

LISTENING FAITHFULLY WITH FRIENDS:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF QUAKER COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

LISTENING FAITHFULLY WITH FRIENDS:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF QUAKER COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

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One of the most basic human questions is whether there is a divine presence with which we can interact, and, if so, how do we communicate with this presence and how should the results of our communication be manifest in our lives? This study is an exploration of how one community has sought to answer these questions in their practices. The researcher adopts an ethnography of communication perspective, informed by cultural discourse analysis, cultural communication, speech codes theory, and the coordinated management of meaning, to explore the communicative practices of members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the United States, with a focus on the practices of participants at a meeting of unprogrammed, liberal Friends. This research seeks to answer questions about these Friends' practices in their meeting activities, including: When are the phrases "gathered" meeting, "corporate discernment" or "spiritual journey" used by Quakers? What are the forms of communication identified with these terms? and Are there deep cultural meanings about communication, sociality, and personhood active in communication about or during

these practices? Data are drawn from approximately a year and a half of participation in the meeting community and include field notes on participation in meetings for worship, articles in a Quaker publication, and recordings of meetings for business, of interviews, and of Friends telling their “spiritual journeys.” This work seeks to contribute to scholarship on cultural communication, religious communication, decision making, silence, narrative, and identity and suggests comparisons with the practices of other religious traditions. Most importantly, it attempts to provide a descriptive and interpretive account of how it is that Quakers understand communication with a spiritual presence to be fundamentally based in expectant group silence, understood as *listening* together, which in turn is the foundation for the process through which they reach agreement in meetings for business on corporate social action. Findings include the identification of distinctive characteristics of “gathered” meetings for worship, the description of elements of a Quaker style of speaking, and the formulation of a Quaker code of communication, including cultural premises of value and norms for acting in the community.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 1.1 Introduction

The process of taking finals at the small liberal arts college that I attended is unlike that of any other school I have heard of. During the two week exam period, students pick which days work best in their schedules for each exam that they must take, along with one of three time slots, the morning, afternoon, or evening exam period. Then, shortly before the exam time, they go to a room on the first floor of the building on campus where all finals are held and tell the student in charge their name and the exam they plan to take. Exams are stored in large manila envelopes and filed under students' names. Students bring the exam, still in the envelope, up to one of the classrooms on the second floor of the building to take. Often four or five students seat themselves at the desks spread out in each classroom. They wait together, arranging pens or pencils and scrap paper on the desk in front of them, glancing around at each other and the clock at the front of the room. At the designated start time, without exchanging a word, all students in the room open the envelope in front of them containing their final. They sign the initial page, which contains a brief explanation stating that they will take their exams in accordance with the school's honor code, and then they begin their final. At the end of the three hour exam period, students slip the exams back into their envelopes and return them to the room downstairs, to be collected and graded later by professors at the end of the finals period.



In four years of taking all of my in-class exams and finals without a professor or proctor present, I never witnessed anyone “cheating,” and I never heard a report of someone taking advantage of the lack of supervision in order to enhance their performance. All conduct at this small college is understood to be guided by the academic and social honor codes, and, as in the case of being given the freedom to take exams on the day and at the time of one’s choice, the existence of these codes has a very real effect on the experiences of students at this school. Students are introduced to this “code” of “honor” the moment they respond to their acceptance into the school by sending back a signed card, giving their word that they will attend. The first week of the semester freshman year is called “Customs Week,” when students are introduced to a new “culture” through many discussions and activities focused on what the honor code means and how it is lived on campus. Guiding these practices embodied in this “code” are certain assumptions about people and about the nature of relationships between professors and students and among students. Without these assumptions, these practices would perhaps not make sense or even be possible.

The “code” at the school I attended was in fact initially developed by the religious founders of the school, members of the Religious Society of Friends or Quakers, and is still closely adhered to, even though the school is no longer affiliated with any religious institution. Quakers constitute a small subculture within the United States, but their influence, not only in the area of education, but in the wider social and political context of the country, is far-reaching. While much has been written about Friends, in particular by Friends and from a historical perspective, little research has focused on the present-day communicative practices of the community that sustain them and provide the

foundation for continued action. This work is an effort to understand Quaker processes from a communication perspective, as communicative practices have and continue to provide the groundwork for the creation and maintenance of a “code” of behavior that is distinctly at odds with surrounding cultural practices.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

It has been written that “the Quaker sitting in silence without a professional preacher in his unadorned meeting house, most perfectly represents the credo of individualism” (Northrop, 1947, as cited in Chase, 1951, p. 46). The tension of individual versus communal forces is a central dynamic underlying communication in all cultures, according to Philipsen (1987). Arundale (2010) describes this dialectic as cultural understandings of connection versus those of separation that play themselves out differently in different cultural interactions. This issue of balancing individual and communal forces is a central problem confronting national and international groups today, as they struggle to decide how to respect the rights of the individual in the face of the needs of the community. In the United States, the American discourse of “self” versus “society” (Carbaugh, 1988/1989) is evident in debates regarding healthcare or the need to give aid to foreign countries. The playing out of this dynamic in practices among members of the Religious Society of Friends might seem somewhat paradoxical, however, in that Quaker individualism “is nourished by an unusual system of group participation” (Chase, 1951, p. 46). Participation in events such as meeting for worship and meeting for business constitutes communal action that supports the belief that each person can individually hear the word of God. These events might in this way be defined

as representative of *communal* individualism. To complicate the situation still further, Friends understand the basis of their communicative practices to be in silence. With so much focus and emphasis placed on bettering personal and international relationships through “dialogue” (Wierzbicka, 2006), the suggestion made by Quakers to *listen* together in silence as a way of seeking a solution could seem strange, unrealistic, and perhaps ineffective. However, Quakers have throughout their history been at the forefront of many social movements and taken action as a community long before others were ready to acknowledge a problem. **The argument here is that the history of social activism of the Religious Society of Friends is based in communicative practices that support and encourage the strength of the individual at the same time that they foster a communal ethic of helping others in and as a group.** An in-depth analysis of the communication of a small religious group can speak to wider issues involving religious communicative practices, as these reflect and create certain key assumptions regarding the nature of being a person and relating to others in the world. These assumptions animate international relations and have profound implications for the future of intercultural interactions, necessitating continued research in the area of communication. This work seeks to contribute to comparative research on religious communication, such as the work of Bauman (1970, 1983), Daniel and Smitherman (1976), Lippard (1988), Griefat and Katriel (1989), Bland (1990), Buttny and Isbell (1991), Sequeira (1994), Wick (1998), Shoaps (2002), and Druart (2007) in order to highlight commonly overlooked, but deeply felt premises of communication. When so many are advocating fast solutions and change, the notion of basing action in communal silent waiting may not

appeal, but given the success of those who have used this method, it is perhaps wise to heed Friends when they admonish, “don’t just do something, sit there.”

### **1.3 Research Questions**

In his seminal 1962 article, *The Ethnography of Speaking*, Hymes expressed the goal to fill “the gap between what is usually described in grammars, and what is usually described in ethnographies” (p. 16). He was concerned that patterns of speaking were being analyzed as a representation of other phenomena and that speaking was not being analyzed in and of itself. Hymes wished to challenge the common assumptions that speaking does not have a pattern, that it is used in the same way across cultures, that it is inferior to and merely an enactment of abstract language, and that one language equals one culture. He developed a framework that could be used as an etic guide to organize the analysis of patterns of speaking across different cultures. Instead of focusing on a language as his unit of analysis, Hymes advocated using a social unit of analysis, namely a speech community, which he defined as a community that shares rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and for the interpretation of at least one shared linguistic variety.

This study of the patterns of communicating of Quakers, an English-speaking subculture<sup>1</sup> within the United States, will challenge the problematic suppositions mentioned by Hymes, namely through the highlighting of culturally distinct speech patterns and the important role they play in community life. Given the centrality of culturally unique communication phenomena in the Quaker community, it would seem to

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<sup>1</sup> Sequeira (1994) cites Neitz’s (1990) call for studying religious discourse in “modern heterogeneous societies” and considering religious movements as “subcultures,” especially in an American context (p. 126).

be a particularly rich setting for an ethnographic study of communicative practices. George Fox, considered the founder of Quakerism in the seventeenth century, drew on communicative behavior early on as a way of defining and enacting his ideas about the possibilities of communion with the divine. Fox and his followers adopted the use of distinctive vocabulary and different ways for employing pronouns that eventually came to be known as “plain speech” and is still used by some Quakers today. Although “plain speech” is not widespread, many Quakers continue to draw on a distinctive vocabulary, called humorously by some “Quakerese,” that consists of both uncommon terms, for example “convincement” or “corporate discernment,” as well as common terms used in culturally specific ways, such as “Friends” or “gathered.” Quakers are probably most widely known for their unique understanding and practice of “silence” in their meetings for worship, a communicative practice that is quite different from common practices of prayer and communication with the divine among other religious communities. In these ways, communicative practices play a central role in defining Quaker understandings of relationships between people and the divine, of how one enacts membership in this community, and, more broadly, of what it means to be a Quaker.

In fact, interest in the communicative practices of Friends has a long history in the ethnography of communication tradition; Hymes' (1974) work, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics*, contains a reference to the speaking habits of two Quaker preachers in a discussion of the contributions which social anthropology can make to the development of the ethnography of communication. The most well-known ethnographic account of Quaker practices in this tradition is the historical analysis of Bauman (1970, 1983), who argues that “the seventeenth-century Quakers are of special interest to the ethnography of

speaking” because of the way in which distinctive manners of speaking played a role in establishing the social identity of Quakers (1983, p. 10). However, unlike many other speech communities studied by ethnographers of communication, seventeenth-century Quakers viewed speaking “in essentially negative terms and disvalued it” (Bauman, 1983, p. 10). According to Bauman, this difference provides an important reference for comparison, which is one of the central goals set forth for the ethnography of speaking by Hymes (1962). The analysis here will extend this comparison to modern-day practices, which share features with early enactments, but have also undergone significant changes since the performances of early ministers.

In 1972, Hymes introduced the idea of a speech situation, which he defined as a situation in a speech community marked by an association with speaking and recognized as integral and bounded by the participants in that community, but not governed by the same rules of speaking throughout. A speech situation is made up, according to Hymes, of speech events, which are activities bounded by rules of speaking, and these are composed of speech acts, the minimal term of the set, not equivalent to any element of grammar, but serving as the interface between grammar and social meanings. Here I will examine communication in a Quaker meeting through three speech events, which were identified as focal events for members through participation in the community. These include the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour.<sup>2</sup> Certain unique practices and processes of these speech events will be the focus of various chapters. Specifically the occurrence of a “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship, the process of “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” during

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that participants at this meeting have a different name for this event, but I have changed it to “adult education hour” as a more general descriptive term in order to protect privacy.

meeting for business, and the telling of “spiritual journeys” during the adult education hour will be the focus of these analyses.

In the development of the ethnography of communication in the tradition of cultural communication, scholars have explored the culturally distinctive means and meanings of communication that function as heuristic and performative resources in speech communities. Carbaugh (1988) defined cultural communication as highlighting socially situated processes of meaning making that are “a) deeply felt, b) commonly intelligible, and c) widely accessible” (p. 38). Communicative practices among Quakers will be analyzed in this analysis as cultural communication, imbued with cultural forms and significances that are distinct from other communities; the three focal events described above and the practices that make them up will be examined in terms of the cultural meanings that inform their enactment. The way in which these practices serve as performative resources in the community will be explored.

Two other theories that have built on the ethnography of communication and cultural communication include speech codes theory and cultural discourse analysis. Philipsen (1987) distinguished between culture as code, or “a system of beliefs, values, and images of the ideal,” and culture as conversation, or the “patterned representation of a people's lived experience of work, play, and worship” (1987, p. 249). Philipsen understood community as the place where these two come together and code is learned and conversation is played out. Thus, for Philipsen (1987) cultural communication is the realizing and negotiation of code in communal conversation. Cultural discourse analysis can be understood as developing at the nexus of cultural communication and speech codes theory. Carbaugh (2007) defines discourse in cultural discourse analysis as “a

historically transmitted expressive system of communicative practices, of acts, events, and styles, which are composed of specific symbols, symbolic forms, norms, and their meanings” (p. 169). The notion of cultural discourse, or a system of specific symbols and their meanings, will be drawn on here when examining the three central speech events described above in order to formulate a Quaker communication code that is constituted by certain beliefs and values and plays out in communal conversation. The cultural assumptions identified as informing these focal practices both challenge popularly understood notions of personhood and communication and open up new ways for conceptualizing group processes. Thus, the study of communicative processes among Quakers presents itself as a way of accessing and understanding the practices through which a small community comes to have such a profound and enduring effect on wider society.

The guiding research questions of my analysis will focus on the structures and significances of the communication phenomena identified above. I will seek to explore both how these events are described in verbal and written communication about them, as well as what form they take when actually enacted. Research questions with the first focus include:

*When are the phrases, “gathered” meeting, “corporate discernment,” or “spiritual journeys” used by Quakers? In what contexts, with what meanings?*

These questions will be addressed specifically in the initial portions of several chapters as a way of beginning to identify and analyze key communicative events in the speech community. They will provide the reader with a rationale for the focus on certain events as central and with a framework for understanding these events as they are described and



analyzed in the subsequent portions of the chapters. Rather than jumping directly into a description of specific observed instances of these events, I will first overview characteristics and beliefs regarding these interactions by describing and analyzing how members of the community draw on them in communication. This first question is a good starting point because examples of the use of these phrases are easily accessible in written texts by Quaker authors. Also, reading these texts parallels the actions of many community members as they seek to enrich their spiritual life, as well as the initial practices of outsiders considering participation in the community, who may at first search these texts for information about how to appropriately take part in meeting for worship before attending.

As described above, cultural communication, speech codes theory, and cultural discourse analysis assert that as participants communicate, they also, explicitly or implicitly, say something about communal notions concerning what it means to be a person in this community in interaction with others. The analysis here will focus on these meanings implicated in communication about these events through posing the following question:

*Are there deep cultural meanings about communication, sociality, and personhood in communication about these “gathered” meetings, about “corporate discernment,” or about telling “spiritual journeys”?*

This analysis will in this way contribute to the articulation of underlying assumptions, or as they are called in cultural discourse analysis, cultural premises (Carbaugh, 2007), that can be understood as unique to this community and as foundational for a communicative code active within the community.

