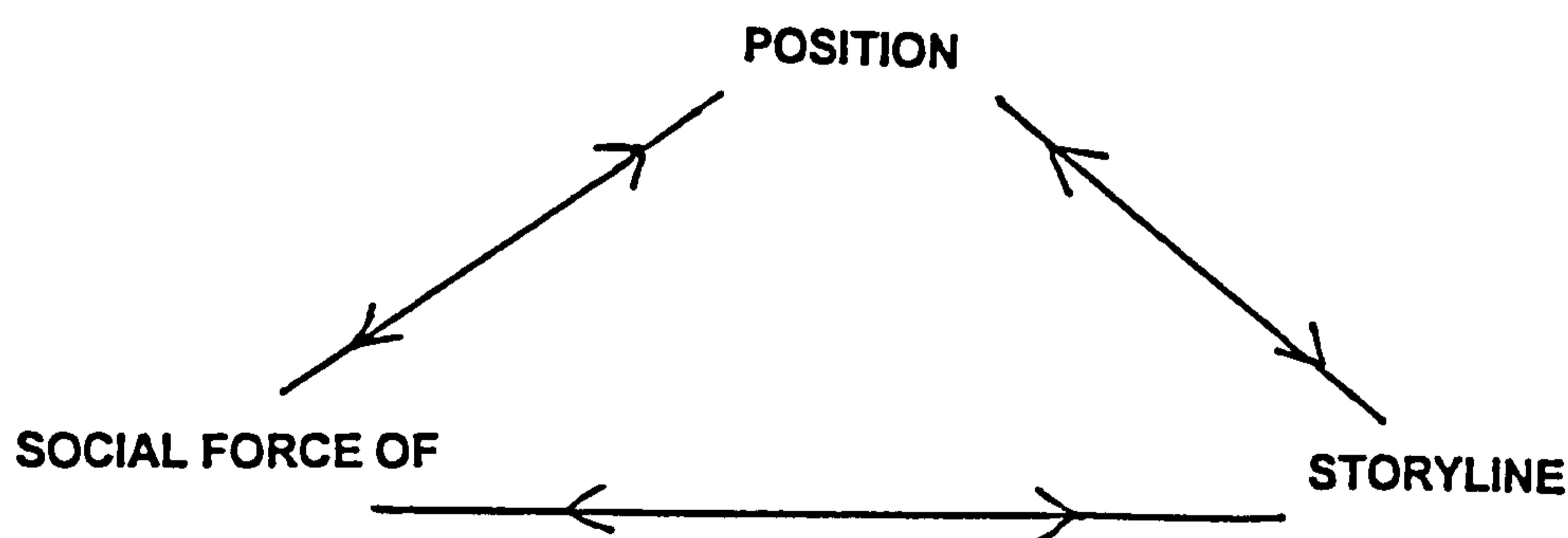


Figure 8 Elements of Positioning
After van Langenhove & Harré 1999

All three elements (Figure 8) are in relation with each other and mutually shape any event. However, the least explored is the social force which is the effect of power within the interaction. The social force of the either the storyline (the community or personal narrative) or the position claimed by the story teller (personal narrative used in a passive or active way) can instigate a new positioning and possibly the start of a new storyline. The proponents of positioning theory bring the agency of the individual into prominence, but in most social situations the storyline is dominant and any individual repositioning is small. The individual is more usually passive in the reception of the storyline than actively querying it, though they may not be aware of this. Many storylines are accepted as social reality.

Applying this theory to Quaker conflict, individual Quakers try to position themselves as the 'proper Quaker', collective Quakers use social force to define a common meaning for the 'proper Quaker', and the collective story line makes available different positions about how the 'proper Quaker' behaves. However, my contention is that the dearth of alternative narratives about Quaker conflict limits the power of the individual to reposition themselves. The agency of the individual is curtailed by the collective lack of story.

Discursive positioning is applied to conflict events by Winslade (2003), a major proponent of narrative mediation. He suggests that it can be used both to make sense of what is happening in conflict situations and as a tool in the practice of mediation. It is suggested that an actor, or speaker, calls a particular version of the world, the storyline, into being from their own repertoire of storylines. Remarks are then addressed as if others shared that repertoire, and a moral claim for legitimation is made in terms of that discourse. ('This is how to be a proper Quaker, and I expect you to be one'.) Winslade argues that positioning is more flexible than social role. It can be used to show how social relations are nuanced, fluid and contested.

" Positioning theory makes cultural influences visible in discourse at the very moment of the establishment of their influence. It also makes visible the ways in which people resist and refuse dominant discourse in the detail of their conversational exchange." (Winslade, 2003, p65)

The process by which people resist and refuse dominant discourse is the process which produces both conflict and change. The focus on awareness of dominant

discourse, dominant community narrative, the context in which the person is agentic must be an essential component in understanding Quaker conflict handling.

Positioning theory may be claimed as one aspect of narrative theory, which without detailed examples appears rather austere. More enticing is the use of story within narrative theory. Within organizations Gabriel (2000) is disappointed to find that stories are relatively rare and fragile. He finds that people in organizations are too busy to spin stories, nor is there the trust, respect and love enough to encourage uninhibited narration.

" moreover, stories in organizations compete against other narrativities, especially against information and data, but also against cliches, platitudes, acronyms, artefacts small and large, arguments, opinions and so forth." p 240

That description may not fit the Quaker organization exactly, but stories about conflict within it are fragmented and fragile.⁸ Consider Mair's (1989) development of the claim that stories are nourishing.

"Stories are the womb of personhood. Stories make and break us. Stories sustain us in times of trouble and encourage us towards ends we would not otherwise envision. The more we shrink and harden our ways of telling, the more starved and constipated we become" p2

Without rich and juicy stories about conflict handling Quakers may behave as if they are starved and constipated⁹.

Two Stories about Quaker Conflict

To end this chapter I will consider the two stories about Quaker conflict handling which came to my notice during the course of the research, and ask what can be learnt by applying narrative theory to them. The first was mentioned in the interviews, and later appeared in the observing participation at a conference on

⁸ Compare a well known book about conflict handling outside the organization, published by a quasi-Quaker group. This cites fifty examples of successful use of non-violence to achieve change (Mathews, 2001). No similar book about conflict within the organization seems imminent.

⁹ In (Collins, 2004) there is an interesting example of narratives being invoked in the course of gentle conflict in a meeting, and how a minute may strive to contain all these narratives. However, this is the use of narrative in conflict handling, not a story about a conflict in Dibdenshaw meeting.

working with children¹⁰. The second appeared in my field notes early in 2000, offered as an item at epilogue at Woodbrooke Quaker study centre¹¹, and then recurred in the observing participation.

The first story was *Fierce Feathers* (Hodgkin, 1949). This story is well known among Quakers. Since its publication it has been performed by many children's groups to admiring audiences. It tells how eighteenth century North American Quakers sit in meeting for worship with their children. Through the windows the children see the feathers of Indian (native American) headdresses. The adults remain immobile and continue their meeting and the Indians join in, and are later entertained to a meal and explanations about not fighting in a Quaker home. The home is then marked with a white feather by the Indians, to ensure its future safety¹². The story tells how Quakers should behave in potential conflict, although not among themselves. There are many ways in which it can be read.

One of these is an example of a 'recast' narrative, where the same story is told from a different position. A Quaker woman went on retreat and found herself reflecting on this story which she had learnt as a child. As an adult she had become involved with questions about protecting children in public contexts. As she reflected she became very aware that had she been a child in those circumstances she might have felt very afraid, and she was overcome with anger at the lack of reassurance and protection offered by the fictional adults. She recast the story as one of terror in the face of seeming negligence, from the position of a disempowered child. This newly recast story might have carried little weight or interest but she linked it to the child protection discourse, which has its own social and emotional force. The creation of this recast story had a powerful effect on an audience familiar with the traditional story. It repositioned them, so they were no longer sure how to react. However, the recast story remains personal, labelled confidential, and could not yet claim to be a community narrative.

¹⁰ Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire Conference with Margaret Crompton, June 19 2004 . . .

¹¹ Peggy Heeks, on 29.6.2000 recounted this story.

¹² The white feather has been used in European culture as the sign of a poor fighter, particularly as a mark of scorn to those who did not fight in World War 1. I was unable to trace its significance among native Americans and wondered if this was the creation of a new story. However, this understanding dates back at least to 1880 among Quakers according to Hodgkin's own notes in Woodbrooke library.

The second story is also set in North America in the eighteenth century. It features in a book (Cronk 1991) which is known to UK Quakers, but perhaps to only a few of them. Its provenance contributes to the argument that there are few stories of Quaker conflict circulating among UK Quakers. Richard Barnard and Isaac Bailey were neighbours, both farmers, both Quakers. The former was a good farmer and an observant Quaker; the latter approached both tasks in a slapdash manner. Isaac dammed a stream on his property and cut off water supply to Richard's farm. Over months Richard did everything he could to sort this out. With the support of the Quaker meeting he went through every stage of the Matthew 18 process, but to no avail. Finally nothing was left except prayer. Following this, early one morning Richard carried a bowl of water across the fields, found Isaac still in bed and, despite protest, proceeded to wash his feet. Little was said but later that day the stream was cleared and the Bailey family made a social visit to the Barnards. Subsequently the two men donated a portion of their abutting land so that a new Quaker meeting house could be built.

This story also has an ill concealed educational agenda. It shows both the strengths and limitations of William Penn's template for conflict handling among Quakers. However, it builds on an extra twist, the additional inspiration in prayer. This is where the story is a good example of Fowler's hierarchy of faith narratives. Richard Barnard was not limited to the one Quaker model of conflict handling, which had failed, he was able to draw on the much wider repertoire of biblical narrative to find a story which he could re-enact to express his feelings to his opponent. Isaac Bailey also shared that story, and responded to being positioned back in the same community of faith.

'Stories sustain us in times of trouble and encourage us towards ends we would not otherwise envision' (Mair, 1989). Quakers see conflict as a time of trouble; if there are few stories known about it, what sustains them? If there are few stories known how can they learn to reposition themselves like Richard Barnard and achieve ends which they would not otherwise envision? Will Quaker conflict continue in the same fruitless and self deceptive way unless new stories are told? Would the creation of new parts in new plays be welcomed and acclaimed as a way to repositioning? Will Quakers remain content to let the habitual story of conflict tell them how to behave, or will they be brave enough to tell new stories themselves? Can they envision stories in which the meeting is not a sanctuary but a school in which peacemaking (Cronk, no date) is to be learnt at an elementary and personal level?

Conclusion: Looking Back, Looking Forward

This section attempts to place the whole thesis in its several contexts, to look backwards to see why there was a need for this work, to assess what has been accomplished and to look forwards to see what work still needs to be done.

This work was needed because no one had addressed the questions of conflict handling among Quakers and the influence of the organizational culture. These predicaments were unexplored. Some anthropological work had studied peaceful communities. Most of these communities were fast disappearing, but there were a few studies of peaceful modern groupings and organizations, which portrayed them with minimal conflict (Dentan, 1994). Historical studies on Quaker conflict, (Cavey, 2000; Holden, 1988; Ingle, 1986) had focused on the experience of the USA, with no UK equivalent. Plüss (1995) considered one particular Quaker conflict in the UK but used this as an example to demonstrate how belief systems are validated. As this research progressed Bradney and Cownie (2000) published a limited ethnographic study of how the espoused theory worked in one meeting. Their aim was to use it as an example of alternative dispute resolution. Therefore they could not say that disputes were not resolved, and concluded Quaker conflict was minimal. Kline (2002) then gave an account of the espoused theory about conflict handling in Quaker business method, identified the pattern of avoidance of internal conflict and raised many questions. Nevertheless these studies only began to scratch the surface. The espoused theory was still unquestioned.

