

MODERN TESTIMONIES: THE APPROACH OF QUAKERS TO SUBSTANCE USE AND GAMBLING

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ABSTRACT

This article outlines a study into Quaker attitudes and behaviours in relation to the testimony of abstinence and moderation and that regarding gambling and speculation. The background to the Quaker testimonies is summarised, and relevant research in the substances/gambling fields about denominational influences on personal behaviours is briefly outlined. The questions raised by recent Quaker scholarship represented are considered, and the study results are outlined in relation to the theory of Quaker double-culture (Dandelion 1996; Dandelion and Collins 2008) and the suggestions of Scully regarding virtue ethics among Quakers (2002, 2008). It is suggested that whereas the liberal belief culture (Dandelion 1996, 2008) and the spiritual/belief diversity within Quakerism (Pilgrim 2008) have some fragmenting effects theologically, in relation to these testimonies, these diversifying elements are counter-balanced by core (deontological) values. These values are spiritually based and widely held among Friends, and are perceived as being specifically Quaker. It is argued that diversifying and unifying factors are thus held in tension in a way that has some distinctive effects, both in terms of individuals and in relation to the denominational profile. It is further argued that the results of this balance are largely benign in terms of substance using and gambling behaviours, and that this may have useful applications beyond a Quaker context.

KEYWORDS

Quaker; testimony; substance use; gambling; spiritual; distinctive profile

INTRODUCTION

POSITION AS RESEARCHER

The starting point for this investigation was my appointment as Project Leader by Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD), which is a Quaker charity with a long-standing concern about these subjects. This gave me 'insider status', as part of the broad group on which I was conducting the research (Becker 1963; Krieger 1985). Dandelion (1996) has classified insider research that is overt (known to all participants) into two categories:

‘insider to the group’ (e.g. Hobbs 1989) and ‘insider to the context’ (e.g. Heilman 1976). Prior to my appointment I had no previous connection with Quakers, though I have subsequently developed a personal interest in Quakerism. Although I had many of the characteristics of the insider, then, I was an insider to the context rather than to the full range of experiences of the group that I was researching. During the research investigation and analysis, I was positioned on the research discourse, the professional discourse, and that of the enquirer about Quakerism. The result is, of course, a composite, but I have tried to make these strands as clear as possible.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THESE TESTIMONIES

The Quaker testimony on the use of alcohol dates back to George Fox and the beginnings of Quakerism. Fox’s journal shows him drinking ‘small beer’ only in so far as it was necessary to quench his thirst, and disassociating himself from a situation where others who ‘professed’ to be religious began to drink to excess:

And when we had drunk a glass apiece, they began to drink healths and called for more drink, agreeing together that he that would not drink should pay all. I was grieved that any that made profession of religion should offer to do so...wherefore I rose up to be gone, and putting my hand into my pocket, I took out a groat and laid it down upon the table before them and said, ‘If it be so, I’ll leave you’. So I went away... (Nickalls 1952: 2–3).

There is also early evidence of care being taken to avoid smoking tobacco in public places, in order to avoid ‘the appearance of evil’:

It being discoursed that the common excess of smoking tobacco is inconsistent with our holy profession, this meeting adviseth that such as have occasion to make use of it do take it privately, neither in their labour nor employment, nor by the highways, nor in alehouses, nor elsewhere too publicly. (Minutes of Hardshaw Monthly Meeting 1691: 17 ix)

Gambling, too, was avoided, for some similar reasons: ‘Are friends careful to avoid all vain sports, places of diversion, gaming, and all unnecessary frequenting of alehouses or taverns, excess in drinking, and intemperance of every kind?’ (London Yearly Meeting 1783: 196).

In the nineteenth century, Quakers were strongly associated with the Temperance movement, and many eschewed alcohol completely. By the twentieth century, the emphasis tended back towards moderation rather than total abstinence, and *Quaker Faith and Practice* gives advice on the use of substances under the heading of ‘abstinence and moderation’: ‘In view of the harm done by the use of alcohol, tobacco and other habit-forming drugs, consider whether you should limit your use of them or refrain from using them altogether’ (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995: 1.02.40).

As regards content, the Quaker testimony on gambling and speculation has modulated somewhat less than that on substances over the last two centuries, and a consistent stance against any gambling has been maintained: ‘Resist the desire to acquire possessions or income through unethical investment, speculation, or games of chance’ (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995: 1.02).

The advent of the National Lottery brought gambling into particular focus for Friends: a public statement of opposition to it was issued in 1995 and reaffirmed in 2004. This gave the testimony on gambling a higher profile, both among Friends and more widely.