Research questions that will focus on the actual enactment of certain communicative practices include:

*What are the forms of communication identified by Quakers as a “gathered” meeting, as “corporate discernment,” or as the telling of a “spiritual journey”?*

*What are their cultural meanings?*

These questions will take the analysis beyond an explanation of how people formulate an event in communication to how they actually participate in that event. It will ground the understandings of these events in empirical data that may support or complicate the way these interactions are drawn on in communication. Specifically, Hymes’ etic framework for descriptive accounts in the ethnography of communication will be the basis for this analysis. Also, since all of these speech events, especially the meeting for worship, draw heavily on nonverbal communication, described by Quakers as “silence,” this practice will be a focus of the analysis. After participation in “silence” has been described, I will delve more deeply into the role of “silence” in these processes.

Again both literal and metaphorical meanings concerning communication, sociality, and personhood in communication during these speech events will be analyzed. This analysis will also contribute to the explication of cultural premises of communication, which will form the basis for an understanding of these key cultural events as drawing the community together with a notion of a shared identity. These enactments of the performance of a Quaker identity will be shown to create a unique understanding of group membering processes that can be compared with the practices of other speech communities. The cultural premises of communication formulated in this

analysis can be woven together into a cultural code of communication that is unique to this specific speech community.

As mentioned above, Hymes took as the central focus of the ethnography of communication the way in which culturally distinct patterns of speaking constitute and characterize different communities. From this perspective, instances of speaking between people do not simply represent a given identity or group membership. Instead, it is in this communicating that identities and groups are formed and maintained. Thus, when Quakers together listen in “silence” or engage in decision-making through “corporate discernment,” they are involved in a process of creating Quakerism. The act of employing “Quakerese” is not simply a representation of some abstract identity, it is the doing of that identity. In our everyday lives, we may fail to recognize the patterns of speaking through which we enact a culturally unique group membership; these practices often go largely unnoticed or are considered unimportant. However, it is the understanding of what it means to be a person in interaction with others that gets enacted in these seemingly simple moments of exchange that create communities, such as the college community described in the introduction or the Quaker meeting community that will be analyzed here, upon which and in the context of which all social action is accomplished. To understand how Quakers practice “silence” together is to begin to understand wider communal movements, such as their opposition to slavery in the United States, distribution of aid in Europe following World War II, and nonviolent protest in Palestine. As Quakers themselves recognize, these processes of silent waiting and listening form the basis for all other social action.

## 1.4 Organization of Dissertation

An overview of the structure of this work in response to the above questions is as follows; specific research questions addressed in each chapter will be introduced at the beginning of the chapters. After the third chapter has provided a description of the speech community in which research has been conducted, the fourth chapter will analyze the central communication event of worship among Quakers. I will begin with an analysis of written communication in the Quaker publication, *Friends Journal*, about the meeting for worship. Focus will be on terms used to describe a particularly meaningful worship experience, referred to as a “gathered” or “covered” meeting. This section will be followed in the second part of the chapter by an examination of communication about meeting for worship in the specific meeting community where research was conducted. Here I will look at certain distinctive aspects of the act sequence of meeting for worship, including the processes of “settling,” “listening together” in “silence,” and “sharing” “vocal ministry.” Further narrowing the focus, the third section of the chapter will analyze the actual enactment of instances of meeting for worship as it takes place in the meeting. Specific instances of meetings for worship that were identified as either “covered” or “gathered” by participants will be described and analyzed with reference to the act sequence articulated in the previous section, and unique elements that seem to characterize a meeting with this quality will be identified. Chapter 5 will examine the way in which the experiential worship of the meeting informs the unique process that Quakers participate in during their meeting for business. The first part of this chapter will discuss descriptions of this decision-making process, also called “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” in Quaker literature. The organization

of the fifth chapter will reflect that of the fourth, in that the focus will start with the wider Quaker community and gradually narrow to events at the specific community in which I participated. The second section of Chapter 5 will include an analysis of how the decision-making process is discussed in a recorded presentation given at the meeting during the adult education hour. The important role of contrastive comparison in the speech of the presenters as they outline key aspects of the process and provide a description of proper behavior during it will be demonstrated. The third part of this chapter will present the act sequence of meeting for business as it is engaged in at the meeting. Also, the key event of “silence” in the meeting for business will be described in terms of when it occurs in this act sequence, how it is understood by participants, and what role it plays in the decision-making process. The final section of this chapter will examine in more depth one example of the practice of making a decision, which will highlight a particularly Quaker style of doing disagreement that will be understood as a part of a more general Quaker way of speaking that is active in this, as well as other, community events. The sixth chapter will explore a third key practice among Friends, that of telling one’s “spiritual journey.” This practice will also be linked to written practices of keeping a journal, and the analysis will seek to contribute to studies of narrative and story-telling through a discussion of dimensions, such as “tellability” and “moral stance” (Ochs and Capps, 2001). It will also expand upon cultural premises formulated in the analyses of the meeting for worship and meeting for business in an examination of how personal stories of conversion, or “convincement,” assume particular understandings of what it means to be a participant in this community. The seventh chapter will tie together the theme of identity that has run throughout the preceding

chapters with an analysis of a recorded discussion about what it means to be a “member” of this meeting, and, consequently, what it means to be a Quaker. Finally, in the eighth chapter, the distinctiveness of the Quaker practices that have been analyzed in the prior chapters will be contrasted with a key practice from another religious tradition, specifically the Eucharistic Prayer said during the Catholic Mass. The conclusion will draw together the discussions in the preceding chapters through a focus on the notion of a shared identity fostered by the key speech events analyzed and the formulation of a Quaker code of communication based on cultural premises explicated in these analyses. Connections to relevant literature and areas for future research will be suggested.

This study will contribute to knowledge about communicative practices as these are enacted in different cultural speech communities. It will provide a contrast with taken-for-granted assumptions about how people *ought* to communicate with the divine or *ought* to make decisions. All of the research questions considered here seek to enhance understanding of the seemingly paradoxical notion of *communal* individualism based in *silent* communication and the immense impact this can have on its practitioners, as well as on the wider culture.

## **1.5 Theoretical Literature**

As mentioned above, this analysis takes as its basic framework the ethnography of communication. I will here give an overview of key ideas from the theoretical literature that will inform this analysis. I will then examine a key concept and other empirical literature that will also play a central role in the analysis; other empirical literatures will be discussed in more detail later in the chapters in which they are most relevant.

### **1.5.1 Ethnography of Communication: Speech Community and Patterns of Speaking**

The philosophy, theory, and methodology of the ethnography of communication stems from the seminal piece of Hymes written in 1962. Hymes was inspired by research in anthropology, linguistics, and folklore, and he wanted to develop a way of working that he saw hinted at in the literature, but not actually undertaken. Influences on Hymes' thinking can be seen in the work of such scholars as Boas (1911) and Sapir (1921) and their understanding of the connection between communication patterns and cultural patterns, in the ideas of Malinowski (1935) regarding phatic communion, in the analysis of face-to-face interaction by Goffman (1959), and in Jakobson's (1960) examination of the functions of language.

In his initial article, Hymes outlined seven elements for his etic framework, which he eventually expanded to sixteen and organized according to a mnemonic represented by the word SPEAKING. These elements can be used to examine speech communities, situations, events, and acts, and include setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. Several early researchers took up Hymes' call for studies focusing specifically on patterns of speaking. Notable among these original studies was the work of Basso (1970) on silence among the Apache Indians. Basso's initial work inspired Hymes to rethink the title of his new theory, and he adopted the name the ethnography of communication, emphasizing his wish to examine all aspects of communication, including uses of silence.

The theory and methodology of the ethnography of communication, and, in particular, the SPEAKING mnemonic, will serve as a basis for this study of present-day

Quaker practices as a whole, and, specifically, for descriptions of the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour. The elements of the mnemonic will be particularly useful when answering questions regarding the form of actual instances of these events. I will also draw on Hymes' (1989) concept of a "way of speaking" as a style distinctive to a speech community. Hymes defines style as a "mode of doing something" and understands "ways of speaking" as made up of two parts, namely, "speech styles and their contexts, or means of speech and their meanings" (Hymes, 1989, p. 446). This concept will be used to explore how Quaker speech practices, and, in particular, ways of doing "disagreement" in meeting for business, can be understood as elements of a style.

### **1.5.2 Cultural Communication: the Communal Function**

Philipsen's (1975, 1976) work in Chicago in the ethnography of communication tradition led him to write in 1987 about the centrality of cultural communication in a community. As mentioned above, communicative practices are understood in this tradition as based in deeply felt premises of belief and value. Philipsen, in his 1987 article, also asserted the existence of a dialectic of social and individual forces in every society. These forces are both always present and playing off of each other in a group, according to Philipsen. This assertion led Philipsen to formulate the cultural or communal function, which is the function of communication, distinct from the referential, persuasive, or aesthetic functions, that draws a community together with a notion of a shared identity. In a subsequent article published in 1989, Philipsen explored the realization of the cultural or communal function of language in four cultures. He



examined research on communication in these cultures, including his own work in Teamsterville on the importance of a shared dialect there and on being co-present with one's peers, work he did with Katriel (Katriel and Philipsen, 1981) and the work of Carbaugh (1988) on the “communication” ritual among the Nacirema, work by Katriel (1986) on *dugri* speech in Israel, and work on “huddling” in Appalachia done by Ray (1983). In all four of these instances, Philipsen observed the importance of certain shared episodes that he described as enacting the communal function of language.

In 2002, Philipsen reviewed much of the work that had been done in cultural communication and organized notions of cultural communication around two central propositions. These are that “every communal conversation bears traces of culturally distinctive means and meanings of communicative conduct” (Philipsen, 2002, p. 53) and that communication is “a heuristic and performative resource for performing the cultural function in the lives of individuals and communities” (p. 59). Quaker communicative practices will be analyzed here as cultural communication, and Philipsen's concept of the communal function will be drawn on in the analysis of the balancing of individual and communal forces in the Quaker speech community as they are enacted in the episodes of the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour. These speech events would seem to represent a realization of this function similar to the “communication” ritual among the Nacirema or “huddling” in Appalachia.

### 1.5.3 Cultural Discourse Analysis: Practices, Radiants, and Premises

In using cultural discourse analysis (CuDA), which was initiated in Carbaugh's (1988) *Talking American*,<sup>3</sup> a researcher adopts five modes of inquiry, or particular stances (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 170). These modes include a theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical mode. During the theoretical mode, a researcher explicates the theory through which he or she will analyze a specific speech situation. The goal of the descriptive mode is to define in as much detail as possible what is actually occurring in a particular speech situation, event, or act based on field notes and transcripts. This description is undertaken usually with the use of Hymes' SPEAKING framework. Next, a researcher attempts to interpret the communicative means and meanings at play in the situation during the interpretive mode. According to Carbaugh (2007), cultural discourse analysis assumes that meaning is present as "an ongoing commentary" by participants both literally and metaphorically about what they are engaged in (p. 174). Clusters of symbols, or key cultural terms that are "dense with local meaning" and "used routinely, prominently, or [are] potent in [their] meaning," (2007, p. 177) can be organized around five hubs of meaning: being, acting, feeling, relating, and dwelling. The symbols can then be organized into statements that capture participants' definitions, concepts, and values; when indigenous terms are used to formulate these statements, they are called propositions in cultural discourse analysis. Propositions can then be formulated by the analyst into more abstract premises, which are statements representing participants' beliefs about the significance and importance of what is getting done in communicative conduct, either as represented in the conduct or as a basis for that conduct. These premises make explicit taken-for-granted knowledge, allowing the

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the development of this theory see Scollo's (2011) review.

researcher to place the beliefs and values of a speech community in the realm of discursive scrutability. Another means of interpretation available to the researcher in cultural discourse analysis is the formulation of semantic dimensions, which are continua of meaning based on two sets of values that represent degrees of meaning and distinctions understood by participants; they are based on ideas of more/less rather than ideas of either/or. Finally, a researcher might also be aided by the formulation of norms based on the symbols, propositions, and premises he or she has developed. Norms are “statements about conduct which are granted some degree of legitimacy by participants” (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 178). They are moral messages that may be stated explicitly by participants or may be more implicit in the structure of discourse. After key symbols and clusters have been identified and formulated into propositions, premises, semantic dimensions, and norms, the researcher may then engage in the comparative mode of inquiry, comparing these symbols and premises with those that are central to other speech communities. The final mode of cultural discourse analysis is the critical mode, which involves analyzing communicative practices from some ethical juncture, making explicit the basis for criticism. According to Carbaugh, the final two stages of comparison and critique are not necessary to cultural discourse analysis and should only be engaged in following a thorough descriptive and interpretive analysis.

In this way, cultural discourse analysis draws on several of the other extensions of the ethnography of communication framework, namely cultural communication and speech codes theory, and proposes five explicit modes to be used in the study of the communicative conduct of a speech community. Research here will follow the process of cultural discourse analysis through the stages of theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, and

comparative analyses. Communication during and about the speech events of the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour will be analyzed interpretively in terms of symbols, clusters, propositions, premises, norms, and semantic dimensions. In the comparative mode, Quaker communication practices will be compared to other communicative phenomena, specifically those engaged in by another religious group.

#### **1.5.4 Speech Codes Theory: Ritual and Communication Codes**

Research on speech codes stems from the theory of cultural communication and Philipsen's work in the speech community of Teamsterville. In 1992, Philipsen published a book exploring what he understood to be a distinctive code of communication among the inhabitants of Teamsterville, which he called the code of honor. Philipsen characterized this code as being focused on ideas of power and hierarchy, and he contrasted it with a code of dignity that he felt members of the speech community of the Nacirema drew on in their communication (Katriel and Philipsen, 1981). This second code is based in part on ideas involving the worth of each individual and on the notion of equality. Philipsen defined a code as a concept formulated explicitly by an analyst used to interpret and explain the communicative conduct of a particular speech community. Speech codes are the resources of symbols and meanings drawn on by interlocutors to name, interpret, and judge communicative conduct. They are constructed by people in the course of social interaction and can be deconstructed, ignored, altered, or adapted to new purposes. Philipsen (1992) proposed four initial propositions of speech codes theory, which are: "wherever there is a distinctive culture,

there is to be found a distinctive code of communicative conduct” (p.125); “a speech code implicates a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric” (p. 127); “the significance of speaking is contingent upon the speech codes used by interlocutors to constitute the meanings of communicative acts” (p. 128); and “the terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself” (Philipsen, 1997, p. 142). These terms rules and meanings are woven into speaking through contextual patterns of speaking, metacommunicative vocabularies, rhetorical invocation of metacommunicative vocabularies, and the organization of metacommunicative vocabularies into three forms. The forms through which these terms, rules, and meanings are woven into speaking include ritual, myth, and social drama. A ritual is “a structured sequence of symbolic acts, the correct performance of which pays explicit homage to a sacred object of a group or culture” (Philipsen, 1992, p. 133). A ritual helps to connect the past to the present for members of a speech community. Examples of research on ritual can be found in the work of Frake (1980) on Subanun drinking, Mechling (1980) on the boy scout campfire, Daniel and Smitherman (1976) on the call and response form in certain churches, and in the previously mentioned article by Katriel and Philipsen (1981) on the communication ritual among the Nacirema. Drawing on empirical research, Philipsen (1997) proposed a fifth proposition to add to speech codes theory. This proposition is that “the artful use of a shared speech code is a sufficient condition for predicting, explaining, and controlling the form of discourse about the intelligibility, prudence, and morality of communicative conduct” (Philipsen, 1997, p. 147). Philipsen wished to stress in this proposition that while members of a speech community will frequently ignore, alter, or adapt speech codes, these codes will often shape their ways of

discussing communicative conduct. Most recently, Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias (2005) added a final proposition to speech codes theory, linked to the work of Huspek (1993) and Coutu (2000). This proposition is that “in any given speech community, multiple speech codes are deployed” (Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005, p. 59). These speech codes influence and interanimate each other. The presence of multiple codes can be seen for example in the discussions of Teamstervillers regarding those codes of outsiders that they view as superior or inferior to their own way of speaking. It is also evident in the comparison of the code of honor and the code of dignity.

