# QUAKER EVENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:
## INFORMAL EDUCATION AND FAITH TRANSMISSION[*]

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines Quaker events for young people and explores the nature of these events through examination of official policies, questionnaires and observation at events. It examines the purposes of Quaker events for young people as described by official policies and by youth work practitioners and examines the significance of these events in the lives of adolescent Quakers. Quaker events for young people are analysed in comparison with the values and principles of 'informal education'. Contrasts are drawn between Quaker events for young people and Christian youth work. This article also explores the nature of faith transmission at Quaker events for young people and argues that Quaker events for young people are the most effective method of faith transmission for adolescent Quakers.

## KEYWORDS

Quakers, adolescents, events, faith transmission, informal education

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In this article I examine Quaker events for young people and Quaker youth work,[1] exploring their purpose and spiritual basis and assessing the educational value of Quaker youth work and Quaker events for young people.[2] I consider Quaker youth work in the context of informal education and argue that Quaker youth work, while including elements of informal education, has a clear and distinct spiritual basis. I contrast Quaker youth work with Christian[3] youth work and, in this context, contend that the approach and context of Quaker youth work is more closely comparable to nurturing than to evangelism. I consider the role of Quaker youth work as faith transmission and contend that Quaker events for young people are the primary and most effective means of faith transmission to adolescent Quakers.

## 2. METHOD

This article is based on data collected as part of a wider research project into the spiritual beliefs and religious practices of adolescent Quakers.[4] Data was gathered through questionnaires—this method was chosen because of the ease of distribution to a large number of potential respondents and the large amount of data that can be obtained with relative ease. A combination of open-ended and closed questions was used in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data from the research questionnaire. Three separate questionnaires were devised for use with different groups: one for adolescents participating in events, the 'Quaker Events Question-naire' (QEQ); one for adults volunteering at Quaker events for young people (AQ); and one for members of Britain Yearly Meeting[5] Children and Young People's Committee (CQ).[6] The young people who were contacted had previously partici-pated in the wider project and had indicated a willingness to be contacted to participate in further research. A total of 16 questionnaires were sent to young people ranging in ages from 14 to 19.[7] Six questionnaires were sent to males and 10 to females.[8] Thirteen completed questionnaires were received (a response rate of over 80%) four from males and nine from females. Twelve questionnaires were sent to adult volunteers at Quaker events for young people. These were contacted at Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM)[9] and Southern Summer School.[10] Eight completed question-naires were received (a response rate of 66%). Four questionnaires were sent to members of Britain Yearly Meeting Children and Young People's Committee (CYPC) selected at random, and three completed questionnaires were received (a response rate of 75%). This article also contains data obtained from the 'Young Quaker Questionnaire' (YQQ), used for the wider research project. 307 YQQs were distributed at events for young Friends between April and August 2003—at JYM (April), Britain Yearly Meeting Summer Gathering (July),[11] Southern Summer School (August) and Southern Senior Conference (August).[12] The response rate for this questionnaire was 100%.[13]

I also undertook participant observation at Quaker events for young people. This included observation of workshops, activities, structured discussions and worship and of unstructured free time, including interaction and relationships between young people and between young people and adult volunteers.[14]

### 3. QUAKER EVENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
### AND QUAKER YOUTH WORK

In this section I examine Quaker events for young people and consider the nature and purpose of these events. In exploring the purpose of Quaker events for young people I examine both official policy statements from CYPC and what adult volun-teers at Quaker events for young people identify as the purpose of these events. I examine what adolescents identify themselves as having learnt and gained from their involvement in Quaker events for young people.

## 3.1. *The Purpose of Quaker Youth Work*

Britain Yearly Meeting Children and Young People's Committee outlines the purpose of Quaker youth work as being to

> enable young Friends to: develop their full potential; be supported during the transition to adulthood; be encouraged on their spiritual quest, and take part in both Quaker activities and in society at large (CYPC 2002a).

There is a particular emphasis on spiritual development and the opportunity for young people to 'explore and develop that source of strength that Quakers call that of God in everyone' (CYPC 2002a). However CYPC also includes amongst its aims 'to advocate for the contribution of Children and Young People to the life of Britain Yearly Meeting now, acknowledging them as fellow pilgrims' (CYPC 2002b). At Britain Yearly Meeting[15] there is an aim 'to provide a Yearly Meeting programme which is relevant, interesting and stimulating' and includes themes and concerns from the Yearly Meeting agenda (Khurana 2002: 96). Quaker youth work therefore includes nurturing current involvement as well as education for future involvement.

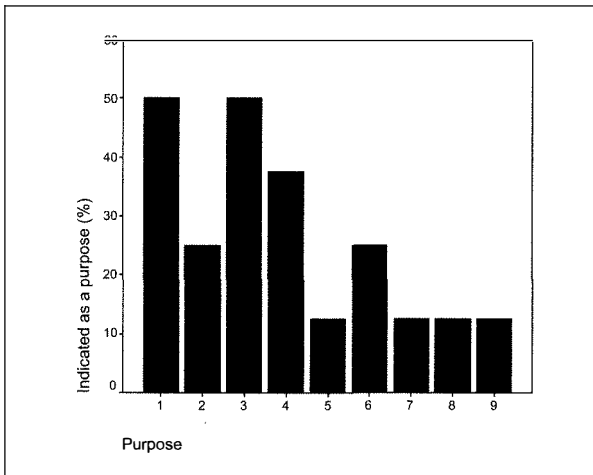## 3.2. *The Purpose of Quaker Events for Young People*

Adult volunteers and members of CYPC were asked what they saw as the purpose of Quaker youth work and Quaker events for young people (AQ Question 6, CQ Question 8). This was an open-response question with answers grouped for analysis. Adult volunteers gave the greatest response to giving young people the opportunity to learn about Quakerism (50%) and the opportunity to meet other young Quakers (50%). CYPC place greatest importance in enabling young people to develop spiritually (66%) and giving the opportunity for adolescents to live as part of a Quaker community (66%).

| Purpose | CYPC Members (n = 3) | Adult Volunteers (n = 8) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Opportunity to learn about Quakerism | 33% | 50% |
| 2. Encouraging young people to become Quakers | 0% | 25% |
| 3. Opportunity to meet other young Quakers | 33% | 50% |
| 4. To help young people learn or develop skills | 0% | 37% |
| 5. To help young people develop self-confidence | 33% | 12% |
| 6. To help young people develop values | 33% | 25% |
| 7. To live as part of a Quaker community | 66% | 12% |
| 8. To enable young people to grow/develop spiritually | 66% | 13% |
| 9. For young people to have fun | 0% | 12% |