STUDIES OF OTHER DENOMINATIONS

Evidence in the field of substance use and gambling shows that both behaviours are related to religious affiliation (Jessor and Jessor 1977). Research in Christian denominations indicates that those with strong standards that proscribe these behaviours tend to show higher rates of abstinence and lower rates of engagement in these activities. Protestant groups (which have proscriptive traditions) tend to show lower rates of substance use and gambling than people in society generally, while Catholicism (which does not strongly proscribe either alcohol use or gambling) tends to show patterns that are more congruent with wider society (Rooney 1977; Jolly and Orford 1983).

The evidence relating to the problem use of substances or problematic gambling is a little more variable. Some studies suggest that among those who depart from the standard of abstinence in proscriptive sects, problem levels can be higher—and it has been suggested that ‘normlessness’ may be one reason for this (Mizruchi and Perrucci 1962). Other studies have found lower rates of problems and dependencies among such sects, as well as lower rates of use (Krohn *et al.* 1982).

Much debate has taken place about the causes and processes that might be involved in the religious engagement–use relationships. It is thought that individual adherents internalise the moral normative standard through the teaching of religious leaders, texts and sermons, and that this will be reinforced through social interactions that reward conformity and provide sanctions against non-conformity. Sanctions could also include internal psychological processes such as self-criticism and guilt when the adherent departs from the norm (Nelsen and Rooney 1982). This framework would suggest that a strong standard of prohibition results in both less use and less misuse for the majority of adherents. An alternative theory (posed by Mullen *et al.* 1996) suggests that religious groups with strongly proscriptive standards tend to ‘lose’ those people who do not conform to the religious norm because those individuals cannot contain the emotional discomfort—or cognitive dissonance—that is caused by the awareness of the gap between their own behaviour and the denominational stance. In this reading, groups such as Catholics do not necessarily have standards or interactions that result in generally higher levels of use and misuse, but are simply more likely to retain adherents who would tend to leave other sects.

Finally, it has also been suggested that asceticism—a distrust of worldly and sensual activities or the pursuit of pleasure—may be a key element in the relationship between religiosity and lower substance use and gambling, particularly as regards Protestant sects (Burkett and White 1974). It has also been suggested that spirituality (Miller 1998), rather than religious engagement as such, may be a significant element both in prevention and recovery from substance problems: spiritual programmes (of Alcoholics Anonymous, for example) are often associated with recovery from addictive behaviours.

QUESTIONS POSED BY RESEARCH IN OTHER
DENOMINATIONS AND QUAKER SCHOLARSHIP

When these findings from other denominations are coupled with Quaker history and currents in modern Quakerism (Dandelion 1996; Punshon 1992; Dandelion and Collins 2008), several questions arise about the operation of these testimonies by contemporary Quakers. Quakerism has its origins in the puritan/Protestant tradition, and normative ascetic standards that advise abstinence in the case of gambling and abstinence or moderation in the case of substance use. However, the silent form of worship and the lack of sermon and institutionalised authority would tend against the mechanisms that are held to reinforce the normative standard in some other denominations. Another fundamental factor is the traditional Quaker stress on individual experience of the Light as paramount, rather than on external authority (Dandelion 1996). The Liberal belief culture Dandelion defines de-stresses belief and allows a wide latitude for individual interpretation. When this is taken in conjunction with Pilgrim's analysis of 'Friends determination to be open to everyone and anything' (Pilgrim 2008: 60) and the 'unboundaried space' (2008: 61) that the modern Quaker Meeting provides, the potential for postmodernist 'shopping' becomes a real one. This is particularly the case since these testimonies do not have the profile or centrality of the peace testimony—and now that Quakers are no longer identifiable as such, they are enacted in non-Quaker, private time.

A linked point is that both testimonies were heterotopic for early Quakers in the terms Pilgrim outlines. The carefulness about drinking or gambling *in public* reflects the Quaker tradition of marking themselves as 'distinctively Other' (Pilgrim 2008: 58) and manifests an 'alternate ordering'. If, as Dandelion suggests, testimony is no longer used to 'mark the separate identity of the group *against* the non-Quaker world' (Dandelion 1996: 121), and if, as Scully suggests, modern Quakers use a shared ethical framework more actively than 'the substantive content' of moral judgments (Scully 2008: 108), questions arise as to how the testimonies on gambling and substance use are considered by Friends – and how they are used to structure 'the Quaker role in the world'.