The cultural premises formulated through cultural discourse analysis that inform the speech events of meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour, will be drawn together in order to formulate a speech code of this Quaker community. These speech events will be understood as rituals through which the terms, rules, and meanings of speaking are inextricably woven into the speech of Friends. Also, the way that multiple speech codes are at play in this speech community will be analyzed in terms of comparisons Friends make between their own practices, the practices of other religious communities, and more general “secular” practices.

### **1.5.5 Coordinated Management of Meaning: Stories and Logical Force**

Another framework that will be used in order to supplement the analysis of speech events in the speech community of this Quaker meeting will be the coordinated management of meaning (CMM). CMM, developed by Pearce and Cronen in the late 1970s, takes as a main premise the idea that meaning is created in interaction.

Consequently the focus of research in CMM is patterns of situated action. From a CMM

perspective, language is understood to be intrinsically social, and society does not exist by communication, but *in* communication (Cronen and Chetro-Szivos, 2001). People work together to co-create what Wittgenstein (1954) calls “grammatical abilities,” or “the rules that a particular conversant is able to bring to bear in an episode” (Cronen and Lang, 1994, p. 18). Co-created contexts are also characterized by a moral dimension, or logical forces, which influence “what we can do, must do and must not do” in a situation (Cronen and Lang, 1994, p. 10). CMM uses a heuristic model to organize episodes of interaction and to hierarchically organize interactants’ stories, defined as patterns of and for acting. The model emphasizes the way that each person’s actions during an interaction create a certain context for the next person’s actions. There is also a focus on the way that a position adopted by an interactant creates constraints and affordances for his or her actions, as well as the communicative actions of other participants.

CMM has been used to a large extent in family therapy and mediation situations (Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, and Prata, 1978; Cronen and Lang, 1994; Salmon and Faris, 2006). More recently it has been applied to communication in health care, in particular for developing a “culture of safety” in interactions between caregivers and patients and for simulations of communication in the operating room (Forsythe, 2010). Of interest in the context of this research is the use of the tools of CMM in an exploration of the meaning of “work” in the speech community of Acadian-Americans conducted by Chetro-Szivos (2006). This analysis focuses on the stories Acadian-Americans tell about working and the logical forces associated with enactments of this action. It also examines aesthetic aspects of the experience, with reference to the notion of a consummatory experience, as discussed below (Dewey, 1934). This aesthetic experience

is understood to constitute a certain understanding of identity and community membership. For more recent work in CMM, one can reference the Transforming Communication Project (TCP), which is a community of scholars and practitioners who work with the theory, affiliated with the Institute for Social Innovation at Fielding Graduate University (<http://www.tcpcommunity.org/index.html>).

The reaching of a decision in a Quaker meeting for business will be analyzed in detail using concepts such as stories and logical force, as well as the CMM heuristic model. An analysis drawing on the concept of stories highlights the coordination between participants that informs the decision-making process. The use of the idea of logical force and the heuristic model will stress the way that each turn at talk creates conditions for the subsequent turn while realizing the possibilities created by the last turn. This analysis will also reveal the complex process of positioning that is engaged in during meeting for business, allowing for the subtle expression of disagreement. A detailed analysis of turn-by-turn interaction complements the analysis of cultural premises in showing how these premises directly inform decision making.

### **1.5.6 Philosophy of Pragmatism: Consummatory Moments**

In his 1934 work, *Art as Experience*, Dewey draws on the everyday interaction of a person with his or her environment as the basis for his philosophy. Dewey believes that life is a process of the individual falling out of and getting back into coordination with his or her environment. Each time that balance is reestablished, asserts Dewey, it is greeted by a sense of harmony in the organism because it represents the possibility that life will continue. This experience of harmony is described by Dewey as a consummation, which



becomes the goal of a person in interaction. A person is continually reflecting back on past action and determining future action in light of these reflections and what they indicate about the practical consequences of an act. Meaning arises from the reflection necessitated when a problematic situation is encountered. Dewey writes, "Agreement between what is wanted and anticipated and what is actually obtained confirms the selection of conditions which operate as means to the desired end; discrepancies, which are experienced as frustrations and defeats, lead to an inquiry to discover the causes of failure" (1939, p. 30-31). Consequently, meaning and truth could not arise in a world that was absolutely stable or constantly in flux because either of these would not provide the basis for reflection or prediction. With each new consummation, a new situation arises that is the basis for further experience. Experience is distinguished by Dewey (1934) from "an experience," which is a full experience that results in a consummation. In Dewey's understanding, an aesthetic experience is a complete experience leading toward a consummation (Dewey, 1934). Thus, art gains meaning in its connection to the everyday interaction of a person with his or her environment, which is experienced by both the artist and the viewer. There are no abstract principles of art, but rather aesthetic processes reflect the processes of daily experience.

According to Dewey, moral valuation is the process of viewing action in terms of past action. Values are not absolutes that exist prior to experience, claims Dewey (1939), but instead they are the result of the daily interaction of a person with his or her environment in which the positive qualities of that experience are abstracted from it into idealizations of what is good. One should not confuse the fact that it is the experience and not the abstracted good that came first. The absolutes of religion are also formed in

this way, according to Dewey, as idealizations of experiences; for Dewey, therefore, a “religious experience” is an experience leading toward a consummation. Thus, the adjective “religious” is distinct from the notion of “a religion,” and what is good in the world can be known to be good without reference to religious creed or a spiritual being, but in terms of its practical consequences through time. It is useful here to note Dewey's concept of ends-in-view linked to his idea of consummation. The reaching of a particular goal should be viewed, according to Dewey, as an end-in-view and not as an ultimate end. It is in fact dangerous and foolish to act as if a particular consequence is the final consequence and will not be followed by anything else. Instead, one should work towards ends-in-view with the understanding that these may change and that they are not the final consequence. They are simply the consummation of a particular experience that will form the basis for the next experience. Moral valuation must take into account these changing ends-in-view.

The notion of a consummatory experience will be drawn on in conceptualizing central Quaker speech events and beliefs regarding the depth and consequence of these events. The idea of consummatory experience will be linked to Philipson's concept of ritual, as a process of bringing a group together. Employing pragmatism in an analysis of Quaker communication and culture enables an understanding of the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour as aesthetic experiences that are based in everyday experience and that seek a consummation. The two notions of beauty and truth are tied together in these experiences, and the philosophy of pragmatism provides a way of conceiving of this connection.

## **1.6 Central Concepts for Analysis and Empirical Literature**

In addition to the theories overviewed above, this analysis will also draw on certain key concepts, one of which will be developed further here, while others will be elaborated in future chapters. The concept discussed in more depth here is that of terms for talk (Carbaugh, 1989), which will be used to consider the connection between certain culturally identified forms of communication and cultural messages about personhood, sociality, and communication. Reference to this concept will run throughout these analyses. Concepts that will be developed to a greater extent in the subsequent chapters that specifically draw on them, include those of narrative and identity. Theories of narrative and story-telling as interactionally achieved performances that are based in, reveal, and constitute deeply felt cultural beliefs will be drawn on in Chapter 6 on the Quaker speech event of telling a “spiritual journey.” The concept of identity, interpreted from a social constructionist perspective in terms of how it is creatively performed in social interaction while also influenced by larger societal and historical forces, will inform the analysis in several chapters, but specifically the analysis of a discussion about membership in a Quaker meeting in Chapter 7. Given that a particular enactment of nonverbal communication called “silence” plays a central role in all of the practices discussed here, I will provide an overview of some of the empirical literature on this concept and a discussion of how “silence” has been formulated in past analyses of Quaker communication as a distinctive cultural symbol. It is also necessary here to discuss briefly the extensive work that has been done on religious language. I will provide below a brief summary of some of the key ideas that will be drawn on in this work. Later, in Chapter 8, other examples of research in this area will be introduced.

### **1.6.1 Terms for Talk: Messages about Communication, Personhood, and Sociality**

Central symbols that identify certain cultural modes or styles of communication have frequently been employed by analysts to examine the structuring of the discursive practices of speech communities. The terms for talk framework (Carbaugh, 1989) draws on the ethnography of communication tradition in order to provide both a descriptive and interpretive mode for analyzing messages about communication, sociality, and personhood present within the use of and practices implied by cultural terms for talk. These indigenous labels for speaking both “identify speech at three distinctive levels, as acts, events, and styles” and “are used to convey multiple levels of meanings” (Carbaugh, 1989, p. 93). Messages about communication itself found in the examination of cultural terms for talk focus on mode, degree of structuring, tone, and efficaciousness. While these messages about communication are studied at a more literal level, messages about sociality and personhood are analyzed at the metaphorical level in the use of terms for talk. Messages about sociality speak to issues of solidarity, power, competition, closeness, and presumptions about institutions. Examining ideas of personhood leads to insight about preferred qualities, proper conduct, loci of motives, bases of sociation, and styles of personhood. Use of this framework can be found in examples such as the analysis of the ritual of “communication” among some Americans by Katriel and Philipsen (1981) or in Katriel’s (1986) study of *dugri* speech among native Israelis. Employing this framework, Baxter (1993) examines the key ideas of “talking things through” and “putting it in writing” as two contested terms for describing communication among those employing the codes of “collegiality” and “professional management” at a

university. Also drawing on this method, McLeod (1999) examines the range of meanings associated with claims of authenticity or “keepin’ it real” in American hip-hop culture as these relate to resisting assimilation; and Bloch and Lemish (2005) study the construction and reinforcement of gendered social relations in Israel through use of the word, *freier*, translated as “sucker” in English. Significantly for this research on Quaker communication, the terms for talk framework has also been used to analyze forms of nonverbal communication such as *asiallinen*, or a matter of fact nonverbal style of communication used in certain contexts in Finland (Wilkins, 2005) and *hiljaisuus*, or quietude, and the social practices involving it that make up part of a Finnish cultural code (Carbaugh, Berry, and Nurmikari-Berry, 2006). As these studies reveal, the terms for talk framework is a way of analyzing communication codes among different cultures (Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, Covarrubias, 2005).

This analytical framework provides a model for studying concepts such as “gathered” meeting, “corporate discernment,” and telling a “spiritual journey” as culturally distinct communication. It will be used in particular to explore both literal and metaphorical messages about personhood, communication, and sociality in verbal communication about terms used to describe communication in meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour, as well as the enactment of the processes these terms represent.

### **1.6.2 Silence: A Cultural Symbol**

Studies of communicative practices of silence have been conducted in a range of disciplines and from many different perspectives. Examples can be found in Jaworski's

(1993) detailed overview of both positive and negative values that have been associated with silence. Acheson's (2007) article also provides a very thorough analysis of the way in which silence has been treated by a variety of scholars. She emphasizes the “plurality” of thinking on silence across disciplines such as medicine, business, religion, and education, exploring negative associations of silence with silencing, secrets, and taboos, as well as various uses of silence, various cultural understandings of silence, and silence as a marker of identity, such as gender or cultural identity. From a rhetorical perspective, Scott (1972, 1993) views rhetoric and silence as in a dialectical relationship. He writes that “Every decision to say something is a decision not to say something else, that is, if the utterance is a *choice*. In speaking we remain silent” (Scott, 1972, p. 146). Interesting to this study of the communal function of communication, Scott (1972) connects rhetoric and silence to the tension between the individual and corporate, claiming, “We seek to distinguish ourselves from others and to identify with others. The dialectic of silence and rhetoric reflects that of isolation and identification” (p. 149). Also, significant in the context of this research is Scott’s (1972) understanding of contemplation as a form of silence. He describes contemplation as necessary for action and explains that “One may take the matter either way: that silence, as the act of preparing, serves rhetoric; or that rhetoric, as the act of carrying the fruit of contemplation, serves silence” (Scott, 1972, p. 151). In this study, I examine silence not as isolation, but as what could be called “corporate” contemplation, with action as its fruit.

Studies on silence have a rich history in ethnographic literature, for example in the work of Basso (1970), Philips (1976, 1983), and Braithwaite (1990). In his chapter in *Perspectives on Silence* edited by Tannen and Saville-Troike (1985), Maltz compares

Quaker “silence” to Pentecostal “noise.” However, Maltz (1985) claims that all silence is the same and that noise and silence are opposites, which can be understood as a presence and an absence. This assertion is contested by Jaworski (1993) who writes that “in behavioral or communicative terms, different silences will be perceived and interpreted differently” (p. 42). Thus, not all silence is the same, according to Jaworski, and viewing silence as an absence is a limited perspective that stems from a bias in certain cultures to treat “speech as normal and silence as a deviant mode of behavior” (1993, p. 46). Philips' (1985) chapter, also in *Perspectives on Silence*, addresses the way in which interaction can be structured through silence as well as through speech, and the works mentioned above of Basso, Philips, and Braithwaite, as well as those by Wieder and Pratt (1990), Carbaugh (1999, 2005), and Carbaugh, Berry, and Nurmikari-Berry (2006) reveal that in some cultures, silence plays a more prominent role and is in some contexts more valued than speech. Taking a slightly different, but closely related approach, Lippard (1988) analyzes how silent worship among Friends promotes participatory identification, and work by Covarrubias (2008) examines silence in the classroom by combining approaches from the ethnography of communication with critical Whiteness theories. Covarrubias and Windchief (2009) have also examined three functions of silence in the experiences of American Indian college students, namely to particularize, perpetuate, and protect culture.