Figure 1a. *The Purpose of Quaker Youth Work and Quaker Events for Young People (AQ Question 6; CQ Question 8)*
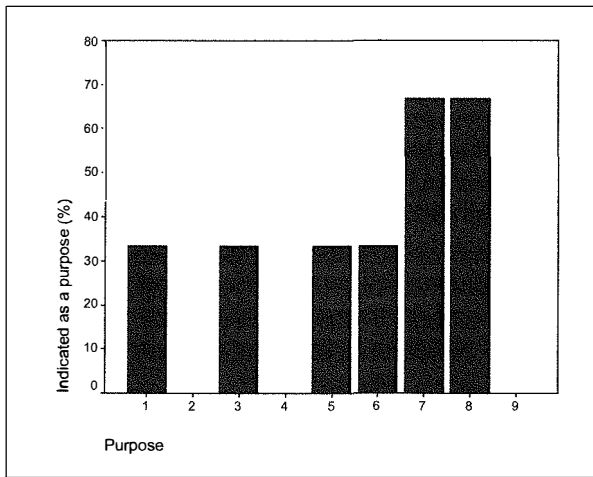
a) responses of CYPC members (n=3)



b) responses of adult volunteers (n=8)

Figure 1b. *The Purpose of Quaker Youth Work and Quaker Events
for Young People (AQ Question 6; CQ Question 8)*

CYPC members present closer conformity to official policies and stress an 'explicit'
Quaker purpose of events such as spiritual development and experiencing Quaker
community. Adult volunteers show a recognition of a greater number of purposes,
including more implicit purposes, such as the fact that young Friends should enjoy
events, while none of the CYPC members mentioned having fun as a purpose of
events.

Adult volunteers have significantly different perceptions of the purpose of Quaker
youth work from CYPC members, although the small size of the sample may affect
these figures. I argue that this is a result of their involvement on a practical level in

the running of events and that being present at these events gives these adults an awareness of the purposes that have the most significance for adolescent Quakers. 58% of adult volunteers mentioned Quaker events for young people as having what I describe as an 'explicit' Quaker purpose. These include: giving young Friends the opportunity to learn about Quakerism; encouraging young Friends to become Quakers; giving them the chance to meet other young Quakers; providing an opportunity to live in a Quaker community. A further 16% stated an 'implicit' Quaker purpose: helping young people to develop their values; enabling young people to grow spiritually. However, these aims are often phrased in general, non-Quaker specific terms with no explicit reference to passing on particular Quaker beliefs but rather mention an intention to 'develop the values of young people' (AQ) and to 'help young people value spirituality'(AQ). In Section 5.2 below I argue that this distinguishes Quaker youth work from evangelical Christian youth work.[16]

### 3.3. *The Educational Value of Quaker Events for Young People*
In the context of this article there are two central questions concerning Quaker events for young people: What do young Quakers learn at these events? and What do individuals gain from Quaker events for young people? I argue that as well as learning about Quakerism at these events, adolescent Quakers also benefit in less formal ways.

First, and significantly, two-thirds of respondents stated that they had learnt most about Quakerism at Quaker events for young people and equally significantly no respondents stated that they had learnt most from Children's Meeting.[17]
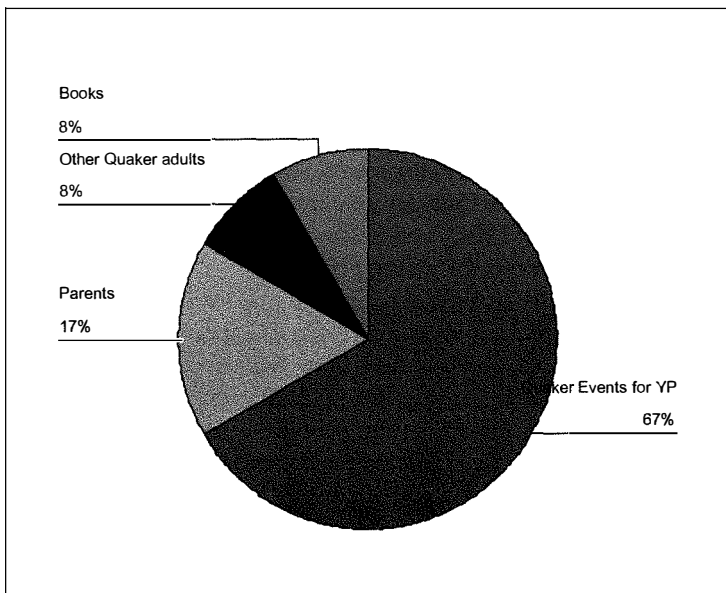


Figure 2. *Where did you learn most about Quakerism?* (QEQ Question 10)

46% of respondents stated that they had learnt 'A lot' and 38% 'Quite a lot' about Quakerism generally at Quaker events for young people; the remaining 15% said they had learnt 'A bit'; 46% also stated that they had learnt 'A lot' about Quakerism from other young Quakers. I suggest that this learning also takes place at Quaker events for young people. In comparison to this only 8% stated that they had learnt 'A lot' from Children's Meeting (42% 'Quite a lot'; 42% 'A bit'; 8% 'Not much') and 15% had learnt 'A lot' from their parents (38% 'Quite a lot'; 46% 'A bit').

Individuals were asked specifically about what they had learnt at Quaker events for young people (QEQ Question 11). 38% said that they had learnt 'A lot' and 61% had learnt 'Quite a lot' about Quaker beliefs. 23% said that they had learnt 'A lot' about Quaker testimonies. 62% stated that they had learnt 'Quite a lot' and 15% 'A bit'.

Similar figures were found when asked how much they had learnt about contemporary Quaker work (30% 'A lot'; 38% 'Quite a lot'; 23% 'A bit'). However, when asked how much they had learnt about Quaker history no respondents had learnt 'A lot' and only 7% said they had learnt 'Quite a lot' with 53% responding that they had learnt 'A bit' and 38% saying they had learnt 'Not much'. The highest percentages came when young people were asked about Quaker worship: 46% stating they had learnt 'A lot' and 54% 'Quite a lot'.

In addition to this explicit learning, Quaker events for young people also help adolescent Friends develop an understanding of themselves (QEQ Question 13). 69% of respondents said that they had learnt 'A lot' about themselves and a similar percentage (61%) stated that they had learnt 'A lot' about their personal beliefs, as this comment from a 15 year old male shows:

> Summer School taught me over time more about who I was and my approach to the outside world. I felt as though all the summer schools I had been to had taught me more about myself, about who I really am (Male 15; Field Notes).

Importantly there is a spiritual dimension to this understanding. 23.1% of QEQ respondents stated that they had gained spiritual awareness from participating in Quaker events for young people. Adolescents' responses indicate that they gained a 'greater understanding of how Quakers perceive God' (Male 15; QEQ) as well as 'spiritual thoughts' (Male 15; QEQ) and 'a deeper faith' (Female 17; QEQ) from their involvement in Quaker events for young people.

While it is impossible to quantify what individuals learn about themselves, what can be shown is what individuals identify as enjoyable about attending Quaker events for young people and what they say they have gained from their involvement in these events. 30.8% said that 'learning about Quakerism' was something that they had gained from Quaker events for young people.