In Dandelion's framework, 'Quaker double-culture' suggests that contemporary Quakerism is liberal in terms of belief but conservative in matters of form: and in these terms, the testimonies have a locus in both, but are defined by neither:

In terms of Quaker double-culture, dimensions of the testimonies...are split between the two areas of belief and form. As part of the tradition, they are maintained within the behavioural creed. In terms of their content and usage, adherence to them is left up to the individual. (Dandelion 1996: 122)

All of these considerations raise questions about the role and operation of these testimonies in modern Quakerism. They can be summarised as follows: Does the liberal belief culture and the spiritual 'openness' of Quakerism mean that these testimonies do not act as 'normative standards' for Quakers? Is this reflected in a wide range of individualised behaviours such as might occur in the general population, or is there still a perception and enactment of 'corporate witness'? If 'normative standards' are not significant for Quakers, how are these testimonies construed?

STUDY FINDINGS IN BRIEF

One hundred and fifty-nine Quakers co-operated with the study, of which 57 were members of Young Friends General Meeting, and therefore predominantly in the under-30 age group. The results indicate that Friends are mainly abstinent from gambling and are generally moderate in their use of substances. However, some gambling did occur among a minority, as did some non-moderate substance use. Where gambling did occur it was spread fairly evenly throughout the age-groups, while higher substance use was found more commonly in younger people—though not exclusively so in the case of alcohol. The results indicate a profile that does differ from what might be expected in the general population, and notably so in the case of gambling. This profile is consistent with a Liberal Protestant sect as regards substance use, and a broadly proscriptive sect for gambling. However, there were many commonalities in attitude in the way Quakers approached the two testimonies.

SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS IN RELATION TO THESE TESTIMONIES

THE BEHAVIOURAL CREED

The testimony of abstinence and moderation is embodied in the fact that Meeting Houses are traditionally substance-free—as are some other Quaker establishments and some Quaker gatherings, particularly for young Friends. Responses within the study suggest that this practice has various kinds of significance, particularly in being embodied in the ‘narratives of Meetings’ and the ‘habitus’ to which Collins refers (2008: 48–51). In Preparative Meetings, respondents described discussions about whether any events or gatherings of other groups who used the building could be allowed to include alcohol: one warden, for example, stated: ‘The Premises committee had a heated debate about alcohol on the premises...’ These discussions tended to be general rather than specific, and to focus on the nature of Quaker space, including in relation to the needs of other groups using the building. The concept of ‘Quaker time’, which Dandelion defines as ‘the time spent as a Quaker with other Quakers’ (1996: xxvi), was similarly relevant, being considered both practically and in terms of what substance use in Quaker time would ‘mean’ in individual and group terms.

Within Young Friends General Meeting the issue has a more direct and pervasive significance, since gatherings are mainly held in Meeting Houses and the substance-free setting is a relevant consideration to non-timetabled time. Meeting House practice thus has a defining significance as regards Quaker time and space: ‘We’re on Meeting House premises and [substance use] is very much not allowed—and people respect that...’ Although there may be some discrepancies between private behaviour and the behavioural creed, the Quaker ‘normative standard’ is embodied. Another effect is to bring private behaviour into the Quaker realm: ‘You’re not allowed alcohol in the building, but you’re allowed to bring it back inside you [i.e. having consumed alcohol off the premises]. But at least they’re willing to talk it through with me when I speak to them...’

A further effect within Preparative Meetings and YFGM takes place at the more general level identified by Scully. She suggests that moral frameworks are less about articulated codes than ‘socially embodied, largely unspoken rules about what constitutes a

good life for community members' (Scully 2008: 108). Several Friends construed Meeting House practice in relation to substances as having a significance mainly in terms of what it symbolises about the Quaker community—and on an individual level, this confirms the 'coming home' or 'at home' feeling of being a Quaker: 'I like being part of a community in which it's acceptable not to drink', as one Friend put it. The testimony's embodiment in narrative and structure thus has significance in construing Quaker identity (both individual and communal) in the way that Scully suggests (even though individuals may critique the narrative or privately depart from perceived group norms when outside the limits of the behavioural creed).

Pilgrim comments on the creation of heterotopic space in the enactment of testimony by early Friends, and the search for heterotopic sites for modern Quakers (Pilgrim 2008: 56–58). Substance-free Meeting House practice does not take over a 'worldly' space and re-order it (in the way that Pilgrim describes the seventeenth-century courtroom), but nevertheless it does retain some heterotopic characteristics in being—and conveying—that the Quaker Meeting House space is a place of spiritually based 'alternate ordering'.

There was no direct analogue in terms of place as regards the testimony on gambling and speculation. However, I do suggest that there is some parallel in considering Quaker space as 'gambling-free' in relation to the National Lottery, and in the decision of Quakers corporately not to apply for National Lottery funding (in contrast with other Protestant churches that have done so). A survey conducted by Quaker Peace and Social Witness in 2002¹ investigated how Quakers who are employed or volunteer in charitable projects eligible for National Lottery funding are responding to the challenges of this position. Because such work involves the addressing of social disadvantage, Quakers working as individuals in non-Quaker bodies did not feel they could make a stand against a source of funds when alternative resources were unlikely to be forthcoming. They did not find it tenable to treat these situations as heterotopic sites (as in Pilgrim's 'courtroom' example)—or to withdraw, as George Fox did from the drinking situation. The expression of testimony has therefore been made by Quakers corporately and by Quaker charities, rather than by Quakers as individuals.