In terms of studies of Quaker silence, it is important to distinguish between silence as a concept and silence as a cultural symbol. In contrast to their devaluing of speech, seventeenth-century Quakers, notes Bauman (1983), place a high value on the cultural symbol of “silence.” Bauman explores how both “speaking” and “silence” were

not just descriptions of communicative action, but key elaborating symbols for Friends, which, he argues, citing Ortner (1973), “extensively and systematically formulate relationships . . . between a wide range of diverse cultural elements” (p. 1343, as cited in Bauman, 1983, p. 10). In the tradition of Turner (1975), Bauman (1983) traces “the symbols of speaking and silence as they operate in isolable, changing fields of social actions, relationships, and meanings” (p. 10), for example in the speaking of early Quaker ministers, the performance of metaphors and the refusal to take oaths by early Quakers, and the meeting for worship. Building on this idea in his development of the ethnographic perspective in communication studies, Philipsen (1989) also discusses Quaker “silence” as a “native symbolic concept” and cites it as an example of the assumption of coordinated action underlying an ethnographic approach (p. 259). Philipsen (1989) notes that “silence” is not “merely the absence of speech” but “a symbolic action, a way of 'waiting upon the Lord' and thus a way of acting in the public occasion of the worship service” (p. 259). It is, thus, a key practice of concern for research in cultural communication.

Research here will develop this perspective of “silence” as a cultural symbol among modern day Friends. The way in which “silence” constitutes communicative practices active in meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour will be explored. “Silence” in these contexts can be understood as a key cultural symbol, as well as a way of naming communicative action; in other words, “silence” can be identified as a term for talk and as a basis for the enactment of the communal function of language.



### 1.6.3 A Note on Religious Language

As Keane (1997) writes, “religious observance tends to demand highly marked and self-conscious uses of linguistic resources” (p. 48). An extensive body of work exists on how language is employed in communication with the divine, summarized in part by Keane (1997) in his work entitled *Religious Language*. In this piece, Keane (1997) “provisionally” defines “religious language” as “the perceived distinctiveness of certain interactions, textual practices, or speech situations” (p. 48). He notes that “religious language is deeply implicated with underlying assumptions about the human subject, divine beings, and the ways their capacities and agencies differ” and “no single set of formal or pragmatic features is diagnostic of religious as opposed to other marked uses of language, such as poetic or ceremonial speech,” but instead “different religious practices seem to select from among the entire spectrum of linguistic possibilities” (Keane, 1997, p. 49). Keane (1997) outlines the way religious speech situations can differ from everyday speech interactions; in this context, “certain default assumptions, such as who is participating and what counts as the relevant context of ‘here’ and ‘now’” must be suspended (p. 50). One of these differences in the nature of participants in communication with the divine involves the inability to assume “the presence, engagement, and identity of spiritual participants” (Keane, 1997, p. 50). This difference may require then that addressees and purposes of communication be more explicitly referred to in the communication itself. Another problem involves the possible inadequacy of everyday linguistic means to address transcendent beings; Keane (1997) notes that in order to deal with this issue, “some traditions, fearing hubris or blasphemy, index the transcendence of divinity by enjoining name avoidance or circumlocution” (p.

51). The question becomes, Keane (1997) asserts, “Wherein lies the efficacy of religious language?” and he seeks to address this question through an analysis of “formal characteristics of speech performance and the explicit beliefs or implicit assumptions that accompany them,” including assumptions about intentionality and responsibility, participant roles, and authorship (p. 51-52). Keane (1997) summarizes research on distinctive formal marks of religious communication, citing the work of Gill (1981) and observing that “virtually any means, including changes in phonology, morphology, syntax, prosody, lexicon, and entire linguistic code can frame a stretch of discourse as religious” and thereby signal to others “a special frame of interpretation” (p. 52). Keane (1997) also cites Du Bois’ (1986) list of commonly found characteristics of ritual speech, divided into features of performance and of text. These features have been understood by some theorists to shift agency away from the individual to “some spatially, temporally, or ontologically more distant agent” or to downplay “the indexical grounding of utterances in the context of the specific speech event, increasing the perceived boundedness and autonomous character of certain stretches of discourse, and diminishing the apparent role of the speaker’s volitional agency in producing them” (Keane, 1997, p. 53). Work on this “decentering of discourse” includes that by Bauman and Briggs (1990) and Silverstein and Urban (1996). An important understanding of ritual speech in terms of my analysis here is the way in which ritual elements can also be viewed as creating a unified group, thus “transform[ing] individuals’ subjective states” (Keane, 1997, p. 53). As Sequeira (1994) argues in her study of “charismatic renewal” in an American church community, “public ritual performance of religious faith functions to synthesize not only who people are as individuals but also who they are collectively, revealing their *ethos*” (p. 126).

According to Sequeira (1994) “religion and spirituality are communicatively constituted and reproduced in ritual performances” and through performance of public rituals, “social actors fulfill specific roles and follow specific behaviors, the successful performance of which constitutes community solidarity” (p. 127).

The underlying assumptions of intentionality and responsibility suggested by Keane and the performance of community solidarity asserted by Sequeira will both be addressed in this research in terms of cultural premises of personhood and sociality underlying Quaker communication. I will also draw on the concept of a participation framework in order to explore the various roles that are active in religious communication in Quaker meeting for worship and the presuppositions about who can participate and who is addressed that these reflect. This analysis in terms of participant roles will serve as a basis for a more extended comparison with another religious group in Chapter 8.

## **1.7 Summary**

This introduction has provided an overview of the central concerns and the research questions that will guide analysis in subsequent chapters. The above discussion also outlines the central theoretical perspectives that will form the basis for this work. The ethnography of communication was identified as the primary framework, supplemented by recent developments in cultural communication, cultural discourse analysis, and speech codes theory, as well as work in the coordinated management of meaning and the philosophy of pragmatism. Other important concepts were also

discussed in terms of related literature. The next chapter will build on this one in the development of a methodology for data collection and analysis.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will first give an overview of the methodology employed for data collection in this study, which is based primarily on participant observation in the speech community of Glen Meeting.<sup>4</sup> The second half of the chapter will focus on the types of data collected and a general discussion of the methodology employed for analysis. More detailed descriptions of the focal data and the methodology for analysis used in each chapter will be given at the beginning of the chapters. There will be some variation in the methodology for analysis between chapters, but the general analytical procedures are previewed in this chapter.

#### 2.2 Data Collection

Data for this analysis have been collected in several ways. The primary data used to study enactments of focal speech events include:

1. *First-hand field notes based on participation in weekly meetings for worship at Glen Meeting*

Glen Meeting meets weekly on Sunday mornings for an hour for worship service, called meeting for worship. I started attending meeting for worship irregularly at Glen Meeting in September of 2008 and regularly in August of 2009. This means that at the time of this report I have been attending regularly for approximately a year and a half.

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<sup>4</sup> The name of the meeting and all names in this work are pseudonyms, used to protect the privacy of the meeting community.

After attending each meeting, I recorded notes using as my guide Hymes' SPEAKING framework including, in particular, setting, participants, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, and norms. This analysis draws on field notes on fifty-eight meetings for worship. It should be noted that following the advice of a Friend, I stopped taking as detailed notes after my fiftieth meeting for worship. This Friend suggested that in order to more fully take part in the meeting for worship and understand what was happening there, it was necessary to sometimes attend without the intention of conducting research. Although I still took some notes on all of the meetings I attended, I attempted, after my fiftieth meeting, to focus more on participation rather than analysis. Also, at this point I determined that the communication patterns I had selected for analysis were being repeated, so the usefulness of additional detailed notes was limited. For this reason, most of my analysis here draws on the first fifty meetings that I attended, and the examples of “gathered” or “covered” meetings analyzed are from these meetings.

## 2. *Field notes and audio recordings of monthly meetings for business at Glen Meeting*

These meetings are also held on Sundays, specifically once a month on the second Sunday of the month and are on average between two and a half to three hours. I have taken notes on ten Monthly Meetings for Business and one Quarterly Meeting for Business, which was also held at the meetinghouse, using similar guidelines to the ones described above for notes on meetings for worship. Also, after receiving permission from the meeting for business, I audio recorded two meetings for business. This makes a total of thirteen separate meetings for business considered in this analysis. One of these recordings was approximately three hours and fifteen minutes long and the other was approximately two hours and fifty-eight minutes long. I transcribed both of these

meetings in entirety. In my transcripts, I drew from the notation developed by Jefferson (1984) in conversation analysis.<sup>5</sup> However, I modified standard transcription styles. My focus is on the content of talk and the pausing and silences in the talk. Noticeable pauses are measured in tenths of a second, and the time gap is represented in brackets. Short pauses of less than two tenths of a second are marked by a dot enclosed in a bracket. A period indicates a fall in tone, and a question mark indicates a rising inflection. A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates a non-verbal activity. A dash represents the sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound. A dot before an 'h' indicates speaker in-breath, and an 'h' indicates an out-breath. Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter. Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a period of overlapping talk. Fragments that are underlined indicate speaker emphasis. Words within a single bracket indicate the transcriber's best guess at an unclear fragment.

### *3. Field notes and audio recordings of adult education hours at Glen Meeting*

Adult education hours occur after meeting for worship, approximately forty minutes after meeting ends, on one or two Sundays a month.<sup>6</sup> Not everyone who attends meeting for worship also attends the education hour. There are generally between ten and forty people present. The adult education hour is held in a back room of the meetinghouse. There is a committee in charge of organizing presentations and events during the adult education hour. These events may include a presentation by an outside

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<sup>5</sup> See example of transcript on page 163.

<sup>6</sup> "Fellowship hour," when drinks and snacks are served, occurs immediately following meeting for worship on most Sundays; the adult education hour follows this, when there is not meeting for business, which takes place on the second Sunday of the month, or "fellowship lunch," which is a potluck lunch that takes place on the third Sunday of the month.

guest, the telling of a “spiritual journey” by a member of the meeting, or a presentation by a participant or participants in the meeting community or a meeting committee about a particular topic that is relevant to the life of the meeting and is often followed by a discussion or a period of “worship sharing.” I attended ten adult education hours in total, three that were presentations by outsiders, two that were the telling of “spiritual journeys,” and five that were presentations by participants in the meeting community.<sup>7</sup> The committee in charge of the adult education hour sometimes records these meetings; when a member tells his or her “spiritual journey” the event is always recorded. All recordings are kept on CDs in the meeting library for meeting members and attenders to check out. I collected and transcribed recordings of six “spiritual journeys” from the library that took place between February of 2008 and January of 2010 and ranged in time from approximately forty-two minutes to one hour and fifty-seven minutes. Two of these recordings included tellings that I attended. I also obtained and transcribed a copy of a recording of an adult education hour that I had attended that was a presentation by meeting members on “corporate discernment” followed by a period of “worship sharing.”

#### *4. Recordings of interviews with members of Glen Meeting*

I interviewed thirteen longtime members of Glen Meeting, and I recorded and transcribed portions of these interviews. The interviews were done one-on-one and in pairs with married couples. These interviews lasted between forty-two minutes and two hours. Many of them took place at interviewees’ homes, and some also took place at the meetinghouse after meeting for worship. I also interviewed one member of another meeting who is a longtime Friend with many connections in the wider community and a

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<sup>7</sup> I also presented this research when it was nearing completion at an adult education hour, as will be briefly described in the conclusion.



reader of *Friends Journal*. This interview took place in the interviewee's home and lasted approximately two and a half hours. It is included as supplemental data and to provide comparison. The interviews were informally structured and guided by the interviewees' experiences. I had a set of general questions that I drew on, and a protocol for the interview is included in Appendix A.

### 5. *Articles in Friends Journal*

The *Journal* is widely read by Friends in the branch of Quakerism with whom I worked.<sup>8</sup> Preceding and throughout the research period, I read monthly issues of *Friends Journal* as part of my participant observation of the community. Reference to articles in the *Journal* came up in interviews and in more casual conversations. Archived articles on the *Journal's* website allow me to have access to approximately ten years of issues, starting in January of 2001, although only one or two articles a month are published on the site. I have hard copies of full issues starting in October 2008 until the present, along with several hard copies of issues in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2007.<sup>9</sup>

Secondary data generated included the following:

#### 1. *Written accounts of the experience of participating in a "gathered" meeting for worship written by readers of Friends Journal*

In October 2009, *Friends Journal* published a letter in their forum section requesting that readers share their experiences of "gathered" meetings for worship with me. I received one hand-written and two e-mail responses to this inquiry. One of my respondents invited me to her home for an interview, which was the basis for the

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<sup>8</sup> As evidence of the importance of this publication in the community, I would like to note that in the 2006 version of the handbook of Glen Meeting, one of the instructions listed for a Welcoming Committee in welcoming a new member into the meeting community is to make sure the new member has a subscription to *Friends Journal*.

<sup>9</sup> It is now possible to have a digital subscription to the *Journal* through the website, but I continue to receive hard copies.

interview of a member of another meeting discussed in the section on interviews above. These written accounts served to supplement the analysis of “gathered” meetings that I observed.

## 2. *Notes from meetings of a committee*

A lot of the organizing at Glen Meeting is done at the committee level. Most of the proposed decisions that are brought to meeting for business originate in the committees of the meeting. The two central committees that are generally responsible for the meeting community are called *Care and Counsel* and *Ministry and Worship*. Ministry and Worship is responsible for overseeing meeting for worship, and the two committees work together to oversee meeting for business. There is also a separate committee that oversees the adult education hour, as well as several other committees. The meeting handbook describes the responsibilities of the committees. In the 2006 version of the meeting handbook, it is written that Care and Counsel:

Offers pastoral care to the Meeting and has general oversight of the functioning of committees. Meets monthly; holds members and attenders in the Light with particular concern for elderly and children and for those whose names arise or who are known to be dealing with health, aging, conflict, possible leadings, or other life issues. Receives requests for clearness or support on personal/spiritual matters, for membership, and for marriage. Greets members, attenders, and visitors each First Day, initiates contact with visitors living in this area, and tends the guest book in the lobby.

There is then a further enumeration of the duties of the committee. The final paragraph reads, “Care and Counsel members are encouraged to attend Meetings for Worship and Business regularly. Six members are appointed for staggered three-year terms. Membership in [Glen Meeting] is not a requirement.” Also in the meeting handbook, it is written that Ministry and Worship “Fosters the spiritual life and growth of the Meeting and strives to enhance the religious life and fellowship of members and

attenders. Has under its care, Meeting for Worship, Meeting for Business jointly with Care and Counsel, and memorial meetings. Appoints one or more of its members to hold and then close Meeting for Worship on First Days.” There is then also a list of the various other duties of the committee, which includes considering applications for membership. The final paragraph reads:

Ministry and Worship meets each month and periodically holds meetings with Care and Counsel. Copies of all Committee minutes are exchanged with Care and Counsel and given to the Clerks and to the History and Records Committee. Meeting is concerned that there be a balance of men and women on this committee. Members should be Friends.”