This study shows the obverse of the espoused theory that Quakers should mend the world and live in a peaceable kingdom without conflict. It shows that Quakers avert their minds from their own conflicts, which do exist. When this proves impossible they are uncertain and unskilled in handling them. This is the position from which they encourage the rest of the world to resolve its conflicts.

This study has provided a more complex analysis than previously of conflict handling in this ethical organization. It has filled in obscure areas in the map, showing how the theory in use militates against the communication and sociality needed for conflict resolution. More importantly it provides a counter narrative to place alongside the dominant community narrative about the moderation and restraint of the peaceable kingdom. It is a counter narrative that tells of difficulty, distress and anger with vehemence.

This research offers a challenge to conflict theorists and students of religious community, who believe that there are peaceable communities which thrive with very little conflict and handle that competently. It offers a view of a community committed to conflict resolution which cannot and does not cope well with its own conflict. This research makes a contribution to knowledge by providing an insight into how this particular organization enacts a preference for avoiding conflict. It adds to the literature on affective and value based conflict, which do not respond to positive connotation and active stimulation. It proposes that effective methods of dealing with identity conflict may not be available in an organizational culture where a history of avoidance has suppressed knowledge of internal conflict, and opportunities for personal agency and choice in conflict handling are therefore limited.

This study therefore opens the door to finding out even more about conflict handling, and about conflict handling among Quakers. It confirms the emphasis of those workers using narrative methods of conflict resolution that the social context is at least as important as the individual, and that the individual cannot be understood without understanding their context. Many contributors mentioned personality clashes at the root of conflicts, but after the recognition of this difference comes the choice of how to handle it. This choice may be individual, but the individual can also only choose within the shared context. The choices within the Quaker context were curtailed by the culture.

In stressing the importance of questioning context the research invites a serious discussion at a level which might produce second order change. If organizations wish to change and develop they need to re-examine the basic values embedded in their cultural identity. This example of different theories of action regarding conflict in one organization may be of interest to both conflict and organizational theorists. It is also a challenge to Quakers themselves.

Reaching the end of the exploration at the top of the mountain the traveller looks back to see where she has come from, realises that there were other paths besides the one she took and then turns to find there is a further range of peaks ahead.

Evaluating the journey behind inevitably raises questions about what could have been done differently to reach the destination more quickly and easily, or with better equipment. In retrospect I would have liked to have planned for a larger number and wider selection of Edge Quakers, perhaps drawn more randomly from the Quaker population. The same principle applied to the pondering process. A wider selection of people, a longer time at the workshop with more preparation for the reflective process, and more explicit attention to stretching the boundaries of privacy and communication might have produced a new dimension of information and transformation.

For another 'journey' instead of drawing data from Quakers unassociated with each other a speculative alternative might be to seek out a Quaker meeting which is confident in its relationships and wishes to commit to the exploration of conflict. A researcher could work with the meeting on constructing a different vision of itself and implementing that over a period of several years. This might need an animateur or support worker to give much close time to the project, who need not be the person to do the analysis.

But what does the range of mountains ahead look like? What other research needs to be done? Within the small compass of Quaker collective life there are many topics which merit attention. For instance

- A study of a Quaker 'big issue' conflict from all angles.
- A study of how Quaker internal conflict resolution groups work
- A study of Quaker business method and conflict handling
- The use of silence in conflict and communication between Quakers
- A gendered analysis of Quaker conflict handling
- More work on Quaker identity and understanding of community
- A comparative study about conflict among Quakers and other denominations or other organizations.

In the wider world of conflict handling what should be the next projects? The apparent gap between the proponents of the win-win distributive model and the contextual explorers needs to be bridged.

The points above indicate the development of future research. There is also the issue of the development of Quaker conflict handling. It remains to be seen whether this project will catch the attention of Quakers, and if it does what the reaction will be. Will some Quakers accept the analysis and the implication that their conflict handling could improve? Will they want to find new stories, write new parts in new plays and perform them with empowerment? Or will this study be a historical footnote which records how Quakers failed to mend their own world?

An Exploration of Conflict Handling among Quakers

Glossary of Quaker Terms

In preparing this glossary I am greatly indebted to Alastair Heron's *Quaker Speak* (1999). It ranges more widely than this list which only aims to explain terms used within the thesis. Terms in the glossary are shown in bold the first time they appear in the text.

Advices and Queries

41 paragraphs of guidance and challenge addressed to all who attend Quaker meetings, Designed to help both individuals and meetings in reflection about religious life and everyday behaviour. Found at the start of Quaker Faith and Practice and in a separate small publication. Revised roughly each generation; the last edition dates from 1995.

Attender

A person who regularly attends a Quaker meeting but has not yet applied for membership of the Religious Society of Friends. May be recorded as in association with a local meeting

Book of Discipline

The handbook of faith and practice for Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting. (Other Yearly Meetings produce their own volumes). The most recent edition 1995 is known as Quaker Faith and Practice. It includes extracts on the spiritual experiences of Friends and guidance for church government.

Book of Members

A list of names, contact details and membership status of people associated with local Quaker meetings, produced by a Monthly Meeting or a General Meeting

Book of Meetings: The Religious Society of Friends

An annually produced publication with contact details for all local meetings, business meetings, informal groups and institutions in Britain Yearly Meeting.

Britain Yearly Meeting

The formal title of the Quaker organization in the United Kingdom.(It was known as London Yearly Meeting until 1994). Can be used to refer to all the members, the 'final constitutional body of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain' or the annual gathering open to all members.

See www.quaker.org.uk

BYM

An acronym for Britain Yearly Meeting.

Business Method (see also Quaker Business Method)

A distinctive method of reaching decisions, without voting and in reliance on the leadings of the spirit of God. (Not to be confused with Quakers and Business group, see below.)

Centre down

A phrase used to describe the personal process adopted in meeting for worship to become calm and centred in the silence.

Children not in membership

A phrase used in statistical returns. Now describes nearly all children associated with Quaker meetings or activities. The decision to become a member is usually taken in adulthood.

Cleanness meeting

An occasion in which a small group attempts to support an individual in finding cleanness about the right way forward in a personal dilemma. This is an exercise in discerning what is from God and what is not.

Clerk (also Assistant Clerk. Co Clerk)

Person appointed to act as the 'servant of the meeting' in decision making processes. The Clerk conducts the meeting, and having attempted to discern the 'sense of the meeting', drafts the minute then adapts it to the expressed wish of the meeting. May also have administrative responsibilities outside the decision making meeting.

Disownment

The process by which membership was terminated at the instigation of the meeting because of perceived failure to live to Quaker standards i.e having a non-Quaker wedding, bankruptcy, drunkenness. Common in the 18th and 19th century, but now virtually defunct. Disowned members could continue to attend meeting for worship and be part of the meeting community.

Documents in Advance

Information papers issued before the occasion of Yearly Meeting. Contains some record of Quaker life and work over the past year.

Elder

Person appointed for a three year term to share the responsibility for the nurture of the spiritual life of a local meeting. In some meetings all members share in eldership.

Friend

Term used to describe an associate of the Religious Society of Friends, particularly in conversation between such people, rather than with the non-Quaker world.

Friend (Quaker weekly journal) – see The Friend, below

Friends Quarterly

A quarterly publication with serious/ academic articles.

Friends World Committee for Consultation

Body consisting of representatives from most Quaker groupings across the world.

Gathered Meeting

A meeting for worship or business acknowledged by those present to have a particularly deep and striking spiritual atmosphere.

Inward Light

A phrase used in describing the experience of early Quakers. They felt that the light of God shone inwards into them, helping them see what was good and what was bad in the conduct of their lives. Variants such as 'the light' and 'the inner light' may be used with slightly different meanings.

Meeting House

Building used for regular worship and association by a group of Quakers. Not considered sacred and may also be used by community groups as appropriate.

Meeting for Commitment

A pre-arranged meeting for worship to note and celebrate the personal commitment of two people to live together. Available in most meetings to heterosexual and homosexual couples.

Meeting for Sufferings

The deliberative and executive meeting between annual sessions of Britain Yearly Meeting. It has representatives from all Monthly Meetings and meets 8 times a year. The name comes from its foundation in the 17th century to record and support Quakers persecuted and imprisoned by the authorities for their beliefs. The name is being re-considered in 2004 and may change.

Meeting for Worship

This is the silence based Quaker equivalent of a church service. It is open to anyone to make vocal contribution; this is meant to be in response to a sense of being led by God to speak.

Ministry

Often used to describe vocal contributions in the meeting for worship, but may also apply to other acts of service and caring.

Minute

Written record of the process of a meeting for business, including any decisions made. It is made in the meeting, with the co-operation and eventual consent of all present.

Monthly Meeting

A network comprising several meetings in a locality. It is the main focus of spiritual, pastoral and trustee accountability. It acts as a channel of communication between Quakers in their local meetings and the national organization. Now meets less than 12 times a year. Usually only attended by a minority of those eligible.

Northern Friends Peace Board

Quaker committee which supports and encourages Quakers and meetings working for peace in Northern England and Scotland.

See www.nfpb.gn.apc.org

Overseer

Person appointed for a three year term to share the responsibility for arranging pastoral care in a meeting. In some meetings all members share in oversight.

Pacifism

The belief that it is wrong to support military action or killing in any way.

Plain dress

Style of dress marking distinctiveness of Quakers from late 17th century to late 19th century. Typically plain and dull coloured clothes, with characteristic hats and bonnets.

Plain Speech

Traditional speech pattern of Quakers till late nineteenth century, using second person singular 'thou', 'thee' etc. Originally a witness to the belief in equality i.e. not differentiating the form of address according to social class. May also denote a commitment to simple truth telling.

Preparative Meeting

Regular decision making meeting of the local Quaker meeting. Originally called 'preparative' because it was preparing agenda matters for Monthly Meeting.

PM

Abbreviation for Preparative Meeting.

Quaker

A term originally applied in derision to George Fox and others who 'quaked' when moved in meeting for worship. Accepted for many years in describing members of the Religious Society of Friends, particularly by non-Quakers. Now increasingly used within the movement as 'Friend' is thought to be ambiguous and confusing.

Quaker-B

An internet online discussion group intended to be focused on issues in Britain Yearly Meeting, but open to Quakers from a wider radius.

Quaker Business Method

The distinctive method of decision taking among Quakers. The aim is to seek the sense of the meeting, without voting. The basic premise is that the meeting can be led in its discernment by the spirit of God. (See also Business Method.)

Quakers and Business Group

A network of Quakers who work mainly in 'for profit' businesses, and wish to explore the relationship between Quakerism and their life in business.

Quaker Life Representative Council

Twice yearly weekend event for representatives from each Monthly Meeting to consider issues which are of interest to Quaker Life (see below).

Quaker Life

The body which supports and develops the spiritual lives of individuals and meetings, including work with children.

Quaker Monthly

A monthly publication intended particularly for newcomers or casual reading.

Quaker News

A tabloid publication produced four times a year, to give news of Quaker activities in Britain Yearly Meeting, both among Quakers in the UK and carrying out work overseas. Often used to encourage financial contribution.

Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire

'An integral part' of Yorkshire General Meeting. Representatives from Yorkshire Monthly Meetings are responsible for arranging publicity and conferences for newcomers, day and residential conferences and activities for children and young people.

Quaker Studies

Peer reviewed research journal published twice a year, by the Quaker Studies Research Association. See www.qsra.org

Quaker Testimonies (see Testimonies)**Quaker Time**

Phrase and sociological concept used by Dandelion (1996). Indicates time which Quakers spend together in acknowledged Quaker activities, distinct from other aspects of their lives.

Quarterly Meeting

A cluster of several Monthly Meetings which met quarterly. Such groupings became known as General Meetings in 1965. It may be decided in 2005 that they cease to exist.

Recorded Ministers

Quakers who were named and recorded because of their gift for vocal ministry in meeting for worship. This carried an expectation of performance. Abolished 1924.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Formal title of Britain Yearly Meeting, and some other Yearly Meetings across the world.