85% of QEQ respondents stated that they had gained friendships as a result of their involvement in Quaker events for young people. I argue that this is an important aspect of participation in Quaker events for young people and that a crucial element is that these friendships are with other adolescent Quakers, reflected by the fact that 69% mentioned either making new friends/seeing old friends or meeting other young Quakers as something they enjoyed about Quaker events for young people.
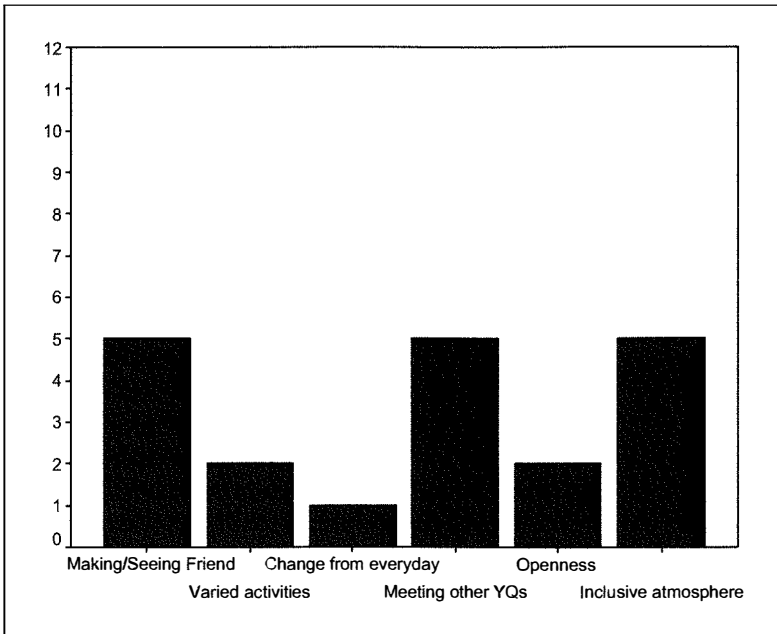
Figure 3. *What do you enjoy about Quaker*
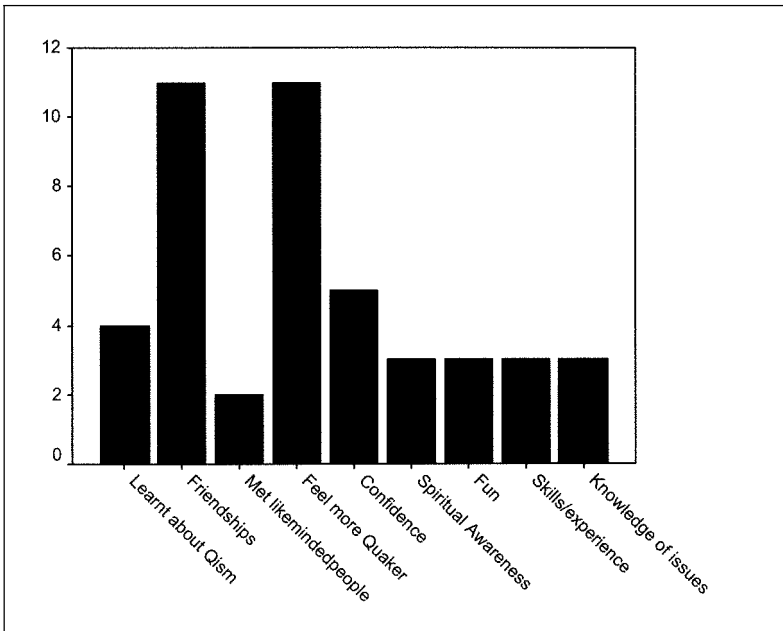*events for Young People?* (n = 13) (QEQ Question 8)



Figure 4. *What have you gained by going to Quaker Events?*
(n = 13) (QEQ Question 7)

Respondents highlighted that they had made 'a lot of very good friends' (Female 15; QEQ), and significantly that 'I've gained lots more contacts all over England' (Male 15; QEQ). 66.3% of YQQ respondents stated that they had either a lot or some Quaker friends of their own age. 91.7% of those that had Quaker friends their age (75.6% of total respondents) stated that these were close friendships. Many stated that, despite not getting together often, they were closer to their Quaker friends than non-Quaker friends:

> closer than all school friends (Field Notes, Male 14)

> we don't see each other often but every time we do meet, it's like we've never been parted (Field Notes, Female 18)

> most of my best friends are Quakers (Field Notes, Female 15)

These responses indicate the importance of friendships for adolescent Quakers' identity, and also the fact that they are spread over a wide geographical distance. I suggest that adolescent Quakers, through their participation in Quaker events, form inter-personal networks which are secured through friendship. In Section 4.2 below I contend that these networks are instrumental in forming a community within which adolescents can learn about Quakerism.[18]

It is evident from adolescents' responses that learning, both about Quaker beliefs and values and wider learning about individuals' beliefs, takes place at Quaker events for young people. I argue that these responses demonstrate clearly that Quaker events for young people enable adolescent Quakers to develop an understanding of Quaker beliefs and practices and also to learn about themselves and their personal beliefs.

## 4. QUAKER YOUTH WORK AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

In Section 3, I demonstrate that learning does take place at Quaker events for young people, and that much of this learning is informal in nature. In order to examine Quaker youth work within the context of informal education below I analyse it against the key characteristics and core values of informal education. This analysis includes examination of policy papers and primary data gathered from questionnaires and participant observation.

### 4.1. *Informal Education*
At the most basic level 'informal education' is defined as 'the learning that goes on in everyday life' (Smith 2004c: 1). Informal education is:

> the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment…it unquestionably accounts for a very high proportion that any person…accumulates in a life time (Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed 1973: 10-11).

Jeffs and Smith (1999: 80) describe informal education as having a number of 'core values'. These are respect for persons, the promotion of well-being, truth, democracy and equality (Jeffs and Smith 1999: 81). Informal education, Smith states, 'works

through, and is driven by, conversation', it 'involves exploring and enlarging experiences' and 'can take place in any setting' (Smith 2004c: 2). The core purpose of informal education is 'a commitment to association and to building communities and relationships' (Smith 2004c: 2). Informal education focuses on conversations and dialogue (Smith 2004c: 2) and educators place an emphasis on experiential learning, enabling people to explore their experiences and learn from them (Smith 1988). Informal educators aim to 'work with people, rather than to organise…for them' and stress 'democratic ways of working, equal opportunity and justice for all' (Smith 2004a: 4-5).

### 4.2. *Informal Education in Quaker Youth Work*

A central aim of informal education is the recognition of 'the dignity and uniqueness of every human being' (Jeffs and Smith 1999: 81). In Quaker youth work this is reflected in the aim that events 'should take place within a climate where all are accepted and valued equally' (CYPC 2002a). Quaker events for young people are described as having 'a friendly inclusive environment' (Female 19; QEQ), which allows young people, as one respondent put it, to 'be comfortable being me' (Female 19; QEQ). Informal educators look to promoting equality and relationships characterised by fairness (Jeffs and Smith 1999: 81). CYPC has an equal opportunities policy (CYPC 1992, 2003a) and at Quaker events it is standard practice for 'equality and non-discrimination' to be included in boundaries established before the event or ground rules that are negotiated by participants at the start of the event (Field Notes).