As most of the meetings of committees within Glen Meeting are restricted to members of the committees,<sup>10</sup> who are, however, not necessarily members of the meeting, I did not have access to these meetings. However, I was allowed to attend and take notes on the meetings of one committee that was open to anyone in the meeting who was interested. This committee meets monthly for approximately one and a half hours at the meetinghouse, with generally between three and five participants attending. I attended four meetings of this committee and took notes.

### *3. Notes on other meeting events and informal discussions*

I also participated in various other meeting events that were open to anyone who wished to attend. These included meeting parties, meeting potlucks, Friday evening worship once a month, and meeting work days. I engaged in informal discussions with many members of the meeting about their experiences as Friends, especially during the “fellowship hour” immediately following meeting for worship. While attendance at these other events and participation in these discussions do not serve explicitly as data in my

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on the process of being nominated to be a member of a committee see Wick’s (1998) article on the practices of a nominating committee at another unprogrammed meeting.

analysis, they did help to form a basis for my general understanding of speech events at Glen Meeting.

### **2.3 Types of Data**

There will be two types of focal excerpts selected for analysis based on their connection to communication phenomena engaged in during speech events at Glen Meeting. These two types of excerpts parallel the two types of research questions introduced in the first chapter.

1. The first type of focal excerpt will be examples of Friends communicating about communication phenomena, such as a “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship, “corporate discernment,” telling a “spiritual journey,” “worship sharing,” “vocal ministry,” or “silence.” These excerpts will be from my field notes, transcripts of recordings of meetings for business or adult education hours, transcripts of recordings of interviews, written accounts from readers of *Friends Journal*, and the articles in *Friends Journal*. These instances will be identified through use of the actual terms in communication.
2. The second type of focal excerpts will be actual examples of enactments of communication phenomena, such as “gathered” or “covered” meetings for worship, “corporate discernment,” telling a “spiritual journey,” “worship sharing,” “vocal ministry,” or “silence.” Instances will be identified in a couple of ways, depending on the practice. Examples of telling a “spiritual journey,” “worship sharing,” “vocal ministry,” and

some instances of “silence” will be identified as such if participants refer to the event as this type of occurrence during a meeting for worship, meeting for business, or adult education hour, immediately before or after the event, or in conversations or interviews later on. All of these key terms represent a range, and sometimes a part of an event will be described as an instance of these phenomena, while at other times the whole event can be identified in that way. Some instances of “silence” were not identified as such at the moment of enactment, but can be identified based on a detailed analysis of periods of nonverbal communication in transcripts of meetings for business, as will be demonstrated. As “gathered” or “covered” meetings seem to be experienced differently by various participants, I will only identify meetings as “gathered” or “covered,” if a meeting that I attend is referred to publicly in this way *during* the event itself. In this way, there will be some sort of public agreement about the instances I analyze here.<sup>11</sup>

Examples of “corporate discernment” will be identified through identification of examples of meetings for business.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In the analysis, I will discuss the range of meanings associated with the terms “gathered” and “covered,” and the understanding that experiences can vary somewhat and certain meetings can be identified afterwards as “gathered” or “covered” by some participants, but not by others. Issues of learning and practice will become relevant.

<sup>12</sup> Friends use the terms “meeting for business” and “corporate discernment” interchangeably, with one referring more to the event and the other to the process. “Corporate discernment” is also called “finding the sense of the meeting,” which will be discussed later. “Corporate discernment” as a decision-making process can occur outside of meeting for business, but without a notion of a process of decision making taking place during meeting for business, the event would lose its cultural meaning. In this way, instances of meeting for business identified as such by participants, can be understood as examples of the process of “corporate discernment.”

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of data in the following chapters will follow a general format with some variations. The methodology used in each specific section of each chapter will be described in detail at the beginning of each section, following a description of the primary data on which the analysis is based. Not every section will include each of the steps described here, but all will draw on at least some of these. In some sections certain steps are subdivided further. Some of the variation stems from differences in focal data.

For those chapter sections that analyze the first type of selected excerpts described above, namely communication about central communication phenomena, the analysis will be based primarily on the framework of cultural discourse analysis, although other theories and concepts discussed in Chapter 1 will also play a role. This analysis will have three steps. First, key cultural symbols that co-occur with the terms for communicative phenomena identified above, such as a “gathered” meeting for worship, will be identified based on certain criteria. Next, these symbols will be organized into clusters of symbols and then cultural propositions will be explicated, in order to attempt to formulate a description of what Friends assume to be occurring when these communicative phenomena take place. Third, I will use these propositions to deepen my interpretive analysis by formulating cultural premises, or statements “about participants’ beliefs about the significance and importance of what is going on” (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 177). Premises can be both “statements about what exists,” as well as “about what is proper or valued” (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 178). Carbaugh (2007) explains:

While both propositions and premises can be formulated to capture beliefs or values, cultural premises are typically more abstract formulations about specific terms and practices, with these being immanent across expressive practices. Cultural premises capture and explicate taken-for-granted knowledge which

usually does not need to be stated by participants since it is believed to be part of common sense. (p. 178)

In the chapters on meeting for worship and meeting for business, this type of analysis of examples of Friends communicating about communication phenomena will be presented first in order to give a general idea of the communication phenomena, before focusing on specific examples of them in Glen Meeting through analysis of the second type of data described above. The analysis of the second type of selected excerpt will include an additional initial step in which the data will first be analyzed in terms of the components of Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic, specifically the concepts of act sequence and participants. An analysis through the concept of act sequence will allow me to respond to my research question of what makes up these communicative phenomena and what shape they take. Following this initial step, the analysis of this second type of excerpt will again be based primarily on the framework of cultural discourse analysis and follow the steps outlined above in that cultural symbols, propositions, and premises that are active will be identified. In this way, examinations in terms of act sequence and participants will be the foundation for a formulation of cultural propositions and cultural premises in the analysis of the second type of excerpt.

Although the ethnography of communication and cultural discourse analysis will be the primary frameworks drawn on here, I will also supplement these with other concepts and frameworks, most of which were introduced in the first chapter. The beginning of each section in each chapter will contain a more explicit discussion of the concepts and frameworks and the process of analysis undertaken in that section. Carbaugh's (1989) terms for talk concept will be drawn on in many of the chapters to analyze the metacommunicative messages about communication, sociality, and

personhood contained both literally and metaphorically in communication during and communication about the phenomena I have identified. Also, Philipsen's (1987, 1989, 2002) theory of cultural communication, in particular the concept of the communal function of language, as well as speech codes theory (Philipsen, 1992, 1997; Philipsen, Coutu, and Covarrubias, 2005) will inform the analysis throughout in considering the premises active in a Quaker cultural code. Goffman's (1981) notion of footing and Levinson's (1988) reformulation of this concept as participant framework will be the basis for part of the analysis in Chapters 4 and 8, in order to analyze the structuring of participation during meeting for worship and compare this with the practice of saying prayers during the Eucharist in the Catholic Mass. Understandings of decision making through democratic process and through consensus and how these relate to small group processes will inform the analysis in Chapter 5 of the decision-making process during meeting for business. The theory of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (Pearce and Cronen, 1980), specifically the concepts of stories and logical force, will also be used in Chapter 5 to analyze a "way of speaking" (Hymes, 1989) as it is active in the formulation of a "sense of the meeting" during meeting for business. Theories of narrative and story-telling, as formulated by various theorists, will be drawn on in Chapter 6 in the analysis of the telling of six "spiritual journeys." The concept of identity as a social construction that is influenced by both particular social interactions and wider social forces will influence the analysis in Chapter 7 of how community members understand the difference between being a "member" of the meeting and being an "attender." Finally, the analysis of key communicative phenomena as cultural rituals will be supplemented by a consideration of them as consummatory experiences, a concept



formulated in the tradition of American pragmatism (Dewey, 1934). Dewey's (1934) distinction between "religious" experience and "a religion" will also be considered as it applies in this context.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The goal of this analysis is to not only describe cultural communicative practices within this speech community, but also to interpret their meanings. This analysis will allow the researcher to identify premises of communication, personhood, and sociality that constitute a Quaker code for communicating. The formulation of this code will hopefully clarify the seemingly paradoxical understanding of "silence" among Friends as a primary means of communicating together in a way that sustains a strong community of individuals. It will also shed light on how a decision-making process based in this practice can lead to actions that bring about change far beyond this small community.

## CHAPTER 3

### BRIEF HISTORY OF FRIENDS AND DESCRIPTION OF FIELD SITE

#### 3.1 Introduction: The Social Context of this Study

The speech community in which this research was conducted belongs to the branch of the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers, in the United States that is referred to as liberal and unprogrammed. In particular, the focus is on the community of a specific meeting that I will call Glen Meeting. Data was also collected from Friends in other regions and from the readers and contributors to the Quaker publication, *Friends Journal*. The concentration is primarily, however, on the speech events of meetings for worship, meetings for business, and adult education hours at Glen Meeting.

#### 3.2 Brief History of Quakerism

The Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as the Quakers, developed at a time of great political and theological change in England. Politically, it was the time of the Civil War and subsequent Commonwealth period. The reformation had begun in the sixteenth century, and Quakerism took shape in an atmosphere of many other religious reformers including the Puritans, the Anabaptists, the Ranters, and the Fifth Monarchy Men. Although there were several influential individuals at the beginning of the movement, the founder of Quakerism is considered to have been George Fox (1624-1691). Fox left home as a young man and traveled England, visiting ministers of the established church as well as of dissenting churches in search of a religious experience that could satisfy him. Finally, when all other religious leaders failed to aid him, he

claims to have heard the voice of God speak directly to him, saying “There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition” (Fox, 1694/1976, p. 82). Following the hearing of this voice, Fox proceeded to travel throughout England visiting towns and churches, or “steeple-houses” as he called them, and sharing the “Truth” or the “Light” with others.

Fox believed that the established religion of his time had moved away from the original messages heard by the followers of Christ. He believed that the spirit that spoke to him and that could speak to each individual was the same spirit that had inspired the scriptures. Thus, Fox placed authority in the scriptures, but this authority was secondary to the divine message that each person received directly from God upon being converted and turning to the Light. Many of Fox's initial followers were fellow religious dissenters known as Seekers who had already adopted certain practices, such as meeting for worship in silence. Fox’s message was in accord with their beliefs, and they were convinced to adopt him as a leader. In this way, Fox gained a following of ministers who also traveled, establishing Quaker meetings.

Although Quakers claimed not to have any creeds or doctrines, they believed strongly in the presence of the Light of Christ within each person. Certain core beliefs, which are now called testimonies, also began to develop. Birkel (2004) describes the concept of a Quaker testimony when he writes,

Because revelation is continuing, new leadings will come, but because the Spirit is consistent, certain principles will prevail. Friends have called these principles “testimonies” because they witness to the wider world of the power of God to transform individuals and human society. Although the testimonies have retained a recognizable character, the expression of them has changed and developed over the centuries. (p. 104)

The emergence of some of these testimonies can be understood as connected to the

political climate of the time. Initially, Friends faced much persecution due to suspicion that they might be trying to overthrow the government. The Quaker Peace Testimony is felt to stem in part from an attempt by Fox and other leaders to convince Oliver Cromwell and other members of the English government that Friends had no intention of taking up arms against authority. Other Quaker testimonies include those of equality, simplicity, and integrity. These testimonies developed initially as certain behaviors that may at first have had different motivations. For example, early Quakers engaged in certain practices to discourage the flattery of egos, some of which may have originated as signs of protest, as in the case of refusing to remove one's hat as a sign of respect, which the historian, Hill (1972) describes as "a long-standing gesture of popular social protest" (p. 247). Also, the showing of respect through formal terms of address was unacceptable to Friends, as only God was worthy of these expressions of deference. The Testimony of Equality developed out of these practices. Early Quakers refused to say oaths because they believed that doing so implied that what they said under oath was truer than what they said at other times. This belief in speaking the truth developed into what is now known as the Testimony of Integrity.<sup>13</sup>

An important event in early Quaker history that seems to have played a key role in the development of Quakerism is the symbolic riding in 1656 of James Nayler into Bristol on a donkey, with women "strewing palms before him" (Hill, 1972, p. 249). Nayler, considered almost as influential as Fox in the early days of Quakerism, was

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<sup>13</sup> See Comfort (1941) for a discussion of the Quaker avoidance of oath-taking. Comfort (1941) writes "A man who always tells the truth need not raise his voice to strengthen it, nor call down the wrath of Heaven upon himself if he fails in that primary ethical obligation; a man who does not tell the truth under all circumstances will not be more trustworthy under oath" (p. 65). He also observes that Friends feel it is not "safe to go beyond saying 'to the best of my knowledge' when making a statement of fact" (Comfort, 1941, p. 66). This practice of mitigation and emphasis on speaking from one's own experience seems relevant to the discussion of a Quaker "style" in Chapter 5.

“flogged and branded” for impersonating Jesus Christ and later repented of his actions (Hill, 1972, p. 231-232, 249). This event is considered to be connected to increased persecution of Quakers in England, as well as to efforts by other Quaker leaders to extend some control over the actions of followers in order to prevent further persecution. As Hill (1972) observes, “For all protestant churches the appeal to conscience, to the inner voice, conflicted with the necessity of organization and discipline if the church was to survive” (p. 252). This shift toward discipline and organization did lead to splits within Quakerism, but probably also facilitated the continuation of the movement. The eighteenth century is known as the quietist period of Quaker history, since it was during that time that Friends focused more on consolidation; activism was less common, and it was during this time that processes of group discernment further developed. However, reactions against increased discipline led to further division into branches in the nineteenth century in the United States. Some branches came back together again in the twentieth century, but there continue to be many different varieties of Quakerism in the United States, and practices of Friends tend to be closely tied to the local monthly meeting with which they are associated and the historical participation of that meeting in divisions and reunifications. Currently, in the United States, there are groups of unprogrammed Friends who are divided into those who are liberal and those who are conservative, as well as programmed Friends, some of whom are evangelical. Further branches exist within these groups. In this way, the theme of the tension between individual versus communal forces that was introduced in the first chapter of this study can be traced back to the early days of Quakerism and to conflicts between faithfulness to the Inner Light versus the structuring and formalization of certain group practices.

Quakerism, especially of the evangelical variety, continues to spread. Worldwide there are now approximately 300,000 Friends, with approximately 100,000 of them in the United States. While the worship ceremony of programmed Friends is similar to other Christian groups, unprogrammed Friends practice a silent form of worship. During meeting for worship, only those speak who feel that they have received a certain message from the Light that is meant to be shared with others. This message does not originate within the individual, but instead is received from the Light and passes through the individual to be shared with those gathered.