Thus, Meeting House practice as regards substances and Quaker corporate policy on gambling could both be described as retaining some aspect of the heterotopic—but within internal Quaker space only. Pilgrim's analysis of different spiritual understandings—and therefore 'alternate *orderings*' (rather than ordering: Pilgrim 2008: 64)—does have relevance to this study's findings, as I will explain below. In more general terms, however, the embodiment of these testimonies in the behavioural creed works at several levels in rooting them in Quaker narratives. The normative standard is asserted and enacted, a sense of Quaker identity and relationships is confirmed, and this is done in a way that juxtaposes them with wider society.

THE LIBERAL BELIEF CULTURE

The liberal belief culture would suggest that attitudes to these testimonies might be non-credal, and therefore may not be approached as normative standards. Questions were asked about Quaker guidelines and their influence on personal conduct as regards substances. There was a spread of attitudes, with about 10–15% expressing a non-normative view. Responses in this group could be strongly individualistic: 'I hope not!' for example.

Others could fit into what has been described as ‘market-place’: ‘I pick and choose’. At the other end of the spectrum, there was a smaller minority (fewer than 5%) who expressed strongly pro-normative views implying that the standard could and should influence behaviour: ‘sometimes I wonder if a more robust discouragement might be helpful’, for example.

About three-quarters of those responding said they did consider Quaker guidelines of abstinence and moderation and the behaviour of other Quakers within their own decisions. The predominant view was one of active personal consideration of the written testimony and the behaviour of other Quakers—but not in the spirit of what could be described as conformity. ‘They prompt me to make a well thought-out choice’; ‘taken into account’ were examples of this range of responses.

It is interesting to note that these proportions in response to the idea of ‘guidelines’ for substance use roughly equate to those Pilgrim suggests for the three groups within contemporary Quakerism (Syncretists, Exclusivists, and Inclusivists). However, a paradox that also relates to Pilgrim’s observations is that those who reject the idea of normative standards perceive this to be a Quakerly stance²—just as those who relate to the idea of normative standards also feel *this* to be Quakerly. On one level this could be considered as an example of an ‘internalised and individualised’ heterotopic stance (Pilgrim 2008: 64) but the potential for the space to be contested is little realised in practice—partly because the study also reveals that responses to the idea of ‘guidelines’ are not consistently related to personal *behaviour* as regards substance use or gambling. Interview responses illuminated why this might be so.

Some who took a strongly non-normative stance were low users of substances or non-gamblers, who simply took this position in relation to the idea of ‘rule-based’ behaviour. For example, one such respondent commented in relation to gambling, ‘It’s so against what I think Quakerism is about...’ At the other end of the spectrum of behaviour, some with higher levels of use (in comparative terms) did not reject a normative approach, but simply were not always successful in acting on it: ‘I try to follow the “in moderation” guidelines, but have difficulty’ being one such response in relation to substance use. Although there was some evidence of ‘market-place’ approaches among this latter group, it was not the dominant pattern.

A further finding, particularly in the case of gambling, is that Quaker testimony and the approach of other Friends were described as reinforcing an existing disposition. As regards gambling, most respondents cited Quaker testimony as a secondary, rather than a primary reason for desisting from it: ‘I don’t think I’m directly influenced by Quakerism as such—just much more naturally aligned with the Quaker position’, as one Friend said. (However, as has already been described, this sense confirms personal narratives and identities as Quaker.)

So, in summary, for the strong majority of Quakers in the study these testimonies have some normative functions—including a confirmatory role—and this is reflected in the broad findings of abstinence and moderation. While this study confirms the suggestion that there is a plurality of responses to the idea of testimony as a Quaker normative standard, perspectives are not reflected in any particular configuration of behaviour. Differences in behaviour and in approaches to testimony are therefore not generally apparent or contested. Indeed, in a paradoxical manifestation of Quaker double-culture, those with a

wide range of responses to the idea of Quaker testimony as normative find their Quaker identities variously confirmed—either by their freedom to interpret them within the liberal belief culture, or by the nature of the testimonies themselves.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

The general approach of Quakers in this study thus manifests Scully's formulation that 'Liberal Quakerdom' is resistant to deontological ethics that put 'rule' or text 'over the authority of individual experience and conviction' (Scully 2008: 114)—albeit that these testimonies also function normatively in the ways that have already been outlined. It has been suggested that the stress away from 'rule' is related to the primacy given by Quakers to individual spiritual experience, and this link was attested to in the present study. Friends were asked to select from a list of ten items the aspect of Quakerism that they found most fulfilling. Over 40% of those surveyed selected 'a concentration on spiritual journey rather than fixed doctrine' either as first or second choice (22.5% selecting it first).