Doyle and Smith use the specific context of youth work to describe association as 'joining together in companionship or to undertake some task' (Doyle and Smith 1999: 44). Smith emphasises 'the educative power of playing one's part in a group or association' (Smith 2004b). CYPC identifies one of the purposes of Quaker youth work as being to 'gather together to build friendships' (CYPC 2002a), and both CYPC members and adult volunteers identify building community as an aim of Quaker events for young people. Adolescent respondents identified the importance to them of the opportunity to meet and develop friendships with 'like-minded people' (Female 18; QEQ). At Quaker events the 'sense of community' is often highlighted: 'We found confidence in each other's company, and were able to build a close community in this short time' (JYM Epistle 2003). I argue that that this sense of community is not restricted to events but that young Quakers form what can be described as a continuing community, as one young Friend stated: 'JYM doesn't end, it goes on in all of us' (Female 17; Field Notes).

Smith states that participants in informal education learn from each other through a process of dialogue (Smith 2004c: 2). This dialogue is apparent in Quaker youth work both between young people and between adults and young people. Respondents mentioned that talking to people at events had helped them to learn about Quakerism and importantly make friends 'who you can talk to about stuff you might not touch on in everyday conversation' (Female 19; QEQ). A dialogical relationship between young people and adults is also evident 'they [adult volunteers] have experiences and you can share your views on various subjects' (Male 16; QEQ). This

importance of learning through dialogue is also stressed by adult volunteers who see their role as being 'to guide young people through discussion' (AQ). Learning is not just one-way; for example, one adult volunteer reported 'occasionally I teach...they sometimes teach me' (AQ) and another respondent reflected that 'I feel I've learnt at least [as much] if not more, from them than I have taught them' (AQ). The influence that adult volunteers at Quaker events for young people have on adolescent Quakers is clear (QEQ Question 24). 100% of questionnaire respondents stated that adults at Quaker events had had a positive influence on them both as Quakers and in their lives generally. The level of influence undoubtedly varies but this is a remarkable statistic even with a small sample. The ways in which adults have been an influence on young Friends include: giving support and encouragement (23.1%); being an example of what Quakers are like (15.4%); sharing their experiences (15.4%); giving guidance and helping with problems (15.4%); giving opportunities to do things (15%); and giving increased confidence and skills (7.7%).

Informal education 'values people's experiences and feelings' (Smith 2004c: 6) and the opportunities for learning that arise from them. In contrast to this, formal education values answers more than questions and 'young people's questions are treated as a sign of deficit' (Green and Christian 1999: 14). Quaker youth work seeks to give young people the opportunity to 'raise questions about their vision and values and how meaning can be made of their experience' (CYPC 2002a). I suggest that in part this is a result of Quakerism being seen as having 'few answers...there is always room for doubt' (Penny 2003).

### 4.3. Informal Education, Participation and Involvement

Informal education places importance on 'the active involvement of people in the issues that affect their lives' (Smith 2004c: 2). In the context of Quaker youth work this includes the participation of young people in the organisation and running of events. CYPC stresses the importance of participation in Quaker youth work and of young people 'being fully involved, having a voice, being valued and having the right to participate' (CYPC 2003b):

> Participation involves working in such a way that the traditionally accepted balance of power and responsibility between generations alters in favour of young people taking up responsibility in such a way as to promote growth in their personal, social and spiritual development (National Council for Voluntary Youth Services 1981).

Young people are involved in active participation in a variety of roles at Quaker events for young people and adults see their role as one of 'partnership, usually leading but sometimes being led towards better ideas' (AQ). Young people clearly value this involvement: 'One of the brilliant things about JYM is that it is organised by young Quakers' (Conway 2004). However, I argue that the issue of participation in Quaker youth work is often contentious. CYPC states that participation should be 'appropriate' and balanced with 'effective use of resources' (CYPC 2003b). I suggest that there is a conflict between providing activities for young Quakers and giving them responsibility, between what an adult volunteer defined as 'the danger of too much participation' (Field Notes) and ensuring that 'the main organisation should be

up to the young people, so as not to create a feeling of "us and them"' (Female 19; QEQ).

Adults at Quaker events for young people do allow greater involvement than local Quaker meetings. As one respondent stated, '[I dislike] people at my local meeting who do not let us express our own views as well as those at JYM' (Female, 17; YQQ); another responded, 'older Quakers can be not as willing and open as the younger people' (Female, 16; YQQ). However, I contend that adolescent Quakers are marginalised by organisational structures within the Religious Society of Friends and although Quaker events for young people allow some level of participation, this is controlled by adult volunteers. One adolescent stated that the Religious Society of Friends would not change for another ten years because 'we won't have the confidence to express our views until then' (Male 17; Field Notes). Adolescents commented that 'there is no forum for young people to have input into the Religious Society of Friends...there is no way for young people to bring their concerns' (Male 18; Field Notes). Although there is a Quaker Youth Forum appointed by Children and Young People's Committee, I suggest that the range of issues it considers and any resulting minutes are largely controlled by adults and limited in the extent to which they are actively heard by the adult group. In recent years there has been an increased awareness of the Yearly Meeting event including all ages, and including elements of the agenda in the Under 19s programme. However, adolescent involvement is controlled by adult advocates. 'Under 19s needs to be part of the agenda [at Yearly Meeting] and have some influence in setting the agenda' (Male 17; Field Notes). Green states that adolescent Quakers' 'participation is not a right and a given, but dependent on the goodwill of adult Friends' (Green 2005: 8). Although the staff member responsible for the Under 19s programme and a member of CYPC sit on Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee[19] both of these are adults. I contend that adolescents participate in Yearly Meeting but are effectively excluded from decision making because they rarely participate in plenary sessions but do activities in separate age groups. Occasional participation in adult sessions is decided by adults running the adolescents separate programme on the basis of what adults consider to be of interest to the group. One adult volunteer stated that many adults 'presume they wouldn't be interested...they would be bored and distract the sessions' (Field Notes). It should be noted that at a recent Yearly Meeting[20] adolescents raised concerns about their exclusion from decision-making processes and the issues of participation and enfranchisement are currently being considered.[21]

### 4.4. The Role of Adults

I contend above that young people's involvement in events is limited, in part by Quaker structures and in part by the adult volunteers working with them. Despite this, I argue that the role of adults as supporting and empowering young people is similar to the role of an informal educator in seeking to give people the opportunity to explore their experiences and learn from them and 'to work with rather than for people' (Smith 2004a: 4-5).