Sense of the Meeting

A unity (but not unanimity) which underlies and leads to decision making in a business meeting. Also sometimes used as in 'The sense of the meeting is that.....'

Testimonies

A Quaker testimony is an accumulation of experience and witness about a particular aspect of life. Belief is revealed by action, and sometimes explained in words. A testimony can become out of date i.e. against paying tithes, or emerge newly i.e. the testimony to the care of the environment.

The Friend

An independent Quaker weekly Journal. Has up to date information, some reflective or provocative articles, correspondence columns and advertisements. Circulation approximately 4000, but read by more.

Triennium

Three year period. Many appointments to voluntary Quaker roles are made for a triennium. A special case should be made if anyone is to serve for longer than two such periods.

Unprogrammed

Term applied to meetings for worship where no specific contributions are planned beforehand. Refers to nearly all meetings in the UK. In other Yearly Meetings there may be a programme of a service planned in advance.

Warden(ship)

A warden, or Resident Friend, is a person appointed by a meeting to look after the premises, sometimes including a welcoming presence to users of the meeting house and other responsibilities. This can be part time job, often with accommodation near the meeting house.

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham

Originally founded in 1904 to educate the members of a religious society with no professional clergy. Now a residential centre, open to Quakers and others, which supports short and longer courses focused on Quaker topics and spiritual growth. See www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Worship Sharing

A form of verbal exchange based in silent worship. Guidelines about confidentiality, taking turns, listening etc are usually called into play at the beginning.

www.Quaker.org - url of the BYM website. Many subsidiary sections

Yearly Meeting

Can refer to the annual gathering, or all the people in membership in the specified area.

Yorkshire General Meeting

Comprises all the local meetings and Monthly Meetings in Yorkshire. Meets four times a year for business, exercising trusteeship and spiritual education. Administers trustee responsibility for 'Quaker' institutions and funds in Yorkshire.

Young Friends General Meeting

Business meeting, with social additions, which meets for three weekends a year. Open to all between 18 and 30 who are interested in Quakerism. Sends representatives to Meeting for Sufferings.

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AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING AMONG QUAKERS : APPENDICES

Appendix A Page A i Correspondence to set up interviews

All interviews were also acknowledged with a personal letter or e-mail of thanks.

Appendix B Page B i Interview Schedules for three sets of interviews

Appendix C Page C i Publicity, programme and papers for the workshop. Follow up correspondence.

Appendix D Page D i An example of 'pondering' writing

Appendix E Page E i Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis: an example

AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING AMONG QUAKERS

APPENDIX A

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA

01484 845330
susan.robson@btinternet.com

Person,
at place,
in Road, Suburb,
County AB1 2CD

March 13th 2000

Dear Name,

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to help in a research project on conflict handling among Quakers. I have been a Friend now for over forty years and it is this experience which has led me to want to explore how Friends handle conflict between themselves. I am a member of Huddersfield PM and active at all levels of Britain Yearly Meeting.. The research will be carried out within the framework of an M.Phil/ PhD at Huddersfield University. I hope that it will be useful both to Friends and to others.

I am looking for 6 people with extensive experience in Britain Yearly Meeting who would be willing to act as 'Key Informants' about the way our organization works. This would involve an interview, probably between one or two hours in length, focussed on your knowledge of how Friends are encouraged to handle conflict when it arises, what actually does happen and what processes exist to help on such occasions. At this stage the focus will be on processes rather than people and, of course, care will be taken to protect the anonymity of anyone you mention and indeed you yourself.

The interview will be carried out at a place and time of your choosing, probably between mid-April and the end of June. If this idea interests you and you would be willing to give your time to it, please would you return the attached slip in the stamped addressed envelope. I would then contact you to make arrangements convenient to us both.

I don't want to overload you with information at this stage but if you would like to know more about the plan for the project, either before making up your mind or after, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me, and I will do my best to answer any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Robson

A:

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

Name

Address

Telephone, e-mail address etc

I would be willing to take part in the research into conflict handling among Quakers.

I would like to be interviewed in the following geographical area

I shall not be available for the following times (holidays, other large commitments etc) from mid-April to the end of June.

Signed

Aii

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield, HD7 6DA

tel/fax 01484 845330
susan.robson@btinternet.com

September 2000

To all NFPB MM Representatives,

Dear Friend,

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

With the permission of your Clerks and Co-ordinator I am writing to ask for your assistance.

I am undertaking a research project on conflict handling among Quakers, under the supervision of Huddersfield University, and I am looking for a varied sample of 'grass roots' Quakers who would be willing to be interviewed about this subject. At the moment I am confining this sample to the NFPB area in the hope that I may be able to travel to meet most of the interviewees in a day.

Please could you find somebody in your Monthly Meeting who would be willing to be interviewed? By leaving the selection in your hands I hope to get a wide variety of people. Your choice can be any age or gender, not necessarily particularly interested in peace or conflict handling. They can be members or attenders, but in the latter case should have been to at least five Quaker business meetings.

The interviews would take place sometime within the next year, at a time and place convenient to the Friend concerned. I am happy to do all the travelling. Anonymity will be carefully guarded.

If you find someone who would be willing to take part in this project, please could you pass this letter on to them. On the back is a form which they can fill in and return in the attached stamped addressed envelope. If you are not able to do this please could you use the envelope to let me know and I will approach your MM some other way.

Thankyou very much for any help you can give me.

In friendship,

Susan Robson (Huddersfield PM)

Aiii

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA

01484 845330
susan.robson@btinternet.com

January ~~2~~³¹ 2001

Dear Friend,

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

I am writing to ask for your assistance. I am undertaking a research project on conflict handling among Quakers, under the supervision of Huddersfield University, and I am looking for a varied sample of 'grass roots' Quakers who would be willing to be interviewed about this subject. I am confining this sample to the North of England and Scotland in the hope that I may be able to travel to meet most of the interviewees in a day.

Originally I made similar approaches through committee members of the Northern Friends Peace Board, and while this has been successful in some Monthly Meetings it has not been so in yours. So I am writing to someone I have knowledge of in the Monthly Meeting in the hope you will help me. I would be most grateful if you could find someone in your Monthly Meeting who would be willing to be interviewed. By leaving the choice in your hands I hope to get a wide variety of people. Your choice can be any age or gender, not necessarily particularly interested or experienced in peace or conflict handling. They can be members or attenders, but in the latter case should have been to at least five Quaker business meetings.

The interviews will take place between now and September 2001, at a time and place convenient to the Friend concerned. I am happy to do all the travelling. Anonymity will be carefully guarded.

If you can find someone who is willing to take part in this project, please could you pass this letter on to them. Attached to it is a form which they can fill in and return in the attached stamped addressed envelope. If you are not able to do this please could you use the envelope to let me know as soon as possible.

Thankyou very much for any help you can give me.

In friendship,

Susan Robson

Susan Robson
Huddersfield PM

Aiv

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA

01484 845330
susan.robson@btinternet.com

May 15th 2001

Dear Friends in Scotland,

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

Several months ago four of you kindly agreed that you would be willing to be interviewed for this research project. I am now writing to start the process of fixing times for these interviews. The interviews that I have completed so far vary in length of time between one hour and two, depending on how much the person concerned wants to say. I am happy to come to interview you in your home, but if that does not seem suitable to you perhaps you would like to suggest another place which is convenient for you. I hope you will not object to me recording the interview, which is only for my own use afterwards.

I hope that I will be able to combine seeing all of you in the week beginning July 16th. I attach a sheet on which I ask you to indicate your availability during that week, and when I have replies from you all will work out a timetable for a circular tour. We are also hoping to visit some friends in the North of Scotland. Please can you return the sheet to me as soon as possible and then I will get back to you as soon as I can.

Thankyou very much for your willingness, I do appreciate it. Though this is the same letter sent to each of you, I will take care to preserve your anonymity.

In friendship

Susan Robson

Av

Availability for interview July 16-20 2001

Please indicate with a tick all the times when you are available

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Name

Avi

File copy

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield, HD7 6DA

01484 845330 susan.robson@btinternet.com

March 7 2002

Dear Friends,

Research Into Conflict Handling among Quakers

Sometime in the last two years you were kind enough to talk with me about the subject of this research project. I promised you some feed back, expecting this to be at the end of 2001, so I apologise for the delay. This has been due to an unfortunate experience with a computer programme, though the problem was with my inadequacy, not any defect in the programme. However, although everything is two months late, the project overall is going well and should not be greatly delayed at the end.

Overleaf is the summary at the end of my analysis of the two series of interviews. As a representation of all the rich information you gave me it is irritatingly brief and superficial. However, it is also temporary, showing the stage of thinking reached at the moment. The final write ups will also rely on further stages of the work and go into some parts of the findings in much more detail.

If you would like to make any comments on the summary, or more importantly, which parts you would like to see explored further, please do get in touch with me. Something written, by hand or sent by e-mail, is likely to retain its accuracy better than a phone call.

We are now going to have a short pause for more reflection on the relevant academic theory before deciding whether to use a questionnaire or other methods to explore the next stage.

Thankyou all very much for your help.

With good wishes

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

Summary analysis of 31 interviews in 2000 and 2001

The contributors see the Quaker organization with a distinctive stance on conflict. They have no doubt about its commitment and effectiveness in large scale conflict resolution, and perhaps derived from this a particular view of conflict within the organization. The Quaker community is expected to have less conflict than other groups; it is expected to be a 'peacable kingdom'. When conflict is acknowledged it is experienced as surprising, even shocking, and distressing. There is little confidence about how to deal with it. Procedures and techniques are known of but relatively rarely used, and are only of limited effectiveness. The aftermath of conflict is long and bitter.

The community convinces itself it has relatively little conflict by inhibiting the expression of anger, which is 'unQuakerly'. When tensions arise they are frequently not recognised, ignored, 'walked around' without exploration, and in an optimistic scenario recognised and worked on very early so that they do not grow into conflict. The subjects which provoke unavoidable conflict are group decisions on practical, checkable matters. Differences about theological beliefs are many but accepted easily.

Resolution or letting go of conflict is associated with openness and sharing for all concerned. Confidentiality or secrecy, seen as power in the hands of a few, prolongs the episode. This is because this cuts across the fundamental Quaker belief in equality, 'that of God in everyone'. Each person should have the possibility of input and carrying responsibility.

The contributors are all socially competent and well educated. However, they share a reluctance to speak definitely on questions of conflict. The combination of Quaker moderation in expression and a hesitancy to appear authoritative make them present as fumbling and lacking in confidence when involved in conflict themselves. A few see themselves as developing this aspect of their lives, often after experience in counselling, but most do not. Training in this area has come to a few in secular contexts, but only to one within Quakerism.

Only one example of two individuals solving their own argument was quoted. Most incidents identified as conflict took place within the arena of the group and were dealt with by the established procedures, and unspoken conventions, of the group. Quaker groups use a unique method of decision making, which was supported and commended by the contributors. However, they were unclear about how this should proceed in difficult problems. The researcher concluded that there are several elements in the Quaker business method which are in tension with the perceived need for openness and individual responsibility.

There appear to be three significant tensions, or indeed conflicts, exerting pressure on both the Quaker group and individuals within it

- a) Firstly the tension between authority and individuality.
- b) Secondly a tension about verbal expression within the group.
- c) Thirdly the tensions inherent in the Quaker business method of decision making.

These shape the culture which tries to reduce the awareness of conflict within it.

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6 DA

01484 845330
smr@fish.co.uk

August 20 2002

Dear

Research into Conflict Handling among Quakers

I write to ask whether you would be willing to talk with me as part of the project outlined above. I am now half way through an exploration of how Quakers handle conflict among themselves. Much of the data I have collected and analysed so far has come from 'core Quakers' who are immersed in the activities of their local meetings. I am now seeking to talk with Quakers who have a particular viewpoint on the organization and who may have experience of different group cultures to draw on. In writing to you I am thinking particularly of your interest in the Quakers in Business group, though you might wish to add other perspectives.