While this study confirmed the plurality of understandings of spirituality within Quakerism, gambling and certain kinds of substance use were widely regarded as unhelpful to spiritual life, and this was expressed in congruent terms. For example, A Christian theist commented, 'The clearer my consciousness, the more alive I feel and receptive to God's wisdom', while a non-theist stated: 'I think it would affect one's thinking, reasoning, discernment and thus one's spiritual life'. Behaviourally, those who felt that spiritual life (however construed) was a significant feature in their daily lives were also likely to undertake lighter levels of substance use. As regards gambling, a view that gambling is unhelpful to spiritual life because it encourages materialism was widely shared among Quakers, and spiritual considerations were stated as a motive for non-engagement in gambling activities. In general terms, then, notwithstanding the different perspectives on spirituality, its prime role for Quakers had a unifying effect in relation to these testimonies, both as regards how substance use and gambling are construed as spiritual matters, and in underpinning moderate or abstinent behaviours.

One exception to this general pattern appears to correspond roughly to the 'amorphous' group of 'Syncretists' as described by Pilgrim (2008: 63)—or rather, to individuals who could be numbered within it. This small group considered it possible that some substance use could be spiritually enhancing in certain circumstances, and were more likely to have experience of cannabis (though not any other substance or gambling activity). This outlook was allied with a feeling of God's immanence in nature, and matches the group Vincett has described as Quagans, including Goddess Feminists—as this quotation illustrates:

So it's not particularly that God judges me and my smoking [of cannabis]...much more that I judge myself, and I think God just folds arms and says, 'next time'... It's about God, and because my spiritual God-life has always been part and parcel of being a Quaker... It's very much about the relationship with God and feeling that—it goes back to that body as temple thing. How can I be fully related to God if in some ways I am escaping by smoking?

Consistent with Vincett's analysis, this conception of the Divine is of 'power with' rather than 'power over' (Vincett 2008: 179)—and this is associated with a non-judgmental, but not a permissive theology, which is not perceived as inconsistent with

Quakerism. However, the internal dialogue, which is described as taking place over time and includes Quakerism as an integral component, results in a reduction of substance use. Vincett's description of those who are essentially Goddess Feminists in belief, but whose praxis is shaped by their Quakerism seems, to encapsulate this approach. Her analysis of a type of syncretism that is not 'superficial' or 'lacking in coherence' (Vincett 2008: 176) is apposite. While there was some evidence of an individualised 'Quagan' spirituality associated with some substance-using behaviour within the present study, this model—in which understandings that are perceived as specifically Quaker are incorporated into personal deliberations—was much more common.

VIRTUE ETHICS AND PHRONESIS

The internal dialogue taken by the last respondent was reflected in others that took place at all levels of substance use and gambling, and abstinence. The character of such dialogues, which tended to work from the perspective of the moral agent rather than from rules of behaviour or abstract general principle, was generally consistent with Scully's view that virtue ethics tend to be favoured by Quakers, and are particularly suited to the concept of testimony. Scully's observations regarding virtue ethics and moral reasoning are further illustrated by the following quotation from a Friend, who describes his/her deliberations about when and where to drink alcohol:

I do have a struggle with this one, because I do think there is a value in setting an example along with most other Friends, and I just feel very ambivalent about it to be quite honest...I would be most likely to drink with...[fairly close relatives], who might be drinking half a bottle between them with a meal and say—'would I like a glass?'—and I would probably say—'yes'—but I think that in a large mixed party, with some vulnerable youngsters, I'd be far more likely to say no. Which is, as I say, inconsistent and hypocritical. I haven't resolved that one...but it goes back to the time of George Fox and 'wear your sword as long as you can'.³ Goes right back to the beginning, that you allow people to think about these things, rather than saying you should do this and you shouldn't do that... We do say 'consider', so having considered, if you've decided what your doing is O.K. for the reasons that you're doing it, sometimes perhaps friendship is more important than witness. Sometimes witness is more important than friendship. I like the word 'consider'.