As mentioned above, early on Friends developed a distinctive way of speaking referred to as “plain language” or “plain speech,” which includes replacing the pronoun “you” with “thou” and “thee,” a practice that is much less common currently. Also, as mentioned, Quakers have a wide variety of what they refer to humorously as “Quakerese,” which are distinctive words and phrases that continue to be employed by Friends. Wick (1998) in her article on linguistic agons in Quaker decision making observes that the “specialized language” of Quakers “is one way of invoking the Quaker and spiritual identity” (p. 119). The “spiritual process” used during decision making “is carried out through the use of a special vocabulary,” explains Wick (1998, p. 119). Much of this vocabulary stems from Fox’s original preaching and his journal, which was published and distributed to meetings throughout the world following his death. Quakerese terms are used to describe many aspects of the Quaker experience. When Friends enter meeting for worship, they sit silently and “settle” or “center” in order to begin the process of seeking communion with the Light. During meeting for worship among unprogrammed, liberal Friends, when a person feels that he or she has received a

message from God that is meant to be shared with the rest of the group, he or she is said to “minister” to the group, and, while giving his or her “vocal ministry,” the Friend must be careful not to “outrun the guide,” or to say more than what is meant to be said. When a meeting for worship reaches a deeper sense of being united and in communion with the Inner Light, the meeting is described as being “gathered” or “covered.”

Many Friends, though not all, draw on the Bible in their religious practice. Early in the development of Quakerism, groups of meetings in England also began the practice of writing letters to individual meetings (Monthly Meetings) with statements known as “advices” and questions called “queries” for those meetings to consider. While these were not considered binding, they were understood to serve as guidance for proper conduct. This developed into the practice of writing books known as *Books of Discipline* or *Faith and Practices*. A *Faith and Practice* is a book of Quaker practice written and periodically updated by members of a Yearly Meeting (which is made up of groups of Quarterly Meetings that are composed of groups of Monthly Meetings). It is both “descriptive” of who Quakers are and what they do and “prescriptive” in providing examples of how Quakers have lived in the past, as models for current Friends to follow (NEYM *Faith and Practice* website <http://www.neym.org/fandp/>). Along with descriptions of practices written by members of the Yearly Meeting, there are also numerous quotations from letters and other writings of historical Friends included in *Faith and Practices* that also serve to guide behavior.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For more information about Quaker history, see the Introductory Booklist under the Resources tab of the Quaker Information Center website (<http://www.quakerinfo.org/>).

### **3.3 History and Demographics of Glen Meeting**

Glen Meeting began under another name in the late 1930s. There had been other occasional worship groups<sup>15</sup> of Friends in the area, in particular among college students, but the formal organization of the meeting was largely the initiative of a European couple, who were professors at a local institution and had been members of a Friends meeting in Europe. There were initially four worship groups that made up the meeting and met together only for Monthly Meeting for Business. In the 1950s, the group began to meet together as one Monthly Meeting and decided to build a meetinghouse. In the 1960s, the meetinghouse opened, and the meeting was renamed. The meeting is affiliated with eight other local meetings in a Quarterly Meeting that meets four times a year for Quarterly Meeting for Business, and participates also in a larger Yearly Meeting, which meets once a year for Yearly Meeting for Business.

According to a recent statistical report compiled in 2009 by the “recorder” of the meeting (different from the recording clerk), there are approximately 150 members of the meeting, with approximately 60 of these being male and 90 female. Most of these members live in the area, anywhere from five minutes to forty-five minutes by car from the meetinghouse. Generally, around seventy-eight members and attenders attend weekly meeting for worship, according to the report (this includes approximately ten to fifteen people who meet in a worship group “under the care of the meeting,” but at a different location). On average approximately twenty-six members and attenders attend monthly meeting for business. There are approximately twelve members under the age of twenty-

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<sup>15</sup> A worship group develops when a group of individuals, who live in an area where a Monthly Meeting is not established, meet together regularly for worship. This group can eventually apply for Monthly Meeting status to the Yearly Meeting in the area or to the Friends World Committee for Consultation International Membership Committee.



five, and fifty-five members, who are sixty-five or older. There are also approximately seventy-one active “attenders,” who are not members of the meeting, but frequently attend meeting. The statistical report did not include information about race or ethnicity, but the majority of the members and attenders of the meeting are of European ancestry.

The meetinghouse is made up primarily of five parts: (1) the meeting room where meeting for worship takes place, (2) the vestibule connecting the meeting room with the “fellowship room,” (3) the “fellowship room” where “fellowship hour” after meeting for worship takes place and which has a small kitchen and two small rooms connected to it where childcare and First Day School for the children take place, (4) the library room, which connects the “fellowship room” and the Oak Room<sup>16</sup>, and (5) the Oak Room where other group meetings take place, such as the adult education hours that follow “fellowship hour” on some Sundays. The meeting room is square with wooden benches arranged in three or four rows along the walls, all facing the center. There are also two rows of benches in each corner, also facing the center. Windows run horizontally across the upper part of three of the walls and make up the complete upper half of the wall farthest from the door that connects to the vestibule. There are no windows on the wall with the door that leads to the vestibule. There is also another door in the far corner that leads to the outside, but people do not normally enter through that door, although it is opened in the summer, along with the windows, to allow for a breeze when it is warm. There is a brown carpet on the floor, and several small speakers hang from the ceiling and connect to the hearing amplification system, which is used to help those who have difficulty hearing. The benches have long, greenish cushions on them. Within the past

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<sup>16</sup> This room was named after a former member of the meeting. I have chosen not to use the name in order to preserve privacy.

year or so, other types of chairs, such as more comfortable plastic chairs, have begun to be brought into the room to replace some of the benches for those who may have difficulty or be uncomfortable sitting for long periods of time on the benches. Besides these benches and chairs, there is no other furniture in the meeting room.

In the 2006 edition of the handbook of Glen Meeting, which outlines the policies and practices of the meeting and is frequently consulted by participants in the meeting, there is a subsection entitled “Communications at Glen Meeting.” It seems useful to enumerate here the suggestions that are listed under this subsection, which can serve as a backdrop for the following analyses. In the handbook the following suggestions are given:

1. To open ourselves collectively in attending to the Spirit: to speak and listen faithfully to one another;
2. To speak plainly, i.e., simply, clearly, directly, openly, honestly;
3. To receive communications in a spirit of openness and trust.
4. To be careful in speech, avoiding tale-bearing and detraction, and safeguarding the reputation of others;
5. To allow for the seasoning effects of time, within and between communications;
6. To communicate with all members of a group involved in a matter of common concern;
7. To communicate in a form and manner fitting to the relationship in question, so that all those involved may seek Truth together;
8. In matters of corporate worship and discernment, to seek God’s will in the presence of another;
9. To welcome others into Quaker faith and practice.

The terms and ideas outlined in these instructions will weave throughout the following analyses, suggesting a common code of communication guiding communicative processes in this community.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> After reading my description of Glen Meeting, a member noted that I may want to add an additional observation that the meeting is made up of many members from various different Yearly Meetings, who have come to the area to work. She explained that these different backgrounds can sometimes cause difficulties in that Friends have different experiences and different languages; for example if they come

### **3.4 Brief History of *Friends Journal***

*Friends Journal* is the major publication of Friends Publishing Corporation, which was founded in 1955. The mission statement of the Corporation states that it seeks to “serve the Quaker community with timely, comprehensive, responsive, and understandable information and reflection on the experience of Friends” (Mission Statement, 1998, cited on *Friends Journal* website [www.friendsjournal.org](http://www.friendsjournal.org)). The *Journal* represents the coming together of two publications published by two branches of Quakerism, which reunited around the time that the publishing corporation was founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The *Journal* has five full-time and five part-time staff members and relies heavily on its interns and volunteers. Readers can be found in all fifty states and in forty-three foreign countries. The *Journal* was originally published weekly, but is now published eleven times per year. The average number of paid subscriptions is over 7,300, with an approximate readership of over 20,000 in print and 6,000 online (*Friends Journal* website [www.friendsjournal.org](http://www.friendsjournal.org)).

I interned for three summers at *Friends Journal* during the summers of 2002, 2007, and 2008. During the first two of these summers, I volunteered approximately twenty to thirty hours per week for fifteen weeks, and, during the third summer, I volunteered approximately ten hours per week for fifteen weeks. My duties as an intern included copy editing, helping to choose articles and poems from the many submissions for publication in the issues, reading articles for possible inclusion in anthologies,

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from a programmed meeting where they did not often speak individually in meeting for worship. She observed, however, that “the common way of speaking is shared, surprisingly, through some kind of osmosis, even though the meetings they come from are in states far away, with different histories.” This idea of a Quaker “style” will be addressed further in my analysis in Chapter 5.

participating in layout meetings, participating in staff meetings, and attending conferences at Friends Center and writing up news reports on them.

### **3.5 Position of the Ethnographer**

As mentioned in the introduction, my interest in this community stems from having attended a Quaker-founded college. The practices at this college, especially its use of an honor code, are still influenced by Quaker beliefs and practices. I was very much impressed by the sense of community that these practices created, although the college is no longer directly affiliated with Quakerism. In some senses, my research here is an attempt to understand a community that I greatly admire and the success of whose practices I have been a direct witness to in my educational experience. My experiences as an intern for three summers at *Friends Journal*, reading articles by Friends from all over the country and learning from the *Friends Journal* staff, also inspired me to explore Friends communication practices in more depth. This is a unique speech community for study from the perspective of the ethnography of communication and cultural communication in that the primary worship experience is based on an understanding of a way of communicating that is in many ways different from other faith communities and widely disvalued in other contexts. The community also has a long history as a unique subculture that has often advocated actions at odds with the surrounding culture, and yet the community has simultaneously gained respect from that wider culture for these practices. Although I was raised in the Roman Catholic faith, I consider myself what Quakers call, a “friend of Friends.”

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has given an overview of the speech community in which this research was conducted. A brief history of the Religious Society of Friends provides the reader with a sense of the development of this group and of the wider context in which members of Glen Meeting understand their practices to be situated. An orientation to the physical meetinghouse in which meeting for worship and meeting for business take place also gives a sense of the physical setting of the speech events analyzed here, which was highlighted by Hymes (1972) as a key element of any communicative event. I will now start with an analysis of communicative practices that constitute worship among Quakers, beginning with a discussion of written communication in *Friends Journal* about meeting for worship in order to set the stage for an examination of specific instances of worship in the community of Glen Meeting.

## CHAPTER 4

### WORSHIP AS COMMUNICATION

#### 4.1 Part I Meeting for Worship among Quakers

##### 4.1.1 Introduction

As in many religious groups, the core event around which the life of the community centers at Glen Meeting is a weekly worship service. It seems appropriate, therefore, to begin this analysis of communication practices of participants in this community by focusing on weekly meeting for worship. The analysis in this chapter will be broken down into several sections and will serve as a foundation for the analyses in subsequent chapters. As will be explicated in more detail here, Friends often refer to a particularly meaningful worship experience as being either “gathered” or “covered.” Consequently, the first part of this chapter will be an analysis of written communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship in the publication *Friends Journal* in order to explore the cultural meanings associated with this term. This more general overview of cultural meanings active in the wider Quaker community will form the basis for a more specific analysis of meetings for worship that I participated in at Glen Meeting, which will be analyzed in the subsequent sections. In this way the focus of the analysis will gradually narrow, beginning with written communication in the wider community, moving next to oral communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting within Glen Meeting, and then moving to an analysis of three specific instances

of “gathered” or “covered” meetings for worship at the meeting.<sup>18</sup> The research questions that will be addressed in this section include: *When is the phrase “gathered” or “covered” meeting used by Quakers? In what contexts, with what meanings?* and *What understandings of communication, sociality, and personhood does communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting presume and create?* It is important to note the distinction in data used between the different sections of this chapter, in that I am first starting with an analysis of written and oral communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship, before moving into a study of communication that actually occurred during this speech event itself.

#### **4.1.2 Description of the “Gathered” Meeting in Quaker Writings**

The “gathered” or “covered” meeting is considered distinctive and special by Quakers and has been written about by many Friends. Early Friends in the seventeenth century sometimes referred to this event as “a tender, broken meeting” (Abbott, 2003). Abbott (2003) explains, “Early Quaker Journals often described worship as ‘broken’ and ‘tender.’ When hearts were tender, people had been open to the work of the Spirit among them. Meetings were rich when many were ‘broken’ —when the demands of human lust, greed, fear and selfishness broke and gave way to the leadings of the Light.” Use of the term “gathered” likely originated with Fox in his descriptions of those meetings that were established early on. As Fox and many of his followers traveled and engaged in ministry, groups of “convinced,” or converted, Friends began to form. Fox referred to these as

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<sup>18</sup> The analysis in Chapter 5 will also adopt a similar format in order to analyze decision making. The focus of the first section will be on communication about decision making in the wider community, the next section will move to an analysis of communication about decision making within Glen Meeting, the third section will look at specific instances of meeting for business, and the final section will look at a specific decision that was made in one of these meetings for business.

“gathered Friends” or “gathered meetings,” and Bauman (1983) explains that, for early ministers, these “gathered meetings” were “viewed as a refuge from the world, a spiritual haven, a place to recharge one’s spirit in fellowship with other Quakers” (p. 120). They were at first considered “secondary to the ministry out in the world as a directed focus of Quaker energy and initiative” (Bauman, 1983, p. 120). However, these gatherings gradually became more important during periods of persecution as a way of maintaining the community. Also, during persecution, practices developed to test “leadings,” or actions that individuals felt compelled to take, in the established meetings before carrying them out in the wider world, in order to discourage extreme behavior that might have negative consequences for the whole group, as in the case of the actions of James Nayler discussed earlier.<sup>19</sup> The understanding of meeting for worship as a refuge and a place to recharge one’s spiritual batteries before taking action in the world still seems to exist at Glen Meeting.