I am hoping to complete this series of interviews by the end of October, and would be very grateful if you would be willing to meet with me sometime before then. The interview could be at a place of your choice. I am happy to travel, or it could be in my study near Huddersfield. It would be tape recorded, for the subsequent analysis, but your anonymity would be completely protected.

A stamped addressed envelope is enclosed; please let me know whether or not you are willing to do this. If the answer is yes perhaps you could indicate what sort of times and places might be suitable, and the best way to communicate with you (phone, letter, e-mail) to make firm arrangements.

The project is being carried out within the framework of a PhD at Huddersfield University. I hope it will produce information and ideas that will be useful both to Friends and others.

In friendship

Susan Robson

Aix

**AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING
AMONG QUAKERS**

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR 'KEY INFORMANTS'

Preamble

Use of recorder.

Interview will cover personal, BYM, conflict, conflict handling, and general comment.

Confidentiality. Ranges etc. Any questions?

Personal Details

Use of identifier.

Gender, Age. Age at first contact with Quakers.

Membership status now.

How many meetings?

What other contexts are you active in? [work, home, leisure etc]

What do you do as a Quaker? [roles, tasks, activities etc]

Is there any particular sub-group in BYM you identify strongly with?

BYM/RSoF [Britain Yearly Meeting/ Religious Society of Friends]

What do you think Quakerism is for?

Is there any characteristic of Quakerism which is particularly different from other organizations? [secular or religious]

Do you think Quakerism has a distinct culture of its own? What is it like?
[give examples]

Is there any metaphor or image which describes the group for you?
[It is like.....]

Do you know any jokes which encapsulate something about Quakerism? What do they show?

Can you give me examples of unQuakerly behaviour?
[re conflict/ non conflict]

Conflict

What do you think of when you use 'conflict'?
[What does it mean to you? In this context public not intimate. 2 parties want different outcomes which cannot happen at the same time. Differences + tension.]

What would you choose as an example of such conflict?

What other words spring to mind associated with conflict? Words for feelings?

Do Quakers have a view/ policy about conflict? What is it? Are there several?

What do Quakers think will happen if they do have conflicts? For themselves, for the group?

Do Quakers have conflicts? What have you observed/ known them get into conflict about?

Compared with other groups is this more/different/ less?

How can you tell when Quakers are in conflict? What do you see or hear? Compare with non Quakers?

Conflict Handling

How do you think people outside the Society of Friends think Quakers handle conflict? [?evidence] How do Quakers think they handle conflict [well/not well ?]

How does a good Quaker handle conflict?

How do new Quakers know this?

Is there guidance, relevant material in Quaker Faith and Practice, the Bible, other writings? What is it ?

Is there teaching, guidance, advice? How is this communicated? Is there training?

Does this amount to rules? Who makes the rules?

An example of breaking a rule? What happens if someone does this – officially/ unofficially?

Are there well known stories about how Quakers have handled conflict? Within a Quaker context?

Can you give an example of a Quaker who handles conflict really well? What did they do?

Can you give an example of handling conflict badly?

Are you aware of any systems/ processes for handling conflict? Have you seen them used? Would you use them?

Does it make a difference that we are a religious organization? In what way?

Final section

What else do you think it important to think about in this study?

What would you want to say about Quakers and how they handle conflicts?

What comments would you like to make about this interview process and how it could be improved?

Would you like a short report?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR 'GRASSROOTS' QUAKERS

Section A

Explain research. Confidentiality.

Gender. Age.

Age at first contact with Quakers? Did you grow up in a Quaker family or school?

Membership status now? How many meetings?

What other contexts in your life are important?

What do you do as a Quaker? Worship, tasks, socialise?

How many times have you been to PM in the last year?

How many times have you been to MM in the last year?

What other Quaker business meetings have you attended? GM, YM etc?

What other Quaker activities? Do you identify yourself with any particular subgroup?

Do you think your early life was helpful to you in learning how to handle conflict or not? How did it influence you?

Section B A view of BYM [Britain Yearly Meeting]

What do you think Quakerism is for?

Is there any characteristic of Quakerism which makes it different from other organizations? Religious or secular?

What difference does it make that we are a religious organization?

Where do you find the rules about how Quakers should behave? What are they- an example? What happens if someone breaks them?

What is unQuakerly behaviour?

Do you know any jokes about Quakers?

Section C – Conflict

**How do you use the word conflict? Give me an example? [Difference + tension].
What associations come to mind when you think of conflict? What feeling words?**

Have you seen Quakers have conflict? How can you tell when this happens? Do you feel surprised when this happens? Are other people surprised?

Have you been involved in conflict with another Quaker, either personally or as part of a group? Roughly what about ?

Bill

Some people say Quakers sweep their conflict under the carpet. Do you agree? What do you think about this and how would you describe it?

If you compare your experience of conflict among Quakers with conflict in the other contexts in your life – do you see any differences?

Do you behave the same among Quakers as in other contexts?

Section D Conflict Handling

Are Quakers good at conflict handling? Who says so? On the international scene or nearer home? What does your experience tell you?

How do you think a good Quaker handles conflict?

Do you think it makes a difference being a man or a woman?

If you were asked for a passage or story from the Bible, Quaker Faith and Practice, or other writings, which guides you in handling conflict the Quaker way, what would you choose?

Can you give me an example of conflict being handled badly?

Do you know a Quaker, alive or dead, who handles conflict really well – what do they do?

Do you know of any Quaker systems or procedures for handling conflict?

Can you imagine a Monthly Meeting disowning anybody these days? What might it be for?

In a Quaker business meeting, where a minority is in disagreement, what should happen next? Have you ever been in a minority? What happened?

On the whole are you comfortable with the Quaker way of making decisions?

Have you experienced a really good meeting for business on a difficult issue? What was it like?

Have you experienced a really bad meeting for business on a difficult issue? What were your personal reactions? Are these rare, frequent or middling?

In the Elders and Overseers book on Conflict in Meetings there is the following typology (see next page)

How many of these do you recognise in yourself?

What do you think this study is missing? What else would you want to say about Quakers and conflict handling?

Conflict in Meetings QHS 2000

The following extract is taken from Pages 60-61 of the book above, published at the time of Yearly Meeting 2000.

Conflict Management Styles

Each person is unique. We all use strategies for responding to conflict and with[in] the diversity patterns can be identified. Different situations call for different styles; some are helpful in certain situations and not in others. The descriptions below should not be taken too seriously but they are helpful, not as personal value judgements, but as an aid to awareness of our own and other people's ways of responding to a situation of conflicting interests. An awareness of one's natural style and an ability to slip into another when appropriate are valuable conflict resolution skills.

When we are involved in conflict, there are two main concerns to consider:

- Achieving personal goals
- Maintaining a good relationship with the other person

Turtles withdraw into their shells to avoid conflicts. They are willing to give up both their personal goals and their relationships. They avoid the issues over which the conflict is taking place and the people with whom they are in conflict. They prefer to withdraw (physically and psychologically) rather than face them.

Sharks try to overpower their opponents. Their goals are far more important to them than their relationships. They are not concerned with the needs of others and seek to achieve their goal at all costs. Sharks assume that one side wins and the other loses. Winning gives them a sense of pride and achievement; losing a sense of weakness, inadequacy and failure. They try to win by attacking, overpowering, overwhelming, and intimidating others.

Teddy Bears rank relationships as more important than their own goals. They want to be accepted and liked by others, and think that conflict should be avoided in favour of harmony. They believe that conflicts cannot be discussed without someone getting hurt, and that will ruin their relationship. To preserve their relationship they give up their goals.

Foxes are moderately concerned with their own goals and their relationships with others. They seek a compromise – each giving up part of their goals. They seek the middle ground and will make some sacrifice to find agreement for the common good.

Owls value highly both their own goals and relationships. They view a conflict as a problem to be solved and seek a solution that achieves everybody's goals. By seeking resolutions that satisfy both themselves and the other side, owls maintain the relationship; they are not satisfied until solutions are found and the tensions and negative feelings are resolved.

Ostriches, although extremely well equipped for effective action, both confronting and defensive, frequently become vulnerable by putting themselves in a position where it is impossible to see the problem. Unfortunately this damages their relationships and does nothing to achieve their goals.

Lemmings when threatened, make relationships of paramount importance. As a result, their goals may be lost through following blindly the actions of the peer group, which may be counter effective or disastrous.

Adapted, with thanks, from the Mediation UK training manual.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE EDGE QUAKERS

There were 8 small file cards. On each card the corners were marked with the four same prompts to remind me to follow up these topics

- Comparison with other [non Quaker] experience
- Expressiveness and speaking out
- Power and Influence
- Emotions -ugly

The centre of the card contained the following reminders of questions

- A Introduction. Explanations. Anonymity.
- B Why you? Your connection with Quakers. Why a particular view?
- C For you is Quakerism about being an individual or in a group?
? Tension
- D Group constraints. Have you [ever] not said something [you wanted to]?
What was the rule you might have broken? Can you formulate that rule for an
attender?
- E What kind of conflict have you been involved in among Quakers and
elsewhere?
- F How did you handle it? How did others handle it? Was this satisfactory?
- G In any context what is the best way you have seen conflict handled?
- H Any ideas about alternative ways Quakers might handle conflict?

**AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING
AMONG QUAKERS**

APPENDIX C

Quaker International Centre
An oasis of calm in the heart of London. Affordable accommodation in single, twin and shared rooms. Conference facilities for groups between eight and 60. Excellent homemade food.
1 Byng Place, London WC1E 7JH.
Telephone: 020 7387 5648 or 020 7387 3810. Fax: 020 7383 3722.
E-mail: qic1@qic.org.uk

Rookhow Centre, Lake District
Situating between Lakes Windermere and Coniston, near Grizedale Forest Park, comfortable self-catering for groups. Also self-catering suite for 2-7 persons. £9.50 adults, £5 junior, per night inclusive. 18th century Meeting house available for conferences, seminars, training sessions etc. Adjoining "Quakers Wood" for retreat and nature study. New for 2003 - traditional 'yurt' in Quakers Wood for retreats and overnight camping. Wardens: Robert and Lesley Straughton, Rookhow Centre, Rusland, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 8LA.
Telephone: 01229 860231.
Email: rookhow@britishlibrary.net

Wells-next-the-sea, Norfolk
Ideally situated for enjoying the seaside or exploring the Norfolk coast. Separate self-catering accommodation in: 1) meeting house gallery, with own shower/wc and separate kitchen and 2) garden chalet, sleeps up to 10, with own kitchen and shower/wc nearby. For both, mattresses and pillows provided. Telephone. 01328 711387.

Yealand Conyers, North Lancs
The Old School Holiday Hostel offers well-equipped self-catering accommodation, with full central heating, for groups or families at moderate charges. Excellent centre for 1652 Country, walking, RSPB, Quaker Tapestry. Convenient for Lake District and Yorkshire Dales. Details and brochure from: The Warden, Yealand Conyers, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 9ST
Telephone: 01524 732336

RESEARCHING into how QUAKERS handle CONFLICT among themselves

Would you like to take part in the last stage of a project researching how Quakers handle conflict among themselves?

At this workshop Susan Robson will

- tell you of findings from three years of research
- ask for your responses
- invite you to take part in the exploration by reflecting and reporting your own experience with Quaker conflict in the following months (anonymity preserved).

For bookings and further information contact Susan Robson on smr@fish.co.uk or at 9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA. Limited places. Free.

One-day workshop
20 September 2003
Carlton Hill FMH, Leeds

ST CHRISTOPHER

Head

The Governors invite applications for the Headship of the School with effect from September 2004 on the retirement, after 23 years service, of Colin Reid.