This also illustrates what Scully describes as 'moral collage', which seeks to 'articulate with integrity' the ethical understanding of the individual. The deliberation provides an example of *phronesis* in practice—the 'how to do it' process of enacting moral ethics and awareness. This Friend works through the difficulties (and inadequacies) of selecting a dominant deontological principle that should be followed in all situations. The importance of virtue ethics is apparent in the centring on the moral agent (as potentially 'hypocritical'). The result of the moral process is that the tensions and inconsistencies involved in sometimes working from one principle, sometimes from another, are acknowledged and held rather than neatly resolved—and this is done in a way that the speaker ultimately feels expresses Quaker advice to 'consider' one's use of substances in relation to the 'harms done' by them.

The study as a whole supports Scully's view that virtue ethics, which 'unite interior belief with external behaviours', express the Quaker concept of testimony. However, as

Scully notes elsewhere, ‘Virtue ethics can produce a highly individualised morality’ (Scully 2002: 219) and, as has been noted, the effect is potentially diversifying. My observation is that this potential diversity in terms of behaviour is offset by a number of unifying factors that work in terms of process.

UNIFYING QUAKER VALUES

The potential for fragmenting diversity is partly contained by the expression and moral terms of the written testimonies in *Quaker Faith and Practice*. These have an impact on the terms and nature of the moral reasoning that takes place. So, for example, in relation to the testimony on abstinence and moderation, many Quakers (like the one in the foregoing quotation) stressed the power of example and the need to assess the general impact of their substance use on others, particularly children. This relates closely to the wording: ‘consider whether you should avoid these products altogether, discourage their use in others, especially young people...’ (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995: 20.40). Similarly, responses in relation to gambling reflected the sense in the written testimony, often stressing social justice, or the spiritually ‘clogging’ risks of greed. The ethical orientation of these written testimonies consistently showed a discernible relationship with the *nature* of the moral reasoning that was undertaken, even though behaviour varied.

Another significant counter-balance to the diversifying effects of virtue ethics is provided by certain key Quaker values, which were frequently activated in moral reasoning: these acted in a binding way in terms of process, and had strong deontological aspects in their functioning. The first of these values, cited by the last respondent and considered in a more deontological way than circumstantial specifics of testimony, is ‘as long as thou canst’. This was consistently used as a touchstone value by Friends in this study—often as a way of reminding oneself not to be judgmental of others: ‘I wouldn’t dream of saying this is the only right way; do it “as long as thou canst”.’ It was also used as a way of mitigating harsh judgments of the self—as in the case of a Friend who described a process of substance reduction: ‘It’s... “wear thy sword/smoke thy spliff as long as thou canst”.’

The second value that was frequently utilised in the process of phronesis is ‘that of God in everyone’. Dandelion (1996) and Scully (2002) have both noted its centrality in Quaker moral discourse in other contexts.⁴ This was replicated in the present study, where, when Friends were asked to rank aspects of Quakerism they found most fulfilling (as described in section 3.3), ‘that of God in everyone’ was ranked second most frequently. The use of this value in practice was widespread, particularly in mitigating harsh or censorious judgments of others whose substance use or gambling diverted from Quaker testimony.

The importance of these key values not only relates to the way in which these testimonies were directly construed, but was also apparent in relation to the influence of asceticism. It has been suggested in previous research (notably Orford 1985) that the origin of low substance use and gambling in some religious people may be due to ascetic attitudes. This theory was upheld within the Quaker group, in that these attitudes were shared by about two-thirds of respondents, and those who endorsed them were lighter in their substance use and gambling behaviours. For example, those who agreed with the statement ‘I would have reservations about using a substance just for pleasure’ were less likely to use alcohol at all levels of consumption. However, within a Quaker context it is

also particularly helpful to consider ascetic attitudes in relation to Collins's observations about 'plaining' and his suggestion that this undergirds Quaker narratives, including the testimonies (1996; 2008: 43). The responses within the study about both testimonies are consistent with this formulation. 'Moderation, respect for self and others, simple life-style: these things not needed', is a response from the study that succinctly summarises the 'will to plain' in the context of substance use and gambling.

Research in other Protestant denominations has found that these non-hedonistic attitudes, which I have described as 'personal ascetic', are linked with an outlook that 'moral people' do not behave in such ways, and that members of their religion are unlikely to experience substance or gambling problems (Jolly and Orford 1983). However, most Quakers in the study did not feel that these behaviours would not be undertaken by moral people, nor that Quakers would be unlikely to develop problems. I suggest that dominance of personal ascetic attitudes underlies the abstinence and moderation of the majority, but also that these Quaker values mitigate 'moral ascetic' attitudes—and that their recessiveness has further individual and community effects.