I argue that the role played by adult volunteers at Quaker events for young people is a significant factor in the nature of education at these events. Consideration needs

to be given both to how adult volunteers perceive their role and relationship with adolescents at Quaker events for young people and also to how adults are perceived by adolescents. 50% of adult volunteers stated that they saw their role as 'mentors', 12.5% as friends and 12.5% as teachers (AQ Question 10). I contend that there is a conceptual difference between the description of mentor, which describes a supportive role, and that of teacher, which implies a formal educative relationship. One respondent stated that they saw their role as 'supporter' and one that it was 'to facilitate the Quaker experience for them'. When questioned, 69% of adolescents stated that adults at Quaker events were regarded as 'friends',[22] 23% as 'mentors' and 8% as 'guides' (QEQ Question 23). Adolescents drew a clear distinction between adults at Quaker events and teachers. 77% of respondents said that there was 'A lot' of difference between teachers and adults at Quaker events, 8% responded 'Quite a lot' and 15% 'A bit'. In contrast to this only 8% said there was 'A lot' of difference between adults at Quaker events and parents, 46% responded 'Quite a lot' and 38% 'A bit'; the remaining 8% said there was not much difference between adults at Quaker events and parents (QEQ Question 26). Fewer adolescents identified a significant contrast between adults at Quaker events and parents. I suggest that this may be because many of their parents are Quakers, indicating that there may be a difference in attitude towards non-Quaker and Quaker adults. 95.4% of YQQ respondents attended meeting for the first time with one or both parents, 2.9% had been to meeting for the first time with a Quaker friend and only 0.3% had attended Meeting for Worship on their own the first time they went. When asked to explain the differences between parents and adults at Quaker events for young people (QEQ Question 27), adolescents' answers focused on the way that adult volunteers related to adolescents with 36% answering that the difference was that they treated them equally and 27% that they were more relaxed. According to one 'rather than instructing, bossing like teachers they are open minded' (Female 19; QEQ); another stated that 'both teachers and parents have responsibilities to make you do something...so they behave differently' (Male 15; QEQ). This distinction between the role of an adult volunteer and that of teacher is also apparent from the responses of adults. Adult volunteers were asked to reflect and comment further on their role at Quaker events for young people (AQ Question 11). Four respondents mentioned their role as being that of an 'informal mentor', two as a facilitator and one each as role model, teacher and supporter. One stated that they were there 'to help the young people but not boss them about' (AQ) and one adult saw their role as being that of 'an informal teacher...as someone who has more life experience and is willing to share it' (AQ). This reflects another difference mentioned by adolescents—that adult volunteers at Quaker events 'have experience and you can share your views on various subjects' (Male 15; QEQ) and that 'there is much more of an opportunity to speak about things openly' (Female 18; QEQ). 18% of respondents gave these or similar answers.

Although the role of adult volunteers is in part educative and includes informal education, a more accurate description of the role is that of 'accompanying' as outlined by Green and Christian (1999).[23] Accompanying is about 'providing a framework, a safe base which the accompanied can use to explore different themes in

their lives' (Green and Christian 1999: 20). The role of the accompanier is 'not someone who will give answers, but someone who will...allow the young person to discover their uniqueness, develop a sense of meaning and understand their personal vocation' (Green and Christian 1999: 29). This aspect of the role of adult volunteers is apparent from responses of both adults and young people: 'They talk to me about my worries and help me to help myself' (Male 15; QEQ) and 'I hope I am someone they can ask questions of...it is important to allow young people a chance to be themselves and express their opinions' (AQ).

## 5. QUAKER YOUTH WORK AND SPIRITUALITY

In Section 4 above I show that Quaker youth work reflects the values and characteristics of informal education and that informal education does take place at Quaker events for young people. In the following section I examine the spiritual basis to Quaker youth work and argue that this is conceptually different from evangelical Christian youth work.

5.1. *The Spiritual Basis of Quaker Events for Young People and Quaker Youth Work*
Quaker youth work is aimed at 'raising awareness in [young people] of their own spirituality and developing and nurturing their spiritual lives' (CYPC 2002a). This aim is

> grounded in Quaker theology. Our emphasis is on creating a worshipping community—based on the vision of the early church that we should be at one with one another spiritually, intellectually, socially (CYPC 2003b).

I argue that inclusion of Quaker worship as a central element of events is a distinctive feature of Quaker events for young people that reflects their spiritual basis. At many events there is worship, both programmed and unprogrammed, twice a day and occasionally more often (Field Notes). There is an emphasis on creating a worshiping community: 'The quality and quantity of ministry reflected the atmosphere of the event and the trust that developed between us' (JYM Epistle 2004). Young people, adult volunteers and CYPC Committee members alike emphasise the importance of Quaker worship at such events (QEQ Question 17, AQ Question 7, CQ Question 9). Amongst young people 77% state that worship is 'very important' and 23% 'quite important'. 87% of adult volunteers stated that worship is 'very important' with 13% categorising it as 'quite important'. 100% of CYPC members stated that worship is 'very important' at Quaker events for young people. I suggest that the ritual of Quaker worship has an influence on the nature of these events:

> The worship which held JYM together...was the basis of everything and was really deep. For the first time...I felt my pulse race and my hands tremble and I knew I had something to say to the meeting (Gulliver 2004).

I argue that the significance of Quaker worship at events and the basis of Quaker youth work in Quaker theology reflects the idea, asserted by one adult volunteer,

that Quaker events for young people are about 'teaching them [young Quakers] about Quakerism, getting them interested in Quakerism' (AQ). This gives rise to the question of whether Quaker events for young people are concerned with the inculcation of Quaker beliefs and values and, related to this, whether they are successful in achieving this, which will be discussed in Section 6.

### 5.2. Contrast and Comparisons with Christian Youth Work

Before examining the question of faith transmission at Quaker events for young people it is helpful to contrast Quaker youth work with Christian youth work, which has faith transmission to young people as a specific aim.

The contrast and comparisons are problematic because there are no primary empirical findings on the nature of Christian youth work and, as such, the comparison is unequal. The comparison of empirical findings and published statements about Quaker youth work only with published statements regarding Christian youth work was made largely because the main focus of this article is on the nature of Quaker youth work and also, in part, because of the difficulty of undertaking field work at Christian youth events. Comparisons with Christian youth work are drawn in order to identify and illustrate the nature of Quaker youth work.

Breen (1993) identifies two models of Christian youth work: the 'inside-out' and the 'outside-in'. The 'outside-in' model focuses explicitly on evangelism to 'unchurched' young people in the community in which the church is based (Onslow-MacAuley 2002: 57). Milson claims that this approach seems unwilling to allow young people to work out their own problems, instead seeking conformity to a previously accepted pattern (Milson 1963: 124). The evangelist, according to Milson, must always be a propagandist rather than an educator, seeking 'inculcation of a creed' (Milson 1963: 124).

Milson has criticised Christian youth work which focuses on 'securing a verdict and a commitment from young people rather than to foster the search' (Milson 1981: 5). Christianity, according to Astley and Crowther 'introduces [people] to, and imposes on them…the values of Christian spirituality' (Astley and Crowther 1996: xi).