St Christopher School is a well established day and boarding school noted for its friendly informality and sense of purpose. There are over 600 boys and girls with the Montessori Nursery, the Junior School and the Senior School (including 100 sixth formers) all on the same Garden City site and under the overall responsibility of the Head. The School maintains good academic standards but also emphasises the education of the whole person, aiming to equip children with the skills and self-confidence for their future life and work. The breadth of educational vision has led to many distinctive features and initiatives.

The Governors seek to appoint an individual with the necessary skills and qualities to lead the further development of this educational community.

Details and an application form are available from Pat Biggins at the School (email: pat.biggins@stchris.co.uk). The closing date for applications is 8 April 2003.

St Christopher School

Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 3JZ

Tel: 01462 679301 Fax: 01462 481578

Web: www.stchris.co.uk

The School is an educational charity which aims to treat all children as individuals and to develop their proper self-confidence.

14 March 2003 The Friend p 13

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RESEARCHING into how
QUAKERS handle
CONFLICT among themselves

September 20 2003 Carlton Hill FMH, Leeds

Would you like to take part in the last stage of a project researching how Quakers handle conflict among themselves?

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- invite you to take part in the exploration by reflecting and reporting your own experience with Quaker Conflict in the following months. (Anonymity preserved.)

To book a place, or for further information please contact her at smr@fish.co.uk or 9, Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA. Limited places. Free.

**RESEARCHING QUAKERS HANDLING CONFLICT
CARLTON HILL MEETING HOUSE, LEEDS
SEPTEMBER 20 2003**

You have booked a place on this workshop. Here is some further information. If there is anything else you need to know, please contact me using one of the methods at the foot of the page.

There is also a map included, with some travel directions. There is a small carpark at the back of the meeting house, which is approached via Raglan Road, the first on the right after the meeting house if you are driving out from the centre of Leeds.

The workshop will run from 9.45am. to 4pm. The programme is on the other side of this sheet. Coffee, tea and herbals will be available in the breaks. Please bring your own lunch. (A limited range of food can be bought near the meeting house, it's probably better to plan ahead.)

Carlton Hill Meeting House has what appears to be easy access for disabled people. If you know you have specific needs please let me know so that we can check you can be comfortable. There is a hearing loop in the room we shall be using.

It is now eight weeks to the workshop and we have eighteen people booked in already. As numbers will be limited to twenty it may be necessary to run a reserve waiting list. So if you find you can't come please let me know as soon as possible so that someone from the waiting list can take your place.

If you find you cannot come on the day itself please contact me on my mobile phone 07786 918536, from which I will pick up messages, so that we are not worrying that you are lost on the way.

I am looking forward to working with you all in September. It is likely that that you will leave the day with some new questions to reflect on in the next few months, rather than any easy answers. Nevertheless I hope that together we will have an interesting day, which may lead to something useful for us and for others.

Susan Robson, 9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA
Tel/fax 01484 845330 smr@fish.co.uk

**RESEARCHING QUAKERS HANDLING CONFLICT
CARLTON HILL MEETING HOUSE, LEEDS
SEPTEMBER 20 2003**

9.30 Coffee, tea etc available

10.0 Welcome, introductions, anonymity.

Session 1

What is Quaker conflict like?

Findings from the research so far.

11.15 Refreshment break

11.30 Session 2

Responses from the workshop participants

Session 3

Coping with Quaker conflict.

Methods, good practice, role models

12.45 Lunch break

1.45 Session 4

Ourselves and others

The group and the individual

2.45 Refreshment break

3.0 Session 5

Reflective Researchers

What do we do next?

4.0 End. More refreshment if required.

The only equipment you need to bring is yourself and something to write with.
Stuff to write on will be supplied.

RESEARCHING CONFLICT AMONG QUAKERS
September 20, 2003

Number 22

This information is solely for the use of Susan Robson, and details will not be shared with anyone else without your permission.

Name

Postal Address

e-mail address (if any)

Gender

Age 20+ 30+ 40+ 50+ 60+ 70+ 80+

Do you attend a Quaker meeting?
If not, please go down to ###

If so, which?

Are you an attender or member?

How long have you been 'among Friends'?

If not Quaker, what other group do you identify with?

Do you, or have you, held responsibility for conflict resolution

a) among Quakers?

b) among others?

Five dilemmas – all have been mentioned in the research interviews

In the following circumstances how would you react? What would you do, what would you feel, what would you think you should do? Please answer as an ordinary person in the meeting, regardless of any role you may hold at the moment (e.g. Elder or Clerk).

1. There is a toddler who has reached the stage of being restless in meeting in the children's time. You find this unsettling and you know other people do. What would you do?

2. Nearly every week the same person speaks lengthily on a similar subject. Many Friends find this unacceptable. What would you do?

3. A Friend who agreed to help you run the study group lets you down at the last moment with a poor excuse. What would you do?

4. After meeting you hear two Friends in heated argument about whether there should be Friends schools or not. What would you do?

5. There are plans to make major alterations to the meeting house. You find your views are in a minority. What would you do?

Two Pen Pictures

Number 22

Please write a pen picture of yourself in conflict, as if it were written by somebody in your meeting. It can include personality characteristics, behaviour, supposed thoughts and feelings or whatever.

Please write a pen picture of yourself in conflict, as if it were written by someone who knows you in another setting, ? at work, a hobby setting, your family, whatever.

Session 1 - Findings from the Research

Definitions of conflict - I did not offer a definition of conflict and ask people what experience fitted in with this. I asked them what conflict they had experienced and then accepted what they told me. If pushed I relied on a definition by Caroline Schrock-Shenk- 'difference plus tension'

Method – how I learnt what I did.

Participation among Quakers – 50 years experience

Participant Observation among Quakers – as researcher

3 conferences on conflict – one by Quakers for Quakers, one by Mennonites for all denominations, one by non - Quakers for Quakers.

6 Semi-structured interviews with key informants, i.e. Quakers with wide and deep experience of the organization.

25 Semi-structured interviews with 'grass roots' Quakers from the Monthly Meetings in the north of England and Scotland (2 missing)

8 Semi-structured interviews with 'Edge' Quakers – people coming in or going out of the society, or with a particular or critical viewpoint.

And Reading.

What was conflict about?

a) doing it right – the failure of the vision 'you're not being a good Quaker'

- canvassing before a business meeting
- asking a meeting to change a previously agreed minute
- issues about finance and supporting the Clerk

Apparently miscellaneous, this was the largest single group. It includes some large problems which might be identified by labels, but which seem to carry on because of 'the failure of the vision'.

b) practical matters

- about wardenship
- changes to the meeting house

c) relationship splits

- when this happened I was angry with the meeting because it didn't care about/respect me.

d) miscellaneous but repeated

- unacceptable ministry, children in meeting, ending membership.

How did it work out? - in about a third of the stories it was considered resolved (n.b. later information – it takes time). The storytellers/contributors associated this with openness. Other situations were characterised by their tellers as involving secrecy, suppression and denial and were often still smouldering.

No particular method (to be considered later) was acknowledged as helpful.

How the contributors saw themselves

Most saw themselves as personally uninvolved in the conflict. (Only one account of a one to one disagreement.) If close to the conflict it was as a spectator, a healer, or fulfilling a role. The conflict was presented as 'out there'. Very little involvement of 'I'.

An observation

One informant compared professional life which involved sorting out conflicts with Quaker life; it seemed to him that Quakers 'walked round' conflict, instead of exploring it to find out what needed to change.

I am now rather tired of people telling me that my leaflet for this workshop should not refer to how Quakers handle conflict but how Quakers avoid conflict.

How do they avoid it ?

- a. **Non recognition, is this denial?**
- b. **Pretending or hoping it's not there, not serious, will blow over soon or go away**
- c. **Coming too soon to 'resolution', fudge and compromise.**

How to be a good Quaker with regard to conflict –

no use of power

stress on no hierarchy, resistance to authority, equality (of input?), no hurting that of God

hesitancy in speaking out, to each other, in being clear about how to do it – diffident, tentative, reluctant to be seen to give advice. (contrast G7- belligerent)

no anger- anger is unquakerly, see OHP, and E6 on showing anger.

Session 2 – Response to the findings

Invite questions and clarification points.

Poll the meeting - how like your experience is this?

I recognise this as the organization I know

Don't know/ sometimes

It's not at all like this

Is there anything you would like to add to make the picture more like what you know?

Then into small groups of four or five to consider

a) Are you content with this picture?

b) Have you any explanations for how we got here?

**c) Would you want to change the picture in the future?
How?**

Feedback with flip chart sheets and compare.

Session 3 – Quaker coping methods and role models

Mainly information, but some thought by participants.

The following procedures were all mentioned in the interviews.

Small groups inc worship sharing, creative listening and
Clearness meetings (for conflict resolution)

Mediation

Standing committee (MM or GM)

Ad hoc group (from M for S etc)

Use of consultants (Q or non Q)

(which of these have you experienced? Did they 'work'? Would you add any?)

'Best examples of handling Q Conflict' - 4 examples from the interviews

Reframing – finding the helpful phrase which moves things on.

A business meeting where the drift changes.

Openness – putting things on the table (? Including emotions)

Talking about it (together, the actors)

(Think of your role model for conflict handling – Q or non - Q)

Here are five kinds of role model drawn from the interviews

Shock absorbers

Active questioners

Quiet diplomatist

Dancing dialogue

? Respectful assertiveness

(Is your role model one of these, or other?)

(Are the top 3 conflict managers rather than participants?)

**The idea of other shoes
And quote from 'slightly belligerent' G7**

If someone comes to you as an experienced Quaker and asks how they should handle a conflict they find themselves in, what would you say?

"The first thing you must do is on your own sit down and become that other person. Think of what it is he or she is demanding of you, or is trying to do, and think of his/her motives, what it means to him and her, and turn the whole thing round so you can see it from the other person's standpoint. Now how unreasonable is that? Are you still sure that yours is the only answer to the problem. And then with that insight that you get from that, gently choose the right moment to talk to this person, not argue just talk and sort of ask questions. Ask for his point of view, I've been thinking about what you said, is that what you meant? Is this what your motives were? And that is usually a great help actually. If it's more violent than that you know there's a real threat involved in it, then look at your own feelings, are you being too stubborn? If you know that the person is utterly wrong, try and discuss it with a third party, And it may be there's no solution. But I think the important thing is to get away from your own standpoint and try and see it from the other side of the fence."

Session 4 – Ourselves and others.

Ask participants to do self characterization – Please write a pen portrait of yourself in conflict – five lines or less- as written by somebody in your meeting. When there's a conflict Susan Robson

Then please write a pen portrait of yourself in conflict – five lines or less-as written by somebody in a different setting, your work, a hobby setting, your family, anything When there's a conflict (at work) Susan Robson.....

Was this easy or difficult to see yourself in different contexts?

Some alternative suggestions from non-Quaker settings, other times, other places. Some things that the contributors have valued in different contexts.

Being in a big group – conflicts can get lost

The counselling approach – includes honesty, self examination

Having a leader figure - ? arbitration CFP 1922

Speaking out – bluntly, about emotions, on sensitive subjects

Acting out - having a role gives authority to be firm

Formal exploration of difference, as for family court hearings.

Having a system for handling grievances – compare with William Penn/ Mennonite outline

Techniques from conflict resolution i.e." I statements"

**Why do we want to be part of the group – 'credit' & 'nourishment'
So is this the perfect group? See child protection issues.**

Ways of Identifying ourselves. What kind of person am I? In other times and other places Quakers have told the world the answer to this question by wearing a hat, the Quaker hat, and the EAPPI hat. Now there is an invisible Quaker hat which makes us think that we can tell in which ways we are like other people, and what we can expect from them. And that is the stuff in the first section. And in limited Quaker time that is what we want.

But we also identify ourselves by seeing how we are different from other people, and this is what comes into focus when we are in conflict. We each have our own shoes, all different shapes sizes and for different purposes, and often we are so needy for the nourishment which comes from being part of the group that we forget about exploring our differences. Can this mean that people get the impression that we only value them for how they confirm our position, rather than for what they are in themselves?