This significance relates to Robson's observation that 'among Quakers I found that the thread of relationship exerts more pull than the thread of right outcome or justice' (Robson 2008: 144) and to her view that the 'aspiration to unity' tends to be dominant. She comments on the concept of shame in a Quaker context, and on Scheff's formulation that this is proportional to the perceived amount of non-conformity with the community ideal (or 'espoused theory', as it could also be expressed). All of this can helpfully be applied to the psychological, spiritual, and emotional reflections that Friends describe when relating their personal experiences with substance use and gambling. Robson's observation of Pinthus's dictum that 'what Quakers call "being human" other denominations call "sin"' (2008: 150) is particularly relevant to explaining the generally non-judgmental way in which Quakers tend to construe their own and others' behaviour in relation to gambling and substance use.

My observation is that this nexus of interconnecting Quaker values—'a concentration on spiritual journey rather than fixed doctrine', 'as long as thou canst', and 'that of God in everyone', undertaken through common processes of virtue ethics, and within a community that emphasises relationship over 'right outcome'—works together to mitigate (but not remove) the emotional discomfort that arises in individuals when their behaviour departs from these testimonies. The descriptions of Friends with a range of substance using or gambling behaviour was consistent with this formulation. One Friend with higher (but reducing) levels of substance use commented: 'I remind myself Quakerism's not about guilt...but it does help keep me in control sometimes'.

The accounts of some Friends with higher levels of consumption also provided examples of what Scully describes when she states 'the testimonies, unlike virtues, are not themselves the dispositions: rather they are moral claims or principles, articulated by the Society throughout history, that guide the personal and collective choices made by Friends, so that, in the end, appropriate dispositions are established' (Scully 2008: 116). The implicit relationship of virtue ethics to time, 'because the capacity for right judgment is acquired by training and practice' (2008: 113), is particularly apposite. Quakers who described reducing substance use or gambling patterns often framed their experiences in terms of a dialogue with Quakerism that took place over

a period of time. Previous studies have tended to emphasise the stringency of the normative standard: while the current study upholds this factor—most obviously in the observed differences between substance use and gambling behaviours—it also suggests that time and process are deeply significant. For Quakers, the process of phronesis, crucially undertaken by Friends at *all* levels of gambling and substance use, appears to be a critical factor in individual and community functioning. It works against the individual who acts outside denominational norms being perceived as different or ‘deviant’, and encourages a perspective of Quakers being involved in a common process, albeit at different behavioural levels.

My argument, then, is two-fold: first that this nexus of Quaker values has deontological and binding functions in the Quaker community—which balances the potentially fragmenting effects of virtue ethics and multiple, idiosyncratic, context-specific, individual formulations of testimony. Secondly, I believe the *content* of this balance accounts in large part for the denominational profile of Quakers as revealed by this study. That is, while behaviour is generally abstinent or moderate, some incongruent behaviour is able to be retained within the Society, because the values that have been described encourage inclusivity at a community level, and on an individual level they militate against mechanisms of shame/cognitive dissonance becoming emotionally intolerable for the individual. Those departing from the letter of testimony are thus less likely to feel it necessary to leave the denomination, but the embedding of these testimonies in the behavioural creed and in the culture of the majority of Quakers means that the normative expression of testimony is retained—including in attracting ‘recruits’ of similar values and outlook.

SUMMARY AND PARADIGM

My conclusion, therefore, is that Quakerism holds an unusual series of balances, which is represented in Figure 1. This model outlines, with particular reference to Scully’s idea of ‘moral collage’, the ethical terms and processes undertaken in the Quaker sample in relation to the testimonies of substances and gambling. The elements that foster a unified witness of abstinent/moderate behaviour (embodied in the behavioural creed, the normative standard, and the ascetic ‘will to plain’) are shown in the lower part of the circle. They are balanced and held in tension with the core Quaker values, which are shown in the upper half and tend to allow behavioural diversity in relation to the testimonies. However, these values are strongly unifying in providing a basis for community and individual identity (as Scully argues), and—since they are largely approached deontologically—they are also unifying in terms of process.

In terms of Quaker double-culture as outlined by Dandelion (1996, 2008) it is interesting to note that these core values, while individually applied, are communally held—and their deontological treatment means that they carry a group binding/ anchoring function. As Dandelion proposes, the letter of testimony is embodied in the Quaker behavioural creed, but it tends to be negotiated individually outside Quaker space and time. However, these negotiations are informed and—to a degree—unified by the values that have been discussed. Consistently, with the double-culture model, it is the holding of the normative standard—*equally*, and in creative tension with—ethical and spiritually based negotiation that is the key to the Quaker balance that I have outlined. While

Quaker double-culture presents problems to some in terms of diversity of belief, my thesis is that its operation in relation to these testimonies enables the retention of a meaningful standard without a loss of inclusivity.