In his pamphlet on meeting for worship, Taber (1992) describes the experience of the “gathered” meeting as feeling like one has “been lifted or expanded into another state of consciousness which enjoys an inward, effortless quietness. At the same time the mind slows down into a reverie-like state, akin to, though not quite the same, as the reverie one falls into when sitting by the seashore or by a mountain stream, when time drops away or becomes irrelevant” (p. 17). Johnson (1991) proposes that the term “gathered meeting” “can mean a meeting where, suddenly or gradually, all the members feel brought together by the Spirit. . . . Or it can mean a meeting in which someone expresses an idea, raises a question, or tells of an experience which sets the tone and

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<sup>19</sup> For a more in-depth discussion on the concept of “leadings” among Friends, see Steve Smith’s article, “‘Leadings’ for Nontheistic Friends?” in the January 2011 *Friends Journal*.



theme for the meeting” (p. 94). In his essay entitled *The Gathered Meeting* that is well-known among Quakers, Kelly (1966) uses adjectives such as “mystical,” “ineffable,” and “transient” to describe the “gathered meeting,” and he explains that it “carries a sense of passivity with it” and a “sense of unity” (p. 76- 78). He also observes that it has a “knowledge-quality” and that during a “gathered meeting,” “the secrets of this amazing world have been in some larger degree laid bare. We know life, and the world, and ourselves from within, anew” (Kelly, 1966, p. 76-77). The significance of the experience of the “covered” meeting to the Quaker community is expressed in the following excerpt from Sheeran’s (1996) work:

One learned Friend remarked that the covered meeting is no rarer than the occasional sense of awe experienced at the most reverent moments of the Catholic Eucharist. Catholics, however, consider that the event of the Eucharist occurs whether the participants experience a sense of divine presence or not. Rarity of such an experience for Catholics, then, is not of central significance. Among Friends, however the experience has so much centrality that expressions of belief are incidental, the community that rarely prays in the Life has much more to fear. (p. 88)

Sheeran also emphasizes the importance of the “gathered” state to the community when he quotes another longtime Friend who claims,

We have gotten lots of new members . . . who are attracted by our testimonies . . . But it seems to me that most of these people will eventually leave us unless they become turned on by our worship. If they don’t find something very special there, they will become impatient because we aren’t so single-minded about such causes as they are. They’ll tire of our slowness and they’ll leave. (p. 89)

Different groups of Friends experience this type of meeting in various ways, and it is, thus, difficult to describe exactly what a “gathered” or “covered” meeting means to all Quakers.

Although, a “gathered” meeting and a “covered” meeting are understood by some Friends as somewhat different, many of the people with whom I talked in Glen Meeting

appeared to use the terms synonymously. They also often referred to a “centered” meeting in a similar manner. The term “centered” can be understood as linked to the “centering” that makes up the initial period of meeting for worship, which will be described in more detail later in this chapter. This connection is interesting because it creates a view of the meeting for worship as a process of seeking a certain state, that of being “centered,” which may or may not be reached in any given meeting. As will be discussed later in greater detail, we see here the notion that a “gathered” or “covered” meeting is a process that requires dedication and time, in order for “centering” to take place. In an attempt to distinguish between the terms “gathered” and “covered,” which she noted were often used interchangeably, a member of Glen Meeting told me, “I guess it’s just sort of, when reflecting afterwards, there’s a kind of a swell of description, ‘That was a gathered meeting.’ ‘That meeting was gathered.’ . . . many many people. . . . You can’t really describe it,” while on the other hand “Covered is the feel of it. Like covered with Light. Covered with the Holy Ghost. Covered with- and that’s what was gathering.” It seems, then, that for some the terms can be used to describe different aspects of a certain quality of meeting for worship, in that people feel as if something has “gathered” them together and that thing is the “spirit” that “covers” the meeting. It should be noted, however, that other Friends distinguish more sharply between a “gathered” and a “covered” meeting. The Friend that I interviewed from another meeting told me that she had frequently experienced “gathered” meetings, but only once a “covered” meeting. The “covered” meeting occurred during a meeting for worship she took part in while visiting a prison. She said that inmates at the prison came to meeting for worship primarily because they wanted to see their friends from other floors and not because they

were interested in worship. However, one time she recounts that, “All of a sudden, quiet swept. It was as if a tent came down, high point in the middle and four poles. I said, ok, this is a covered meeting.” Upon describing this experience to another Friend, she discovered that this Friend had also occasionally felt this shared sense of a canopy overhead during silent worship. For the purposes of this analysis, the terms “gathered” and “covered” will be used interchangeably, as they were at Glen Meeting; however, it is interesting to keep these distinctions in mind.

#### **4.1.3 Methodology for Data Collection**

Experience that informs the analysis of data in this chapter includes interning for three summers at *Friends Journal* in Philadelphia, as discussed earlier. I became interested in the Quaker communication practice of the “gathered” meeting while reading and editing articles for the *Journal*. I discussed this phenomenon with the editors and other staff members at the *Journal*, and my idea of analyzing it further was met with interest and encouragement. This support confirmed my initial sense of the importance of the practice, and further study has since added evidence of its centrality as a key cultural concept.

Data collection for this section consisted in searching the *Friends Journal* website collection of archived articles for feature articles that contained references to “gathered meeting for worship” or “covered meeting for worship.” The full text of one or two feature articles has been published on the site each month since January 2001. There were approximately 130 articles on the site spanning a period of just over eight years when this analysis was conducted. I found one instance of the full phrase “gathered

meeting for worship,” as well as four references to “gathered meeting” and two references to “gathered worship,” which occurred in a total of six articles. I did not find any references to the full phrase “covered meeting for worship” or the shortened phrase “covered meeting” in my search, but I found two references to “covered worship,” which occurred in a total of two articles.<sup>20</sup>

This selection process left me with seven uses of the terms in six articles for in-depth analysis. These articles were from December 2002, October 2003, January 2004, July 2004, October 2006, and January 2007. According to the short biographies provided at the end of the articles, four of the authors are members of Monthly Meetings in California, Illinois, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and two of the authors are members of worship groups in Wisconsin and Texas. I have considered in my analysis the full text of all six articles, but I have focused in particular on the paragraphs which contain the terms “gathered meeting for worship,” “gathered meeting,” “gathered worship,” and “covered worship” and those immediately surrounding them. The data instances that follow are these paragraphs.

#### **4.1.4 Methodology for Data Analysis**

Analysis of my data began with identification of key cultural symbols associated with the phenomenon of a “gathered” meeting. These symbols were chosen based on frequency, potency, and substitutability in the data. In accordance with the approach of

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<sup>20</sup> Of the eight articles that I identified in this way, two of them, one published in November 2001 and one published in September 2006, have what I would consider to be slightly atypical formats for feature articles in *Friends Journal*. Although the use of the term “gathered meeting” in these articles does not seem to be different from those in the other articles, I have chosen to exclude these articles for the time being in order to more closely focus my analysis. However, further examination of these articles would most likely prove fruitful in the future.

CuDA, I next organized these symbols into cultural propositions in order to attempt to formulate a description of what Friends assume to be occurring when "gathered" meeting for worship takes place. The cultural symbols also enabled me to identify semantic dimensions (Carbaugh, 2007) of meeting for worship, which facilitate a better understanding of what makes the "gathered" meeting distinctive and significant for Friends in terms of a continua of characteristics. Finally, in the third stage of my analysis, I supplemented CuDA with the terms for talk framework (Carbaugh, 1989) to identify cultural premises of the "gathered" meeting as a communication event. This stage of my analysis built on the cultural symbols, propositions, and dimensions formulated in the first stage in order to analyze the metacommunicative messages about communication, sociality, and personhood contained both literally and metaphorically in written communication about the "gathered" meeting for worship.

#### **4.1.5 Analysis**

As mentioned above, I began my analysis by identifying key cultural symbols found in the written text about "gathered" or "covered" meeting for worship. These symbols were chosen based on frequency of co-occurrence within the data, potency in terms of their relationship to ideas that are central to the Religious Society of Friends, for example the testimonies or historical practices of Friends, and substitutability for the key terms "gathered" and "covered." This analysis yielded the following cultural symbols based on frequency of co-occurrence: "deep," "spirit," "prayer," "time," "move," "together," and "flowing." The data instances are included here for reference; I have added line numbers.

### **Instance 1**

**December, 2002 *What Is Worship?* by Marti Matthews**

1 I have seen a perfect image of the whole: on Navy Pier along Chicago's shoreline is a 2  
giant Ferris wheel. The large light at the center sends light outward along the spokes 3  
until it reaches the lights on the rim. The rim is always lit, yet is also in the process  
4 of being lit, and the light moves ever outward from the center, while the whole wheel  
5 is moving together at the same time—and it is all one thing! In Quaker worship we  
6 sit in a circle, facing the center, united by this center. If we reach the **gathered**  
7 **meeting**, the center moves us together in the same dance. We experience our  
8 individual light as having a place in a larger dance, not lost but multiplied in power.  
9 We do not need endless prayers to persuade the Source to be with us, all we need to  
10 say is *yes*. Yes, I accept your invitation to dance. I will not separate myself from  
11 this good that wants to happen. I will dance with you, O Mystery that creates us, and  
12 thus I will take my place in the dance of the whole.

### **Instance 2**

**October, 2003 *Discovering Fellowship Among African American Friends* by Elmyra (Amhara) Powell**

1 For reasons of which I have little understanding, during my five days at the  
2 gathering, every experience of unprogrammed Quaker worship felt somehow deeper  
3 and more intense. I consistently experienced the silence more profoundly. I related  
4 more intimately to the spoken ministries of others. I was soothed and comforted by  
5 the many ministries of song flowing spontaneously through the gathered group. Time  
6 after time our silent **worship** felt "**covered**." In remembrance of our dear departed  
7 ones, we poured libation in an unprogrammed experience that today I still find  
8 difficult to put into words. Still more surprising for me were the two occasions  
9 during this five-day gathering when I found myself, for the first time in my ten-plus 10  
years as a practicing Quaker, actually quaking in meeting for worship.

### **Instance 3**

**January, 2004 *For Where Your Treasure Is, There Will Your Heart Be Also* by Kat Griffith**

1 Now we're not exactly out of the woods yet. It remains to be seen whether folks will  
2 actually contribute more to NYM. But there was an excitement in the air that was  
3 unfamiliar to me at NYM, but that I had experienced once before—in El Salvador.  
4 Following the rise of meeting, I was astonished by the number of Friends who  
5 approached me and said how moved they were by the collection for San Ignacio  
6 School, by the report on our visit to El Salvador, by the **gathered worship** we  
7 achieved when Salvadorans were in our midst, and by the example they set in their  
8 financial stewardship.

**Instance 4**

**January, 2004** *For Where Your Treasure Is, There Will Your Heart Be Also* by **Kat Griffith**

1 But the fact remains, NYM did something quite out of the ordinary for us: we  
2 directly linked asking for money to giving money, and we did both on the floor, in  
3 cash, in the context of a business meeting that grew out of a deeply **gathered**  
4 **meeting for worship**. The result is the largest spontaneous donation I am aware of  
5 NYM's ever having made.

**Instance 5**

**July, 2004** *Gifts from the Closet* by **Mary Waddington**

1 How can I possibly explain, especially to one so young as Samantha, the alchemy of 2  
**covered worship** or the mysticism of divine intervention? Perhaps I could write this  
3 as a fairy tale she will grow into as it is read to her, something like . . .

**Instance 6**

**October, 2006** *Deep, Tall, and Wide* by **Marcelle Martin**

1 In addition to taking more frequent opportunities for prayer, worship, and spiritual  
2 sharing, longer opportunities can transform us further. I am part of a group that for  
3 many years has organized regular gatherings during which we worship together for  
4 an entire morning. Although there are times of grace when I can move into **gathered**  
5 **worship** in a short period of time, it usually takes me nearly an hour of meeting for  
6 worship to be released from my deep attachment to my daily concerns, enough to  
7 begin to feel the wider influences of the Divine in my soul. This is where I am  
8 usually left at the end of the typical hour of worship on First Day mornings. It is  
9 good to be taken to that place every week with my meeting. But when I  
10 have the opportunity to stay in communal worship for an entire morning, I notice  
11 that what happens in the first hour is the beginning movement in a more profound  
12 process. As each hour passes, time and my more temporal concerns lose their grip,  
13 and the Spirit can do its work in me in a more intensive and refined way. It is like  
14 submitting to a delicate form of surgery whose intricacies I cannot comprehend, but  
15 whose effects are felt in a cleaner mind and heart, purer intentions, peace and  
16 renewed inspiration, more simplicity, and a greater openness towards others.

**Instance 7**

**January, 2007** *A Quaker Speaks From the Black Experience* by **James Fletcher**

1 Of course, I could go on about the shortcomings of Friends and the many  
2 disappointments I've had. However, that would not do justice to the other side: those  
3 very special moments in truly **gathered meetings** when, in the words of George Fox,  
4 "I felt as if I had come up through the flaming sword into the garden of Eden in  
5 which all things were made new, and the creation gave off a new and beautiful  
6 fragrance." One example of such an experience was the first meeting of the  
7 Fellowship of Friends of African Descent at Pendle Hill in 1990. That meeting was a  
8 tremendous outflowing of joy, celebration, and exuberance. There was an abundance

9 of worshipful silence and sharing in word, song, and prayer. The power of the Holy  
10 Spirit was over all. It went on for hours. The clerks tried three times to end the  
11 meeting, but the Spirit kept on flowing until it was ready, in God's own good time, to  
12 cease.

Each of the symbols mentioned above occurred at least three times in the data in at least two different articles. For example, the symbol of “deep” can be found in Instance 2, line 2, Instance 4, line 3, Instance 6, line 6, and in the title of the article in which Instance 6 was found. The symbol of “prayer” occurs in Instance 1, line 9, Instance 6, line 1, and Instance 7, line 9. It should be noted that in one of the occurrences of “deep,” it is in the form “deeply” (Instance 4, line 3), and in another it is in the form of “deeper” (Instance 2, line 2); in one of the repetitions of “spirit” it occurs in the form “spiritual” (Instance 6, line 1); in one of the examples of “move,” it is in the form “movement” (Instance 6, line 11); and in one of the occurrences of “flowing” it is in the form “outflowing” (Instance 7, line 8). I would also like to point out that the examples of “time” considered for this analysis are those occurring in Instance 6, line 5, Instance 6, line 12, and Instance 7, line 11, which all refer to the passage of time or a period of time, rather than to “a time” or a particular point picked out among others, as it is used in Instance 2, line 9. Also, the meaning of the occurrences of “move” seem to relate to moving physically from one location to another, being emotionally moved, or being moved or moving into prayer. In this analysis, I would like to focus on the last of these understandings, examples of which are found in Instance 1, line 7, Instance 6, line 4, and Instance 6, line 11.