It may mean hard work and unpalatable truths to put ourselves in the picture, and feel someone else's shoes on our feet.

Two examples of this

Alison Leonard QFP 20.75

Don Bannister "I am not angered"

Session 5 – Reflective Researchers in Quaker Conflict

Co-operative working between leader and participants.

In the intervening period there will be

- 1.) A chance to reflect on what we have thought about today and see how it fits with your own experience in the next few months.
- 2) A chance to develop your own view and understanding, and add to that seen today. If it is different I will record that.

Outline the idea of (one hours)(not more than 1 page per month) dedicated reflection and recording per month for six months regarding conflict in 'Quaker time' (if you have access to it) or other time.

Bits about -

Using the 'pondering' self.

Using any other selves, from the self characterization

If you met again in six months time what questions would you want to ask each other?

Default questions

Some questions for participants in the Intervening period

- 1) How has your experience of any conflict compared with what you heard in the workshop?
- 2) Where have you yourself fitted in this picture?
- 3) What personal resources have you drawn on in considering this experience?
- 4) Does your reflection about conflict produce a desire for change, either in yourself or the culture?

How, if at all, will you explain this to your meetings?

Be clear you are not reporting on them, but on yourself.

Have you any further thoughts about anonymity?

Things to be worked out

- a) use of workbook – sheet per session, or e-mail .
- b) do you want to be able to contact each other as you progress, if so how, ? pairs, ?e-mail pairs, e-mail group, ?????
- c) do you want to meet together at the end?

At the end of the six months I will ask you to have another go at the five dilemmas and the pen-portraits.

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA

01484 845330

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September 25 2003

Dear Friends,

Researching Quakers Handling Conflict

Thankyou all very much for coming to work together at Carlton Hill last Saturday. It was very encouraging for me to learn of your interest in this subject and your willingness to take it forward.

I now enclose for you

- the group responses on the flipcharts in the morning
- a list of your contact addresses,
- your individual responses on the yellow sheets
- and overleaf, the questions for pondering over the next six months.

I will book an afternoon session at Carlton Hill, probably next April, when I have had a chance to examine next year's calendar. As soon as I have done that I will let you know the date, as I know some of you plan well in advance.

I look forward to hearing from you. E-mail is probably the easiest method of sending and receiving communications, for those of you that have it, but any kind of writing is fine as well.

All next week I'm away if you have any queries, but after that don't hesitate.

With good wishes,

Susan Robson

An invitation to ponder, between October 2003 and March 2004.

May I invite you to ponder on the questions below, and any other matters which seem relevant, between October 2003 and March 2004? I would suggest that once a month, perhaps towards the end, you take an hour or so to turn some of these ponderings into writing (not more than one page, please) and send them to me. If I do not hear from you for two months in succession I will contact you to ask if you have dropped out.

So here are the questions. Please do not treat them like a syllabus to be covered in full. They are just prompters from which you can select what interests you.

Your questions

Have you seen changing attitudes?

Have you seen transformation in meetings (even if conflict is still there)?

How has this conference affected you and have you changed or has your response changed?

Has your awareness changed (and of yourselves in response to conflict)?

My questions

How has your experience of any conflict compared with what you heard in the workshop?

Where have you yourself fitted in this picture?

What personal resources have you drawn on in considering this experience?

Does your reflection about conflict produce a desire for change, either in yourself or the culture?

Researching Quakers Handling Conflict – September 20 2003

Contents of the flipcharts constructed by small groups.

Sorry about the yellow paper, I'm running out of white.

Are you content with this picture?

Idea of being a 'good Quaker'

- induces insecurity
- gives unnecessary pressure to conform (similar to all organisations)
- friction because of people who have been there for a long time and are resistant to change or different ways. Meeting is seen by them as a 'sanctuary' and extended family. This puts off new people.
- Not being 'Quakerly' = human face

Discontent because Quakers are not addressing conflict in their own lives/ in meeting; it goes underground and festers.

Petty issues often lead to conflict because no discussion of grievances.

The picture is not always as depicted: power is sometimes accepted and seen as legitimate.

Avoidance of conflict is unhealthy and may put some people off joining.

It has concentrated on 'first' stage conflict. There are later stages.

Insufficient acknowledgement of the creative side of conflict.

Absence of recognition of our fear of conflict and therefore how to handle it.

Do we accept this picture – yes.

Have you any explanations for how we got here?

We are a normal set of rugged individualists.

We have unresolved conflicts in our meetings because we are afraid of hurting people.

We have not faithfully followed the Gospel Order of early Friends.

A diagram showing a spectrum of tension from 'calm' to 'conflict' with Quakers in the middle.

Reducing tension, but then we lack drive.

Emphasis on the 'tradition', the 'culture'.

/continued overleaf

The Peace Testimony has evolved to forbid any clash between individuals/ groups – intellectual, verbal as well as physical.

Confusion of idealism, ethical position and feelings.

We exclude people who have skills and qualities which could help us manage conflict better.

Q's are middle class ('nice' people) (but there are bullies).

Denial of conflict ' we are all equal' – but there is an unofficial hierarchy of knowledge.

Self satisfied. Don't want to rock the boat.

Believe other people's perceptions that we are 'wonderful, peace loving'.

Would you want to change the picture in the future? How?

Achieving more openness.

Better formal and informal communication.

More involvement of everybody (clique avoidance).

Collective learning to 'speak truth in love'. Skills training.

Yes we should be open with each other through talking, listening and responding.

Making available counselling, legal, banking advice.

Would we actually go to another Friend and say 'what you have said or written has hurt me or other people'? Would we be prepared for this to be said to us?

Yes.

"Peace is a process"

It is important to accept conflict (and welcome) – diversity, opportunity, inclusion.

How? Talk about it when there is no immediate problem.

One person behaving in a different way can make a difference. You model.

Run assertiveness courses. Bring back voting. More trust + honesty + truth.

Acceptance that anger can be a positive emotion.

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield, HD7 6DA

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smr@fish.co.uk

October 21 2003

Dear Friends,

Researching Quakers In Conflict

When we met on September 20 you said that you would like to meet together again after you had finished your pondering. I have now booked the room at Carlton Hill for the afternoon of May 15 starting at 2pm. This seemed to be the only one they had which did not coincide with something else. I hope the date will suit at least some of you – so please consult next year's diary and put it in if you can. I have been thinking about this a bit and have come to the conclusion that if you are to use your time profitably there may be a need for some structure or programme to the afternoon. If any of you have any ideas about ways that this could be done please do offer them, and if there are too many we can try and combine some. I'll ask you again about this nearer the time.

Some of you have already sent me some reflections, for which thank you. Others have explained why their contribution may be a little delayed, and hopefully others are pondering and will let me have something round about the end of October. If you are sharing some other activity with me, for instance on a committee with me, please separate out your research reflections from any other communications with a distinct heading. I've already shown an ability to muddle things, and wish to avoid this in future!

Thank you all for your help.

In friendship,

Susan Robson

Susan Robson

Cix

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield, HD7 6DA

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November 19 2004

Dear Friends,

It is now two months since our meeting together in Leeds on September 20 and I am feeling the need to write to you. In my reading I have discovered that what we are doing together is called collaborative action research, and I feel a need to enquire about how some of you see your place in that collaboration. I am becoming aware, from talking to one or two of you, how very difficult it is to find the time or the energy to actually get round to doing any pondering writing. I am wondering whether there is any way I can help with this? No, I won't clerk your meeting or mind your grandchildren, but would it be helpful, if you are wanting to do it, to receive a reminder/prompt letter each month? Or is there anything else I could do? Or that you could do for each other?

Some of you have said you cannot do the pondering writing but would like to come on May 15th.

Some of you have said you cannot come on May 15.

Some of you have sent me pondering writing with promises of more, and it's all very interesting.

Some of you have withdrawn altogether because of other pressures.

Some of you have told me that you intend to send me pondering writing as soon as you find time or a certain event has happened.

Some of you have not said anything at all, and these are the people I would most like to hear from and know if I can offer help to?

So if you are in that last group do please get in touch with me.

One of you has reminded me that I have not given you a copy of the Don Bannister poem as I promised – so here it is.

Please don't think that if you missed the first month's contribution you can't still join in with any kinds of contributions between now and the end of March 2004, any timing is possible. I'm wondering which you are finding the most difficult: the pondering, the writing, or actually saying to me 'no, I'm not going to send you anything'?

With good wishes in friendship

Susan Robson

Cx

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA

01484 845330

smr@fish.co.uk

January 6th 2004

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year seems trite, but good wishes as you go.

This is to update you all in your group progress as ponderers. Overall you are not doing too badly at all, but some of you may feel a little in need of encouragement and appreciation as you struggle to ponder. It seems to be proving surprisingly hard. It would be helpful to know what you are finding be difficult. Some of you have told me already!

It has been suggested that I should make it clear that pondering can cover non-Quaker activities. Indeed it can, and that might be most illuminating, so feel free to include whatever catches your interest.

Those of you who are still aspiring to deliver but haven't made it yet, please let me have anything you produce by the end of March. That will be the closing date as far as this research project is concerned, though I have a slightly uneasy feeling that actually this may go on for the rest of my life.

So please, I'm open for the regular contributions that are coming from some of you, and will gladly accept any irregular ones between now and the end of March. It is clear that our group will be smaller on May 15 than it was last September so I will book the smaller room at Carlton Hill Meeting House. However, I think we will have things to hear from each other and will welcome ideas about how we might do this in a coherent way. Since I hope that much of it will be listening I will try and tape record the conversation, so there is a record of it and all your work is not wasted. I hope that recording will be acceptable to you. Let me know if it isn't and I will have to ask which of you can do shorthand.

With all good wishes, and thanks for your continuing collaboration.

In friendship,

Susan

Susan

Cxi

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, HD7 6DA

01484 845330

smr@fish.co.uk

March 3 2004

Dear Friends,

Research into Quakers Handling Conflict

It is nearly six months since we met together at Carlton Hill so I am writing to you all about your final 'ponderings'. Please don't worry about what you have or haven't done up till now, but do try and contribute to this last written roundup, by the end of March.

May I suggest that you try and ponder on something specific to you – it may be that you have an unfinished pondering to complete, and/or that you would like to look back at the questions we concocted in September, and/or that you would like to reflect on problems you have had in actually doing it. Thoughts from you on this last point would be particularly helpful. I am quite clear now that if I were doing the workshop again I would try and set up the follow up differently, but I don't know how. Ideas welcome.

In addition please could you have another go at the 'five dilemmas' exercise. I enclose a sheet for this. You do have your original copy of this, but I would ask you not to refresh your memory from the September version before doing the March version. You will also find another sealed sheet, which has its own instructions when you open it. Please have a try at this as well and then return all three things to me.

Please can you tell me also whether you hope to be with us on May 15 (2 o'clock at Carlton Hill, Leeds again). Some of you have already said you can or cannot come, but I do need to know who to send the calling letter for that day to. I am beginning to get some ideas of what I would like to hear from you about on that day, but your ideas are more important so let me know about those.

In friendship

Susan Robson

Cxii

Two Dilemmas this time.

This exercise is in response to the feeling of my supervisors that these Quakers are 'too nice'. They requested an 'ironic viewpoint'. Like me you may wonder what this might be, but lets try the following, which is the sort of thing we used to do on social work training courses.

Please pick any two of the five dilemmas and write a 'how not to do it' response. Try and include as many ways of behaving, thinking and feeling as you can, but these should be ways that you would not recommend in handling a conflict, in fact ways that you would hope people would avoid, but you may have observed. Where the question ends 'What would you do?' you might like to address it outwards and say 'Definitely do not.....'

PONDERERS REUNITED!

This is to confirm that all those who attended the Conflict Workshop on September 20 2003 are welcome to meet together again

2.00, MAY 15 2004, CARLTON HILL FMH, LEEDS

So far, there will be 10 of us, and there are several items on the agenda, but if you want to add anything let me know. Even if you do not have an item there will be opportunity for you to say whatever you want to say.