The model represents the Quaker balance, and the factors that I believe enable Quakerism to present a profile of abstinence and moderation in relation to substances and the general eschewing of gambling—but with a minimised risk of ‘losing’ people, who, for whatever reason, behave differently. The effects of the balance are largely benign, in that low involvement in these behaviours is fostered, but, it seems, without discernible exclusion. For those who are adversely affected by dependency, this benefit is hard to underestimate. Holding the tensions—and sometimes the inconsistencies—of this balance is, I would suggest, a valuable modern Quaker testimony.

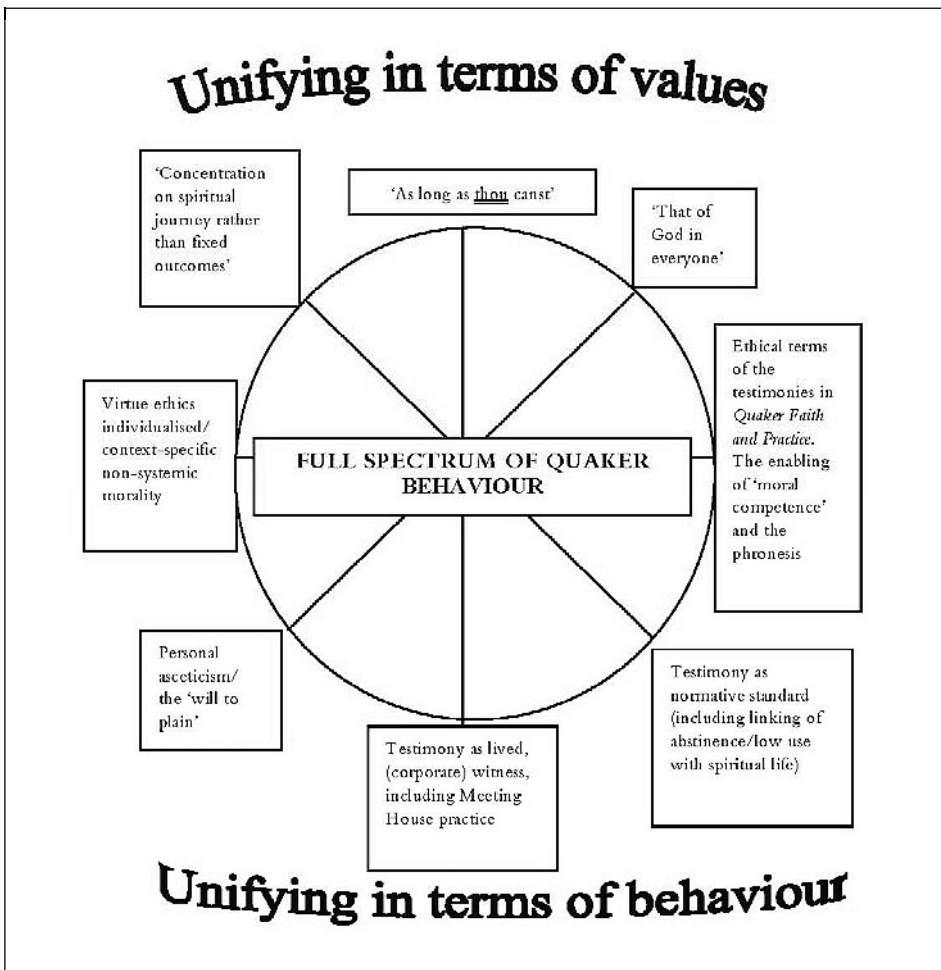


Figure 1. *Collage Model of Quaker Testimony and Values*: diagrammatic representation of the ethical terms and processes undertaken in the Quaker study in relation to the testimonies of substances and gambling, based on Scully’s concept of ‘collage’.

NOTES

1. And explored and described in the book *Role Over* (QPSW publications 2004).
2. With implicit or explicit reference to the passage: 'Dearly beloved Friends, these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding, these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life' (Postscript to an epistle to the 'brethren in the north' issued by a Meeting of Elders of Balby, 1656 [*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995: 1.01]).
3. William Penn asked George Fox's advice about wearing his sword to a Quaker Meeting (given the Quaker testimony on peace and non-violence). Fox said, 'I advise thee to wear it as long as thou canst'. The passage in *Quaker Faith and Practice* continues 'Not long after this they met again, when William had no sword, and George said to him, "William, where is thy sword?" "Oh!" said he, "I have taken thy advice; I wore it as long as I could"' (*Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995: 19.47).
4. Dandelion comments 'The only item of belief which was held by all respondents was the idea of "that of God in everyone"' (Dandelion 1996: 289), while Scully observes 'the absolute and equal moral reverence for every individual remained non-negotiable' (Scully 2002: 217).

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