I contend that Quaker youth work, in contrast, focuses on the 'inside-out' model centred around working with the children of existing adult members of a church congregation.[24] Virtually all those involved in Quaker events for young people are the children of existing members and attenders. Only 3.2% of YQQ respondents had become involved in Quakerism either through friends or on their own. According to Hull 'evangelism is directed at outsiders…nurturing at insiders' (Hull 2004: 11); within Quaker youth work, the emphasis is on 'nurturing the spiritual life of children and young people' (CYPC 1996), rather than on evangelism and gaining converts.

Dandelion (1996) describes the popular theology of the Quaker group as post-Christian. 50.7% of the adult group describe themselves as Christian (Dandelion 1996: 176); however, there is ambivalence within liberal-Liberal Quakerism between being Christian and being Quaker and of the implications of identifying as Christian (Dandelion 1996: 182). Since Dandelion's research there has been a further shift away from the Quaker–Christian orthodoxy. Only 12.6% of YQQ respondents

identified themselves as Christian, 14.3% stated that Jesus was an important or very important figure in their spiritual life, and 55.7% that Jesus was not an important figure in their spiritual life. Only 77.1 % had read all or part of the Bible, with 42.5% stating that they had found it helpful whilst 34.6% had found it unhelpful. In light of these figures I argue that the adolescent Quaker group is most accurately described as non-Christian. Within liberal-Liberal Quakerism there is also evident a desire to avoid the appearance of evangelism. Quakers use the term 'outreach' to describe publicising Quakerism amongst non-Quakers. With 'outreach', care is taken to avoid evangelism or proselytisation, with a focus on information rather than 'message' (Dandelion 1996: 366).

According to Pugh, Christian youth work faces a charge of indoctrination both in terms of content and method (Pugh 2004). The 'outside–in' method is one of 'teaching with the intention that the pupil will believe what is taught is such a way that nothing will subsequently shake his belief' (White quoted in Rose 1996: 175). In contrast to this Quakers 'endorse affirmation of diverse religious paths, so freeing their young people from exclusive sectarian allegiance' (Nesbitt 2001: 137).

I contend that the ambivalence with Christianity and the desire to avoid the appearance of evangelism influence the nature of faith transmission at Quaker events for young people, and results in the exclusive focus of Quaker youth work on nurturing and its emphasis on broad values and diverse beliefs. I argue that Quaker youth work has a distinct focus that differs from that of evangelical, 'outside-in' Christian youth work, which represents the transmission of a particular, and prescribed, set of beliefs.

## 6. QUAKER EVENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAITH TRANSMISSION

In this section I consider the question of the extent to which Quaker events for young people are concerned with the inculcation of Quaker beliefs and values and, related to this, their success in achieving this. I contend that faith transmission at Quaker events is distinct from Christian faith transmission. I suggest that there are three key elements that influence faith transmission at Quaker events for young people; first the de-emphasis and diversity of belief, secondly the role of adults and thirdly the setting and community in which the faith transmission takes place.

### 6.1. *Liberal Belief Culture within Adolescent Quakerism*
Dandelion identifies a liberal attitude towards belief within liberal-Liberal Quakerism,[25] highlighted by a de-emphasis and marginalisation of belief (Dandelion 1996: 303). I argue that belief amongst adolescent Quakers has been further de-emphasised. For Dandelion, the Quaker belief in 'that of God in everyone' represents 'the parameter of acceptability of popular Quaker theology' (Dandelion 1996: 300). I contend that this is not the case for adolescents. 6.2% of YQQ respondents mentioned 'that of God in everyone' as a belief item, and 15% of interview participants identified a belief in 'that of God in everyone'. In addition to this, 15% identified 'the inner light' or 'the light within' all people as a key item of Quaker

belief. The percentage may be higher if respondents were presented with this belief and asked if they subscribed to it; however, I suggest it is highly significant that the percentage that indicated this belief is so low, given that 100% of Dandelion's interviewees indicated a belief in 'that of God in everyone' (Dandelion 1996: 300).

I suggest that adolescent Quakers view the plurality of Quaker belief as being all inclusive: 'I can think what I want and be part of the Quaker ethos' (Male 17; YQQ). The reflection by one adult volunteer that 'young Quakers think that you can believe anything you want' (Field Notes) is reinforced by the statements of young Friends that they like 'the liberal attitude toward religion' (Female 17; YQQ) and the 'freedom to believe what you want' (Female 17; YQQ). In an open ended question (YQQ Question 7) 26.0% of YQQ respondents stated that they liked the freedom to believe what you want. Individual responses reflect a positive attitude to the absence of dogma and doctrine within Quakerism: 'I like how Quakerism does not force itself onto people, it is sort of individual. It is very fair and open minded, very accepting' (Female 16; YQQ) and 'your faith is your own interpretation of a few simple guidelines' (Female 16; YQQ). I suggest that because the plurality of Quaker belief is totally permissive the vocalisation of belief stories is treated as the expression of a personal view rather than an attempt to express a truth beyond that, and, unlike with the adult group, individual adolescent's belief stories are not marginalised but accepted as valid for that individual.

I argue that as a result of the de-emphasis of belief within adolescent Quakerism the faith transmission that takes place at Quaker events for young people is value based rather than belief orientated and represents a process of socialisation or 'enculturation' (Seymour 1996: 4) into the values and practices of the Quaker group. The emphasis is placed, not on teaching about Quaker beliefs, but on enabling young people to 'find out what being a Quaker means to them' (AQ). This is reflected by the fact that 38.5% of young Friends stated that they had learnt 'A lot' about Quaker beliefs and 61.5% felt they had learnt 'A lot' about their personal beliefs—two aspects which are not necessarily mutually exclusive but may not be equivalent.

I suggest that for adolescent Quakers, belief is associated with traditional religion whereas broad values are associated with how one lives one's life. The statement that 'Quakerism is more a way of life than a religion to me' (Male 17, Field Notes) was indicative of responses from group interviews. Janet Scott writes that 'what matters to Quakers is not the label...but the life' (Scott 1980: 70). Adolescents echo this by saying that: 'we see living our lives guided by Quaker values as more important than if we have officially joined' (BYM 2004, Minute 39, 16–18s Group).

Fieldwork undertaken for the wider research project suggests that adolescent Quakers regard themselves as substantially different from other adolescents because they are more likely to have 'alternative' beliefs and stronger values and, most signifi-cantly, are pacifists and opposed to war.[26] The differences are highlighted by the fact that many adolescent Quakers have their beliefs derided because they are different from the majority and because 'people at school think religion and God are stupid' (Male 15; Field Notes). 'Because we don't feel we have to justify our beliefs, we become easy bullying targets to people who don't understand us' (Female 17; Field Notes). I suggest that adolescent Quakers have more diverse theology that varies

'from strong Christian to almost agnostic or atheist' (Female 18; Field Notes) but is also a theology that can be defined as 'spiritual rather than religious' (Female 18; Field Notes).

While Quaker belief is de-emphasised, greater weight is given to Quaker values and to the importance of belonging expressed through community and friendships. Quaker values are both explicit at events and implicit in the way events are organised (Field Notes). Through the acceptance of diverse beliefs at Quaker events for young people, faith transmission reflects and reinforces the de-emphasis on belief.