This confirmation is going to all those who have said they will come, and to those who have not yet decided. Those who have said they are unable to come will not receive it, but may get some news afterwards.

**Susan Robson, 9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA. 01484 845330
smr@fish.co.uk**

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May 25 2004

Dear Friends,

Conflict Handling among Quakers

Probably penultimate communication. As some of you will know we had a lively (fairly) afternoon at Carlton Hill on May 15. I have now transcribed the discs, which came over clearly, and so there is an interesting record with all sorts of pointers to further exploration. If any of you who were present would like a copy I can send it by e-mail or post (33 pages I think). It would probably be a little difficult for those of you who were not there to understand, but if you are keen get in touch with me and I can add some explanation. That is if those who were present do not object – let me know if you do.

I'm now closing the door on further information for this project, though I suspect items will continue to come through the letter box and I will keep peeping through the window at what is happening. When I get to write up the bit which concerns all your work I will let you all know and if you want to you can receive copies of that bit. As I said on May 15 I will check with you individually if you are willing for any anonymised contributions to be used in that process. That will probably be in a few months time.

Don't feel left out if you don't get asked about a quotation. That doesn't mean you haven't contributed. Everybody who has taken part in this in whatever way over the last eight months has contributed something to an immensely rich and complex store of information about conflict handling, which I expect to dip into again and again over the next ten years.

So thank you. I am in your debt. But I hope to meet you again in different places.

With good wishes,

Susan Robson

PS for those who were there on May 15. We all appeared to accept that $16 \times 20 = 400$. It is actually 320, which someone had said in a quiet voice, but did not bother to repeat. There's a moral in there somewhere – or several.

9 Garfield Place, Marsden, Huddersfield HD7 6DA

01484 845330

December 3rd 2004

Dear Friends,

Researching into Quaker Conflict Handling

I am writing to tell you where the research you shared in has got to, and possibly to ask for your permission to quote you. Some of you I have already been in touch with about this and you have already responded.

In my writing there will be chapter based on your words, at the workshop in September, or May, and on the pondering writing you sent to me. Some of these are very small quotes, some of which were made in the group. They will be anonymised (e.g. W2 said), and I don't intend to ask each one of you for specific permission to use them. But if you are worried about this get in touch with me and I will tell you what I am quoting from you.

There are some pieces which are larger in size, and though anonymised are all the work of one person. In these cases I will copy these for you on to the back of this sheet. Please look at them and let me know if you are not willing for them to be used. If you do not wish the words to be used I can summarise the gist of it, but obviously your words have more life. If I do not hear from you I will assume you are willing for them to be used.

Everything you all did is part of the overall consideration and has made a contribution to the final thinking. There is so much that I cannot quote from it all. Some of the quotations have been selected on the grounds of being the shortest example of something – so please do not feel that your contribution has not been taken into account. It has.

The writing up is going very slowly, but I hope it will be completed by mid January. It seems as if there will be various ways for the findings to be made public. When I have got the Conclusion into final form, probably after the viva, I will send copies to everybody who took part.

In friendship

Susan

Susan Robson

AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING AMONG QUAKERS

APPENDIX D

Appendix D

Pondering writing from W10

Contribution 1 21/10/2003

Quaker Handling Conflict Notes September/ October

I am puzzled by the questions around change. I did not come to the conference in order to bring this about, but appreciated the opportunity it offered to consider the role (or not) of conflicts in our meetings/life as Quakers, and in other aspects of my own life. But I don't really look on the (mis) management of conflict as a problem to be solved, more as an aspect of our lives together.

Since the conference I have had the chance to observe the potential emergence of conflict at a Meeting for Worship for Business. Those present expressed clearly different in practice, opposing views. I observed that the Clerk responded by drafting a minute which simply ignored the differences expressed. Instead the minute focused on the area of agreement. I found this disquieting; it effectively reframed the issue under discussion. While it may have been appropriate in this situation, in other contexts it could be seen as a failure to address an issue where this was needed. There are clearly implications for agenda-setting! What is legitimate material?

When differences of opinion (such as this) are expressed in Quaker Business Meetings, it calls into question whether our hearts and minds are open to the Spirit, which must (presumably) speak with one voice. Where parties hold differing views, all cannot be attuned to it. Therefore a) one or more of us is falling short, by not attending to the Spirit. Or b) (worse!) maybe the Holy Spirit is simply not present at all and the whole basis on which our meetings are run is flawed. And if this applies to our Business Meetings, could this also be true of our (devotional) Meetings for Worship?

What about handling conflict outside meetings, and in our non Quaker relationships? I think there are some norms of behaviour which apply in exchanges between Quakers, which the individuals would not adhere to elsewhere. E.g if something in the Meeting has not been done, I am more likely to feel responsible for this, even if I have no clear responsibility in that area. I think that relates to a sense of corporate responsibility for the life of the Meeting. Outside e.g. at work, I would be more likely to say something like "ask X why it's happened/ not happened". But in a close relationship I would probably be more conciliatory. Generally, I much prefer to avoid confrontation. Do I behave like this because I am a Quaker? Or am I drawn to Quakers because I feel more comfortable with the non confrontational (evasive?) way in which they handle difference/conflict. Either way I think both I and the Society need a wider repertoire of behaviour for managing this. This need not involve trading obscenities or duelling.

To be continued.

Nov 20 2003

Communication between W 10 and SMR after the latter's general letter in November. This is an interwoven e-mail. W 10 wrote first, SMR's responses shown in italics.

Dear Susan,

Thankyou for your letter. You sound despondent. I think your research may turn out to be very useful – although that may not be the main objective!

Thankyou for this message. Yes, I suppose I am a bit despondent, but trying hard to think it's all interesting learning! Actually I am realising how widely useful the research may be, not just to Quakers, as my viewpoint enlarges and changes.

Quakers handling conflict. Just in Quaker meetings? I wonder if you are implicitly or explicitly restricting the scope of your enquiry. I think what I wrote included my experiences (as a Quaker) but not just in a Quaker setting e.g. at work, other groups I'm involved with etc. If reflection in these contexts is relevant to your research, it may be helpful to spell that out to those involved.

This explicitness is a good idea and I will try and think how best to include it. I don't want to overload people with nagging correspondence, but perhaps there will be several good ideas and I can send them out together. Thanks for your thoughtful help.

Just a thought. Good luck.

'W10'

March 2004

Dear Susan,

I am sorry to have been such an irregular correspondent. But I imagine I am not alone. Here are my responses to the dilemmas, with further final 2 revisions. I would like to come to the meeting on 15th May.

With good wishes, W10.

Reflecting 6 months later on the questions posed in September 2003, I am disappointed not to have experienced greater change. While I was not anticipating my own meeting to behave differently, I had hoped to become more pro-active myself in addressing several shortcomings in how I handle conflict. I expected this at least peripherally to affect my life in the meeting.

More specifically, what has and hasn't happened:

- My own Quaker meeting has grown with several 'new' people attending regularly. Differences of views and opinions which I am sure exist among us have not become more explicit. Does this matter?

At a practical level maybe not: we probably negotiate existing differences without being aware of them. On one occasion we agreed to host an event which was not very popular and sounded profoundly dull to me. I wondered if I should have done more to question its value when first raised.

On a spiritual level the lack of opportunity to explore difference may actually matter more. I have found the Hearts and Minds prepared course, now in its third month, unadventurous and unchallenging. Possibilities for conflict have been carefully structured out. I am particularly concerned about this as I encouraged the meeting to undertake it and co-lead it. This raises the question of how far the course can contribute to individual and corporate growth.

- The September conference heightened my awareness of conflict and its management and I found this helpful. My work as development officer for a large voluntary organisation involves a considerable amount of relationship building and negotiation. From time to time I am therefore faced with antagonisms, have to inform and persuade and chair involved discussions. In this I am able (sometimes) to build on my existing skill and experience of working in situations involving overt or implicit conflict. Those I currently encounter are of two types.

Sometimes I am coming from a reasonably well defined position e.g. acting as an advocate for a particular project. Then I can be more single minded, and use a number of tactics to achieve 'success' defined by me. Sometimes this is successful, sometimes not. As I can think reasonably self-critically, I can at least start to identify what has gone wrong and how I could (learn to) do better next time.

However, fairly often, I am guiding a process involving a number of people, where the desired end point is not defined, and I need to identify and facilitate a process to move forward. I feel less competent here and would need some skills development to work more effectively. I do feel that 'Quaker values', as well as other participatory methods provide some useful guidance to me in tackling these situations.

I would stress that I find situations which place me in both the roles above particularly problematic. For instance I currently co-chair a large working group whose members are all interested in the development under discussion, but hold differing views on priority and process, and vary greatly in the knowledge, skills, and time they can offer. I have my own strongly-held views, which I need to advocate representing my agency, but as chair I need to allow equal weight to those of others.

- As a result of some of the above, I resolved at the New Year to be more open about what I thought and felt, and worry less about offending other people/ making them angry. I am not sure how successful I have been although I can point to one example in the last week, but I still feel it is worth pursuing. Whatever happened to those

Friends who "can seem rather brusque, without the conventions of flattery and half truths" (QFP 12.01) In this I look to clarify where I stand, to witness the truth as I understand it, and on occasion to challenge other people to behave differently.

Finally, how could the (research) exercise have been structured differently? A fair degree of consensus seemed to emerge in September's meeting about current shortcomings in Quakers handling conflict. Based on this, we might have negotiated a shared vision of meetings where difference was more recognised and worked through, rather than ignored. From this could (have?) emerged individual or collective action plans to bring it about, and a shared support structure. It is not too late to move in this sort of direction.

Div

**AN EXPLORATION OF CONFLICT HANDLING
AMONG QUAKERS**

APPENDIX E

Extracts from 'Current Account'

December 2001

4.26pm December 18 2001

I make this document as the first thing in my new Project G, with my newly installed NVivo.

I am now approximately three months behind my schedule - what has delayed me?

- 1) Delay in finding out about NVivo. Could charitably be put down to Graham Gibbs falling off a mountain.
- 2) The pc lab at Huddersfield University being closed for annual turnover for several weeks.
- 3) The conversion of my transcriptions of the interviews from a Mac format to PC format - three weeks before arranging to have them scanned to CD.
- 4) Finding a suitable computer which could save my work in the University as h drives not installed on the ones in the PC lab.
- 5) Transfer to the PC lab once h drives installed, but my lack of knowledge of the shared system resulted in me saving things in a very odd way, so that they were then lost when staff attempted to untangle them.

However, through all this I became more and more convinced that I wanted to use NVivo, and therefore I have purchased and installed my own single user educational discount copy at the cost of £305. It would have been helpful to have been told of this option earlier on. However, the reference manual is more helpful for my needs at the moment than anything else and I will stick by its letter and hope for no more mistakes.

I have now entered all 25 project documents in.

19/12 /01

Everything working well so far. I have now edited four of the documents in the document browser, to get rid of the glitches caused by the optical scanning process. This is more successful than previously now I have read the reference manual about how to edit in the browser. At the end of each document I enter in the attributes for that document.

20/12/01

I have now edited and made attributes for the first 8 transcripts.

Some thoughts came to me last evening about some themes which seem to be emerging as I browse through the data. It may be worth noting these although they will require evidence, and will be subject to change.

These themes, dimensions, contradictions, tensions, paradoxes (what are they?) are :

silence and articulacy

equality and authority/power

conflict resolution and conflict avoidance (personal and in the system)

individuality and accountability

End of day: have now edited and done attributes for all 25 interviews.

21/12/01

Have just made my first backup to the zip disk, but will continue working in main project G

22/12/01

Now about to start making some nodes for coding. Though I deny making a template, I have to admit there seem to be certain affinities to that. How have I arrived at that position?

Some time ago while waiting to come to work with NVivo I read through all the interview transcriptions. In the left margin I noted all sections which seemed likely to be interesting or relevant. In the right margin I noted ideas or threads which seemed to be emerging which had some common applicability. These I noted on index cards. It was striking how these ideas became less as I proceeded through the interviews. In the first couple of interviews they came thick and fast, by the time I had reached the tenth they had virtually stopped. Presumably this would have happened if I had started at 25 instead of 1. [The pencil marks which were the basis of this first emerging coding basis were rubbed out when the transcripts went to be scanned to CD.] I then dealt the cards out into groupings, where threads seemed to have a connection. At the time I thought I was trying to keep it simple but I wonder now if it is too detailed and complex. It can be altered as I go along.

What I am going to enter now is the coding outline made from arranging those cards.

This consists of

several free nodes

three tree node systems 1) about the organization 2) about conflict within the organization 3) about individuals

I may also add in at least one case node to collect information about a particular incident.

This is coding to sort out the content. When that has been done I will give further consideration to broad and underlying themes.

Have now entered all the node system and coded the first interview all through. In the process I found I needed to add three more nodes, and then another one.

Coding whole interviews at a time seems to go quite quickly, but it is difficult to code to two nodes, like Examples and Case node, at the same time. I am stopping half way through g3, but some of it may need checking through again especially for the last point, but I am tired now and getting slower and slower.

28.12.01

Five and a half more interviews coded today. Gradually getting more fluent at the double coding i.e same material to two or more nodes. Even then I realise there are bits I have not coded in previous interviews and go back to them. It is also interesting that there seems to be nothing to put in some nodes; this will need proper exploration when the basic coding is completed.

29.12.01

I've made another node today, a sibling of Procedures, in the conflict response tree, which I have called 'Reactions - informal' to contain all the material about how people think conflict might be handled that does not include formal procedures. Copied this material from the Procedures node to the Reactions node. Now I need to remove it from the procedures node as well. (No I don't, this has happened automatically.) Now completed coding interview G9.

Have now coded up to G13. The nodes seem to be wobbling a little. 'Recognition' became a child node to 'role models' and a tree version of the free 'unQuakerly' appeared.

30.12.01

Now coded to the end of G16. Getting increasingly doubtful about what I have done. Keep thinking I have missed subjects and items to code in previous interviews and then finding it is not so. Wonder whether it might be helpful to write a retrospective summary of the main points which seem to emerge out of each interview.

31.12.01

Back up copy made to zip disk - today's date.

February 2002

03. & 04. 02.02

Printed out all the node memos. Then drafted out the themes/ tensions/ paradoxes which seem to underlie the material from the interviews. These are in a very loosely woven diagram on a separate piece of paper. Then it struck me that these findings should be related to the research questions. This seems possible and I will draft the piece for Viv etc on that basis. While printing out I kept finding little pieces that I didn't seem to have coded at all, or which needed to be coded elsewhere. I now expect this to continue in the next phase of presentation. It is interesting to note that there is more in my head than the NVivo system.

Does it make sense to draft the paper as an NVivo memo? No, not now I have printed out the node memos.

07.02.02

Three days drafting the paper which is about halfway through. Yesterday read a note from Pam Lunn on Quaker B about Ben Pink Dandelion's work on 'Seeker C' types, those who prefer to seek forever rather than to find, and the prevalence of the 'absolute perhaps' in modern Quakerism, i.e. uncertainty is the one absolute. This

chimes in very much with my own thinking about equality - hesitancy, which seems to be coming so strongly out of the interview data. Hastily e-mailed Pam for the reference, and got more academic ones from Ben, only to find that I had indeed read the book which Pam mentions (Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming, Dandelion BP, Gwyn D, Peat T, Curlew Productions and Woodbrooke College, 1998). I had a very vague memory of the contents once I had re-read them, but I don't think the memory influenced my interpretation of the data, rather the other way round - the data made me notice the idea that had been out there all the time.

In Myers- Briggs terms this is of course IN.

11.02.02

Have just finished the draft of the analysis paper. In doing this I decided to address the research questions and objectives (seems obvious when you think of it). This was interesting when I came to do it because I found I was drawing from all over the documents and nodes, not in the neat little patterns which I had put things into NVivo. But if I hadn't gone through that process I wouldn't have known so much what there was or where to find it. When I have reached a fairly final version of the paper I will turn it into a document and import it as a memo.

12.02.02

Have just about got a package ready for presentation for Feb 27th. There's something simmering in my mind about shared responsibility being something we do in a group, to make us feel better, but as individuals we do not take responsibility, in fact as individuals we guard our irresponsibility because in no way do we feel it right to assert ourselves. This will need further exploration. I am aware there is a lot more stuff in the interview data which is not in the 6000 words of summarised analysis.

26.02.02

Have not been working with NVivo while I prepare the papers for Feb 27th. Have just read the last entry and contrasted that with something I have just read in Plous about social loafing, and how we actually take less responsibility when decision making in a group. These ideas need further exploration. But now I am going to go back to the interview data and see what evidence I can find for a 'Buffy' effect. This is following Viv Burr's presentation on Buffy the Vampire slayer and Sartre - arguing among other things that it is only relationships with a 'negative' thread which are interesting. Are relationships among Friends needed to be so positive that they are dull like the one between Buffy and her boyfriend Riley? Interestingly a couple of days after the presentation there was a mention in Quaker-B of some respected Friend (? in the USA) who admitted to a predilection for S and M.

August 2004

7 August 2004

Had a little try with the Model Explorer. Could be quite useful. Should try and do some more.

But mainly now trying to code all the stuff that is in the W set. It's a bit slippery trying to know which is in which bit and make sure it is all in. I have had to add one or two bits that had been transcribed to disc and then not imported into NVivo. And also there is one bit from W2 which must have come as an attachment, but is only in

hard copy. Or perhaps it only came in hard copy. It all seems to be slithering about. Perhaps I should have given more attention to sorting and combining at early stages. I have done it in too many small bits as the reports have come in.

Made some nodes having looked through and worked out themes, but now seem to be coding into only a few of these. See what it's like when I've finished.

8 August 2004

Having all the W documents in a set makes it easier when working through to code. You can just go straight down the column.

9 August 2004

All morning finishing coding of Ws and May 15. Doesn't feel very satisfactory. Some of the nodes have nothing or very little in them, others have enormous slabs. Decided to change things a bit and work on the Definitely Do Nots, puzzling how to do this when I wondered if I had already done some coding or some memos. Thank goodness I checked as there are several memos and a compilation memo. So I don't have to re-invent the wheel!

Friday 13 August 2004

Hope this is not the day it all crashes. Having layered memos on memos, and then printed some out, and then added some bits to the memos, I'm getting a bit confused. But I am making progress with my writing.

Saturday 14th August

Tried to work straight from node to Chapter. This does not work. Had to make a memo from the node, and then the writing is nearly done.

Monday 23rd August

Managed most of the transfer of words to Chapter 10. Useful to use search to dip in and out and see that there is just one mention of 'peaceable kingdom'. Now going to look at W8 and W12 documents to see if they can be edited to include as examples.

I've learnt to use colour to mark up a document like this - what a useful talent!

And I've just experimented and found I can copy from an imported document into a memo like this. How late to learn.

List of Nodes in Project G

Free Nodes

Alcohol
 Anonymity
 Jokes

Reflexivity
 Sample
 Sexism

Social Issues
 Subgroups
 UnQuakerly

Tree Nodes

Organization

Purpose

Power/hierarchy
 Habits
 Stereotypes/ style

Boundaries

Rules
 Language
 Attenders
 Secrecy/ confidentiality
 Accountability

Business Method

What works
 What doesn't work
 Clerk

Decision Rule

Silence

Time Space Effects

Contrasts
 Conflict Resolution out there

Conflict

Examples

Thresholds
 Wider action

Responses

Observation
 Role Models
 Recognition
 Procedures
 Extracts
 Reactions informal

Attitudes

Pos and neg views
 Outcome vs relationship
 Anger/ temper

Individuals

Background

Wide experience
 Quaker families
 Skill training

Individual in the group
 Communication

Hesitancy

Articulacy/ explicit

Counselling

Animal Typology

Emotions

ALSO 1 Case Node

G3's incident

Unquakerly - memo 26.01.02

This may be one of the most generative nodes in the whole series. All the contributors had heard this phrase; many admitted to using it; some had already used it in the interview before it was focused on; few commended it. Most contributors stressed that this was used often in a joky or teasing way and was rarely taken seriously. Exceptions are noted below.

The threads which have emerged are

Moderation

summed up perhaps by

K3 there tends to be a low key aspect to Quakerism.

or in a less low key mode by

g6 It seems to be deemed unQuakerly to be passionate about something. You're supposed to be very monotonal in things, understated.

This can refer to the wearing of bright colours (tongue sometimes in cheek), perceived excesses in consumption (see alcohol), the puffing up of individuals to celebrity, and expressing yourself too strongly

g1 I suppose you can express your opinion forcibly can't you but doing it too forcibly would be in an unQuakerly way

Perhaps a subsection of this would be Drinking and Gambling

k2 Open the 2nd unQuakerly bottle and giggle

g16 I don't particularly like drink, but you could hear somebody say that's not a very Quakerly thing to do, or to have drink available. Such a paradox in a way is that we accept drinking in our own homes and yet don't accept it in our [premises].

g12 there's only one thing worse than taking sugar in your tea and that's probably smoking. Not Quakerly and then there's drinking and all the rest of things that human flesh is heir to.

g8 We let to various organizations and the Women's Institute wanted to have a raffle with their cup of tea. One or two Friends thought well perhaps that wasn't really too awful, but on the whole it was thought to be unQuakerly.

g23 I remember a correspondence in The Friend, I've personally never bought a lottery ticket in my life but this Friend writing in The Friend was supporting the idea. Much good comes of it and it started a very interesting correspondence, but I remember in my own meeting several Friends were saying 'did you read that, it was most unQuakerly'.

A third strong thread is Expression of Anger

g24 If I was being angry about something. I'd say to myself oh that's not Quakerly.

g20 it's unQuakerly to show anger, and it's unQuakerly to have an argument, and it's unQuakerly to wear lipstick.

g14 someone has said oh that's rather unQuakerly, giving the impression that somehow as a Friend you mustn't display anger or irritation or temper. Be always very cool and calm - something I find rather hard at times.

One aspect of the expression of anger may be speaking plainly. The following extract shows the variable use of unQuakerly

g2 I wrote him a terse letter and another person in the Quakers said I was unQuakerly for speaking plainly. .
And I think that was unQuakerly because there was no plain speaking and no honest dealing.

or, as was said 'unquakerly' can mean

g11 Frivolously and bluntly anything they don't like!

Use of the term

Less frivolously the use of the term evokes strong feelings

K4 I mean I think that's a really bad thing to say, it's so like I am better than you, I have the right to judge.I react badly when I hear it used

g2 you see how 'unQuakerly' is used as a weapon really.

g12 it's a phrase used to make other Quakers feel uncomfortable.

g20 it's saying you're not one of us if you do that.

Dishonesty

This received far fewer mentions but is nevertheless important.

K6 I do know that the way it was done was most unQuakerly - it was put across that the person concerned had desired to take early retirement which was far from the truth.

K1 from my upbringing from my mother, dishonesty of any kind would be unQuakerly.

It should perhaps be noted that K1's mother was not a Quaker, and impressionistic soundings among non-Quakers about the meaning of unQuakerly produce some support for the notion that dishonesty comes high on their list.

There is also one specific use of Quakerly, and there may be others in passing though I have not noted them at the moment.

g18 Yeah I think there are contexts where I would care for it, where I would think, I think I would like it better in a more positive, turned positively, rather than saying something's unQuakerly, saying to someone, I've used this to commend someone for some really perceptive quite hidden kindness, that I thought they did that in very Quakerly manner, which was meant as a 'well done you'