### 6.2. *Faith Transmission and the Role of Youth Workers*

In all faith-based youth work the focus of faith transmission is influenced by the purpose of the work as understood and practised by youth workers.[27] Pugh asserts that for Christian workers faith provides a unique motivation and that a sense of vocation, a calling or invitation from God to engage in young people's lives, is central to Christian youth work (Pugh 2004: 2-3). Barnett expresses this more overtly, stating that meeting the spiritual needs of young people is a sacred Christian duty (Barnett quoted in Pugh 2004: 2). When adult volunteers at Quaker events for young people were questioned about their reasons for volunteering (AQ Question 5) 30% stated it was either a form of 'Quaker service' (AQ) or that they had valued similar events when young Friends themselves and wanted to 'give something back' (AQ) and enable others to gain from the experience.

Adult volunteers at Quaker events for young people clearly play an important part in shaping the nature of the faith transmission that takes place and I argue that they place an emphasis on broad Quaker values and on 'spiritual seeking', rather than on doctrinal belief transmission:

> It is not about turning young people into good Quakers who go to meeting every week—many will go home and continue to stay in bed on Sunday mornings—it is about offering a place where they feel at home to explore their beliefs, motivations and direction (Penny 2003).

58% of adult volunteers mentioned Quaker events for young people as having what I describe as an 'explicit' Quaker purpose. These include: giving young Friends the opportunity to learn about Quakerism; encouraging young Friends to become Quakers; giving them the chance to meet other young Quakers; and providing an opportunity to live in a Quaker community. A further 16% stated an 'implicit' Quaker purpose: helping young people to develop their values and enabling young people to grow spiritually. However, I argue that these aims are often phrased in general, non-Quaker-specific terms with no explicit reference to passing on particular Quaker beliefs but rather mention an intention to 'develop the values of young people' (AQ) and to 'help young people value spirituality' (AQ). One adult volunteer stated that his reasons for volunteering were

> To show young people that you can actually live as a Quaker and being a Quaker is [about] more than going to meeting on Sunday. It is about a practical day-to-day existence, which is not necessarily to do with being a hippy, or a particularly 'alternative' lifestyle (AQ).

From the perspective of participants, adults at Quaker events for young people 'rather than instructing…are open minded and one doesn't feel preached at' (Female 19; QEQ). 100% of questionnaire respondents stated that adults at Quaker events had had a positive influence on them both as Quakers and in their lives generally (QEQ Question 24). 15.4% of adolescents said that adults at events had influenced them through being an example of what Quakers are like, and a further 15.4% through sharing their experiences and giving them guidance. 23.1% said that adults at Quaker events had influenced them through giving support and encouragement.

I argue that Quaker youth workers, by placing the emphasis on a broad spiritual seeking, often focused on the practical expression of values, influence the nature of faith transmission at Quaker events for young people.

### 6.3. *Faith Transmission; Setting and Experience*

For Westerhoff, the most important factors in faith transmission are the setting for learning and the character of the experience (Westerhoff quoted in Seymour 1996: 5). I argue that the setting and character of Quaker events for young people are more conducive to faith transmission to adolescents than other means. When asked what had helped them to learn about Quakerism (QEQ Question 28) adolescents identified being with other young Quakers as the most important in learning about Quakerism (29%) and the atmosphere at Quaker events for young people (14%) as the second most significant factor. I argue that Quaker events for young people enable adolescents to come into contact with a form of Quakerism which they are able to explore and relate to dialogically. These events represent socialisation both through the implicit and informal teaching of Quaker values and through the inclusion of adolescents in the Quaker community. Green emphasises the role of the 'gathering function' in the understanding of adolescent Quaker identity (Green 2005: 12-13) and states that 'gathering together supports Quaker children and young people, giving them a chance to explore their identity with other Quakers in light of their likely geographical, religious and philosophical isolation' (Green 2005: 12). These events enable adolescents to gather and make connections with other adolescents, to develop friendships and create networks. In Section 3.3 I show that adolescent Quakers identify themselves as having gained close friendships from their involvement in Quaker events for young people. 84.6% of QEQ respondents stated that they had gained friendships from their involvement in Quaker events for young people. 66.3% of YQQ respondents stated that they had either a lot or some Quaker friends of their own age. 91.7% of those that had Quaker friends their age (75.6% of total respondents) stated that these were close friendships.

Through enabling adolescents to gather together in community Quaker events for young people are an essential element of their Quaker identity: 92.3% of QEQ respondents stated that going to Quaker events for young people made them think or feel that they were 'more Quaker' and 84.6% of respondents stated that this was something they had specifically gained as a result of going to Quaker events for young people. 92.3% of respondents stated that going to Quaker events for young people was either 'Very important' (61.5%), or 'Quite important' (30.8%), for them as a Quaker (QEQ Question 6a).

I contend that Quaker events for young people and the faith transmission that takes place at these events enables adolescent Quakers to actively claim or 'appropriate' Quakerism for themselves: 'although I have always gone to meeting as well when I was little but didn't really think of myself as a Quaker, I just went coz my mum did' (Female 15, Field Notes); 'I left [JYM] feeling that Quakerism is mine rather than going along because my parents went and I was fairly happy with it' (Female 17; Field Notes). Quaker events for young people also enable them to confirm their Quaker identity: 'I found out who I was [at JYM], I am a Quaker and now I'm sure of that' (Gulliver 2004) and 'I feel more part of Quakerism at all levels—my local meeting up to Yearly Meeting' (QEQ, Female 19). This 'appropriation' of Quakerism results in a sense of belonging that is reflected by increased attendance at Meeting for Worship. 69.3% of respondents stated that they had been to Meeting for Worship more as a result of going to Quaker events for young people (23.1% had been 'a lot more' and 46.2% 'a bit more'); 23.1% stated that they had not attended meeting more as a result of going to Quaker events for young people.

## 7. CONCLUSION

I argue that Quaker youth work and Quaker events for young people represent both informal education and broad, nurturing, value-based faith transmission.

Education is given as a purpose of Quaker youth work, both by official policy papers and by CYPC members and adult volunteers, although teaching of Quaker belief may not be stated explicitly. I argue that Quaker events for young people have both implicit and explicit Quaker purposes, which include education and faith transmission. Responses from adolescents and adult volunteers indicate that education does take place at Quaker events for young people. I contend that the education that takes places is similar to informal education and yet has a distinctive spiritual basis which makes it conceptually different. Quaker youth work differs from evangelical Christian youth work in both its focus and approach and represents a distinctive method of faith transmission. The faith transmission at Quaker events for young people happens through conversation, discussion and exploration and is focused on transmission of Quaker values and on the creation of Quaker community. I argue that because of the liberal, non-creedal content of Quaker belief and the marginalisation of belief within British Quakerism (Dandelion 1996: 259-60), the faith transmission that takes place at Quaker events for young people is practical and value based rather than belief orientated and centres on the enculturation of core Quaker values and the inclusion of adolescents in the Quaker community. Through the acceptance of diverse beliefs at Quaker events for young people, faith transmission at these events reflects and reinforces the de-emphasis on belief. Quaker events for young people are a visible representation of the Quaker community and of networks between individuals. Adolescents' responses indicate the importance of community and friendships as being aspects of events they find enjoyable and gain from. Events have Quaker values as both explicit and implicit features, while emphasising the plurality and non-creedal nature of belief. Quaker events for young people provide a unique opportunity for adolescent Quakers to openly talk about spirituality, which

are seldom talked about elsewhere (CYPC 1996). I argue that as a result of these three factors Quaker events for young people are the most effective means of faith transmission for this age group, illustrated by increased knowledge of Quaker beliefs and values and an increased sense of involvement in, and belonging to, the Quaker community.

## NOTES

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1.    Quaker youth work is an umbrella term used to refer to Quaker events for young people, programmes of activities for young people at all-age Quaker events and Children's Meeting (activities undertaken by children and young people during Meeting for Worship; see also n. 20 below).

2.    This term is used to refer to events that are exclusively for young Quakers, regardless of length, in contrast to events for all ages, which have separate programmes for young people and which, I argue, are structurally different.

3.    The term Christian is used as a point of contrast partly because no contrast is given between Quaker youth work and other non-Christian faith-based youth work. Dandelion (1996) states that the popular theology of the Quaker group is properly defined as post-Christian and has moved beyond the traditional Quaker–Christian paradigm. My forthcoming PhD research shows that only 12.6% of adolescent Quakers identified themselves as Christian and I argue that the adolescent Quaker group is most accurately described as non-Christian.

4.    This research project forms my thesis for a PhD in Quaker Studies at the University of Birmingham, forthcoming 2006.

5.    Britain Yearly Meeting is the organisation of Quakers in Britain. This term also refers to the annual business meeting of Friends in Britain.

6.    Children and Young People's Committee (CYPC) is a committee of Britain Yearly Meeting which is responsible for organising events for young people and providing training and resources for Friends working with those under 19. CYPC is responsible for running Junior Yearly Meeting (see n. 9 below). CYPC has twelve members. Completed questionnaires were received from 3 members, representing 25% of the committee. This term is also used to refer to Children and Young People's Committee of various local meetings. In this study CYPC will be used to refer to Children and Young People's Committee of Britain Yearly Meeting. Where it refers to a local CYPC this will be made explicit in the text.

7.    The wider research project included adolescents aged 11 to 18, while the focus of this research was narrowed to ensure that the respondents had participated in a number of Quaker events for young people. 19 year olds were included as it would be likely they would have participated in a number and variety of events and could give a more long-term perspective of the educational value of the events.

8.    This was done to reflect the fact that the constituency for this research contains more females than males.

9.    Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) is a five-day residential event for Quakers aged between 16 and 18. Monthly Meetings and Quaker Schools within Britain Yearly Meeting appoint representatives (usually two) to attend JYM. JYM is organised by Britain Yearly Meeting CYPC (see n. 6 above).

10.   Southern Summer School is a week-long residential event, organised independently of any Monthly Meeting or Yearly Meeting. It is attended by young Friends aged 11–14 from Monthly Meetings in the southern half of England.

11.   Summer Gathering is an event organised by Britain Yearly Meeting and held every four years. This event is open to all members and attendees and focuses on activities and spiritual exploration rather than formal business as is the case with Britain Yearly Meeting.

12. Southern Senior Conference is a week-long residential events, organised independently of any Monthly Meeting or Yearly Meeting. It is attended by young Friends aged 15–18 from Monthly Meetings in the southern half of England.

13. Data from the first questionnaire are indicated by the abbreviation YQQ (denoting 'Young Quakers Questionnaire'). Data from the second questionnaire are indicated by the abbreviation QEQ (denoting 'Quaker Events Questionnaire').

14. Participant observation took place as follows: JYM (five days, April 2003), Britain Yearly Meeting Summer Gathering (two days August 2003), Southern Summer School (seven days, August 2003), Yorkshire link Group (one day, September 2003), Warwickshire Junior Young Friends (one day, December 2003), Lancashire and Cheshire Teenage General Meeting (three days, December 2003).

15. Britain Yearly Meeting is the organisation of Quakers in Britain and refers both to a collection of Monthly Meetings, e.g. within Britain, and also to the annual meetings of all Friends within Britain. A programme for young Friends (aged 19 and under) runs alongside this annual meeting.

16. In the context of this article, the term 'evangelical' does not refer to a particular denomination, theology or style of worship but to an approach to outreach and conversion.

17. 'Children's Meeting' refers to the activities undertaken by the children with one or more adult volunteers during the Meeting for Worship. Children are normally present in the Meeting for Worship for approximately 10 minutes either at the beginning or end of the hour long Meeting for Worship.

18. In my PhD research I refer to these networks as a 'Community of Intimacy', a collective grouping which places emphasis on inter-personal networks secured by friendships and the difference and separateness of the group both from other Quakers and from other young people. The term 'Community of Intimacy' refers to both the visible community, as expressed in the separate space occupied by adolescent Quakers during 'Quaker-time' (for example, at Quaker events) and to the variable, networked community of friendships between adolescents that exists beyond and between 'Quaker-time' gatherings.

19. Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee is responsible for deciding the business to be addressed by the Yearly Meeting at each yearly gathering.

20. The term Yearly Meeting applies both to a collection of Monthly Meetings, for example, within Britain, and also to the annual meetings of all Friends within Britain. The Yearly Meeting concerned took place 30 July–6 August 2005, at the University of York (Minute 24 of Britain Yearly Meeting 2005 [BYM 2005]).

21. At the time of writing (October 2005) Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee, the body responsible for preparing the business for the annual meetings and deciding how business will be considered, is addressing the issues related to involvement of adolescents in decision making.

22. The use of a lower case f is deliberate to avoid confusion with 'Friends', a term used to describe someone associated with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

23. The 'accompanying' model is a Christian model based on the biblical model of Jesus meeting his disciples on the road to Emmaus; however, it is applicable outside of the context of Christian youth work.

24. Here I take 'members of the Church congregation' in its broadest sense to denote parents who are members or attenders at Meetings within the Yearly Meeting.

25. Liberal–liberal is used by Dandelion to describe current trends within British Quakerism and is marked by a liberal attitude to the liberal theology that became ascendant in Britain Yearly Meeting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The 'liberal–liberal' phase is, according to Dandelion, 'characterised by pluralism, division and debate' (1996: 14).

26. I argue that the significance of the difference comes not necessarily from the fact of their anti-war stance, as recently there has been a sizeable anti-war movement amongst adolescents, but because the belief has a religious basis and is also a more extensive pacifism rather than opposition to a particular conflict.

27. Youth workers is used as a general term and is not intended to refer only to professionally qualified youth workers or paid Quaker staff but includes adult volunteers at Quaker events for young people.

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