The analysis yielded the following cultural symbols based on potency: “light,” “quaking,” “peace,” “simplicity,” “spontaneous,” and “openness.” Terms were identified as potent if they were closely connected to the historical development or practices of



Friends or were linked to central beliefs, such as the testimonies or the presence of God in each person. For example, the symbol of “light,” found five times in Instance 1, is a word that Quakers use to symbolize the divine and was what George Fox believed he and his followers were sharing with others. Also, the symbol of “quaking,” found in Instance 2, line 10, is connected to the historical action of Quakers during meeting for worship, which led to their name. The symbols “peace” and “simplicity,” Instance 6, lines 15 and 16, are linked to the testimonies that have these names. Also, Quaker communication with the divine is understood as being “spontaneous,” (Instance 2, line 5; Instance 4, line 4); and “openness” (Instance 6, line 16) to others reflects the Quaker belief that there is that of God in each person.

Cultural symbols that were chosen based on substitutability include: “spoken ministry,” “process,” “silence,” “communal worship,” “sharing,” and “alchemy.” Although each of these symbols cannot by itself represent the full meaning of “gathered” or “covered” meeting, each one does make up a part of what Friends seem to mean when they make reference to the phenomenon. In other words: *A “gathered” meeting can be described as a “process” of “communal worship” consisting of “silence” and “sharing” through “spoken ministry.”* This sentence forms a cultural proposition, which is a statement formulated by the analyst that “captures participants' definitions, concepts, premises, beliefs or values” (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 177) and which is composed of the cultural symbols identified above. These connections between symbols formulated in this way resonate with Martin's (2006) description of her experiences in Instance 6 when she writes, “But when I have the opportunity to stay in communal worship for an entire morning, I notice that what happens in the first hour is the beginning movement in a more

profound process.” For Friends, communal worship in silence is a process that is not achieved immediately. Although meeting for worship is nowadays often limited to an hour, this was not always the case because of a belief that one cannot and should not determine or limit communion with the Light and a belief that it takes time to achieve this communion as a group; it is something that must be sought after.

Notions of what a “gathered” meeting for worship means for Friends could also be expressed by the following propositions, which I again formulated using symbols identified in the instances above: *In a “gathered” meeting, Friends “together” “move” into “deep,” “silent” “communal worship” for a long and indefinite period of “time.”* and *In a “gathered” meeting, “spontaneous” “sharing” “flows” through “spoken ministry” and “prayer” coming from the “spirit.”* These propositions stress the notion that worship is communal, that it is important that people are together as a group. There is coordination, as represented by the Ferris wheel in Instance 1, and sharing with others, which is described as spiritual by Martin (2006) and takes place in the form of “word, song, and prayer,” according to Fletcher (2007). Thus, a connection is present between two interdependent parts: “silence” and “sharing” in “spoken ministry.” This “sharing” is spontaneous and can lead to other spontaneous action, such as that described by Griffith (2004); it is not pre-planned, but comes from the “spirit,” and it is dynamic and “flowing,” rather than static or confined to one individual, stressing again the importance of the group. That this process leads to change is revealed in Waddington's (2004) connection of “covered” worship to “alchemy” and divine intervention in Instance 5. In this way, these propositions represent an insider’s perspective, as formulated by the researcher using key cultural symbols, of what is getting done in a “gathered” meeting.

These cultural propositions make evident certain semantic dimensions (Carbaugh, 2007) that can be used to compare “gathered” or “covered” meetings to other meetings for worship more generally. As the instances above reveal, each meeting is written or spoken about as placed along a continuum of *depth* and *time*. On one end of the first continuum of *depth* would be a deep, profound experience, while on the other end could be a typical or disappointing experience. Instances 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 all discuss the contrast between the typical or disappointing experience found at one end of the continuum, as compared to the deeper experience found at the other end. For example, in Instance 2, Powell (2003) links “covered” worship to worship that “felt somehow deeper and more intense,” and in Instance 7, Fletcher (2007) contrasts the “shortcomings of Friends” and “the many disappointments [he's] had” with “those very special moments in truly gathered meetings.” On one end of the continuum of *time* would be a longer period of time described as God’s time, and on the other end would be a short period of time, or the typical hour of meeting for worship. Instances 6 and 7 in particular address this idea of God's time as compared to a shorter period of time, represented by the hour on Sunday. In Instance 7, Fletcher (2007) gives an example of a “gathered” meeting; he writes, “It went on for hours. The clerks tried three times to end the meeting, but the Spirit kept on flowing until it was ready, in God's own good time, to cease.”<sup>21</sup> Both of these dimensions of *depth* and *time* connect to the symbol of “process” and to the ideas of being “together,” of coordination, and of something important getting done, as discussed in regards to the cultural propositions above. These semantic dimensions further help to define how Friends understand the “gathered” meeting for worship as a culturally significant event

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<sup>21</sup> Hoffman (2007) references “time” as a common theme in literature on spirituality and organizing. This idea will come up again in the discussion of Quaker decision-making processes in meeting for business in Chapter 5.

that is distinct among other experiences of meeting for worship; as Griffith (2004) writes in Instance 4, line 1, what happens during “gathered” meetings for worship is “quite out of the ordinary.”

Based on this initial analysis, I used the terms for talk framework (Carbaugh, 1989) to identify metacommunicative messages about communication, sociality, and personhood contained both literally and metaphorically in the data. Carbaugh observes that often messages about communication are conveyed more directly, for example when “talk about talk is referring literally to aspects of the talk itself,” while messages about sociality and personhood may get done more indirectly, as when “talk about talk is referring to present social relations and models of personhood” (1989, p. 103). Referring back to my initial research questions, I formulated the following question to guide my analysis of messages about communication: *What are the understandings of communication presumed and created through writings about “gathered” meeting for worship?* Since I was looking more literally at the communication phenomenon of the “gathered” meeting, I first considered the symbols that were identified as in part substitutable for the term, including “communal worship,” “silence,” “spoken ministry,” “sharing,” “process,” and “alchemy,” because these can also be understood to be communication phenomena. I then considered other symbols that could be seen as closely associated with each of these communicative symbols, although all symbols can be viewed as closely connected. With “communal worship,” I associated “together” and “openness,” with “silence,” I identified “deep” and “peace,” and with “sharing” and “spoken ministry,” I associated “quaking,” “spontaneous,” “flowing,” “prayer,” “move,” “spirit,” and “light.” I associated “time” and “move” with “process” and “move,”

“spirit,” and “light” with “alchemy.” Having identified these symbols, I then considered aspects such as degree of structuring, or the flexibility of the communication; tone, or the emotional pitch, formality, and seriousness of the communication; and efficaciousness, or the importance of the communication, in order to identify symbols that reflected each of these characteristics. The following table outlines my connections.

Table 1: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Communication in Written Communication

<b><i>Degree of structuring</i></b>	“spontaneous” “flowing” “time” “openness”
<b><i>Tone</i></b>	“quaking” “deep” “spontaneous” “peace”
<b><i>Efficaciousness</i></b>	“quaking” “deep” “prayer” “together” “move” “spirit” “light”

These symbols analyzed in terms of these characteristics led me to identify the following messages about communication that I consider to be premises of communication during “gathered” meeting for worship: *The communication that occurs during gathered meeting for worship is flexible and nonformulaic, but serious and emotional.* and *The communication that occurs during gathered meeting for worship is important and substantial; people are united, change occurs, and a situation is transformed.*

In order to guide my analysis of the more metaphorical meanings about sociality contained within written communication about the “gathered” meeting for worship, I posed the following question: *What are the relations presumed and created among people and roles through writings about “gathered” meeting for worship?* As above, I then considered the symbols that could be associated with various aspects of messages about relations between people such as solidarity, competitiveness, and closeness. I have again organized my analysis using a table.

Table 2: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Sociality in Written Communication

<b><i>Solidarity/Power</i></b>	“openness” “sharing” “peace” “communal worship” “together” “spirit” “light” “simplicity”
<b><i>Competitive/Cooperative</i></b>	“openness” “sharing” “peace” “communal worship” “together” “process”
<b><i>Closeness/Distancing</i></b>	“move” “together” “openness” “sharing” “peace” “communal worship”

These symbols analyzed in terms of these understandings of sociality led me to identify the following messages about sociality that I consider to be premises of sociality during “gathered” meeting for worship: *Relations between people during gathered meeting for worship are close and intimate.* and *Relations between people during gathered meeting for worship are characterized by solidarity and cooperation.*

Carbaugh (1989) asserts in his writing about terms for talk that messages about personhood are also contained metaphorically in metacommunication about communicative phenomena. In order to consider these messages, I again created a subquestion for myself based on my initial research questions: *What are the understandings of personhood presumed and created through writings about “gathered” meeting for worship?* I looked at the cultural symbols I had identified in my data and considered how these connect to ideas about preferred qualities of people, appropriate conduct, and styles of personhood. I chose these characteristics from the framework as seeming most relevant to my data. The following table summarizes the links I was able to draw.

Table 3: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Personhood in Written Communication

<i>Preferred/Dispreferred qualities</i>	“spontaneous” “simplicity” “peace” “openness”
<i>Appropriate/Inappropriate conduct</i>	“silence” “quaking” “sharing” “spoken ministry” “prayer” “time” “move” “together”
<i>Styles of personhood: Impersonal and positional versus Personal and intimate</i>	“openness” “sharing” “communal worship” “deep” “together”

The messages about personhood in communication about the “gathered” meeting are summarized in the following premises: *During gathered meeting for worship the preferred forms of conduct are moving together into silence and prayer, quaking, and sharing through spoken ministry. It is not appropriate for one to limit the amount of time of a gathered meeting for worship. It is valued for a person to be spontaneous and open. It is valued for a person's life to demonstrate peace and simplicity. and It is valued for a person to be intimate and personal.*

#### 4.1.6 Summary of Findings

My general research questions were originally: *When is the phrase, “gathered” or “covered” meeting used by Quakers? In what contexts, with what meanings?* and *Are there deep cultural meanings about communication, sociality, and personhood in communication about “gathered” or “covered” meetings?* Returning to these, we can summarize my findings regarding messages about communication, sociality, and personhood in the following table.

Table 4: Cultural Premises of “Gathered” Meeting Identified in Written Communication

<p><b><i>Messages about Communication in communication about gathered meeting for worship</i></b></p>	<p>In gathered meetings, communication is flexible and nonformulaic, but serious and emotional. In gathered meetings, communication is important and substantial; Change occurs and a situation is transformed.</p>
<p><b><i>Messages about Sociality in communication about gathered meeting for worship</i></b></p>	<p>In gathered meetings, close and intimate relations between people are valued. In gathered meetings, solidarity and cooperation are valued.</p>
<p><b><i>Messages about Personhood in communication about gathered meeting for worship</i></b></p>	<p>In gathered meetings, proper conduct includes silence, prayer, quaking, and sharing through spoken ministry, as well as not limiting the time of meeting for worship. In gathered meetings, preferred qualities include being spontaneous, open, simple, and peaceful. In gathered meetings, a style of personhood that is personal and intimate (versus impersonal and hierarchical) is valued.</p>

#### 4.1.7 Conclusion

This section has examined the deep cultural meanings contained within communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting, a communication phenomenon that plays a central role in the practices of members of the Religious Society of Friends. Metacommunicative messages were found in this written communication on a literal level about communication and about sociality and personhood on a more metaphorical level. My analysis of this Quaker practice gives evidence for the continued importance of communication phenomena in defining Quaker social identity (Bauman,



1983), which will be developed more in later chapters. Friends continue to have a distinct understanding of the role and function of speaking and of “silence,” and they place great value on communal “silence.” However, an emphasis on and a valuing of “silence” among Friends is complemented by an extreme respect for and belief in the importance of that way of speaking that is part of a process of communal waiting and listening. As Philipsen observes, “The alternation between speech and ‘silence’ represents an intricate fitting together of acts by the several people present. For the participants, the Quaker meeting [is] an artfully accomplished organization of symbolic actions” (1989, p. 259). It appears that speech in the form of the “sharing” of “spoken ministry” “flowing” from the “spirit” is also a native symbolic concept along with “silence.” In this way, both “silence” and speaking are a part of the group process of deep sharing and worshiping that is the “gathered” meeting for worship. I will now turn to a more specific context and examine the way in which “gathered” or “covered” meetings are understood and enacted in a particular speech community, that of Glen Meeting.

## **4.2 Part II Meeting for Worship at Glen Meeting**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

The second part of this chapter will build on the general analysis of written communication about “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship in the first part with an analysis of communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship at Glen Meeting. In order to do this, I will first create a descriptive account of meeting for

worship at Glen Meeting, based on an outline of the act sequence of this event. Key parts of the act sequence, such as “settling” or sitting in “silence,” will be discussed in detail, drawing on data from my interviews. This emphasis on central elements of meeting for worship will lead into an analysis of elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings from interviews, which will seek to answer the research question already introduced in the first section, but this time with reference to verbal reports at Glen Meeting. The focal question is: *What understandings of communication, sociality, and personhood does communication about the “gathered” meeting presume and create?* Cultural propositions and premises will be formulated drawing on key cultural terms identified in the elicited descriptions I have collected from interviews. This analysis will set the stage for the analysis in the third section in this chapter, which will examine three instances of “covered” or “gathered” meetings for worship at Glen Meeting.

#### **4.2.2 Methodology for Data Collection**

The primary data drawn on for the analysis in this section include the field notes that were collected over a period of about a year and a half of regular attendance at Glen Meeting, as well as the interviews that I conducted with thirteen members of the meeting community. Other data that were taken into account were the numerous casual conversations with other meeting members and attenders. The field notes were written following meeting for worship each Sunday and represent fifty-eight separate meetings of about an hour each. Inclusion of information in the notes was guided by elements of Hymes’ SPEAKING model, as discussed in Chapter 1. The interviews were described in more detail in Chapter 2. Members were asked to participate in an interview if they were

longtime members of the meeting, and if they expressed an interest in my work. Many of those interviewed were former clerks of this meeting or other meetings. Several were also described as “weighty” Friends by other members of the meeting. These interviews and conversations were important for capturing how meeting for worship was experienced by those participating in it. As I heard expressed several times in conversations among Friends, individual experiences of meeting for worship are not often shared verbally following meeting. Consequently, it is necessary to rely in part on these elicited descriptions from interviews and conversations, recognizing, of course, the difference that can exist between description of linguistic behavior and recordings of that behavior. Thus, what was said must be considered in relation with what was observed.

#### **4.2.3 Methodology for Data Analysis**

The analysis of this data is divided into several parts. The first part is a description of the overall act sequence of the meetings for worship that I participated in, with an emphasis on the focal acts of “settling,” sitting and “listening” together in “silence,” and sharing “vocal ministry,” drawing on descriptions provided by my interviewees. The second part of the analysis is an examination of the descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings elicited during my interviews. Based on these descriptions, I identify certain cultural symbols, propositions, and premises that inform speaking about these types of meetings for worship at Glen Meeting.

#### **4.2.4 Descriptive Account of Meeting for Worship**

As previously mentioned, according to the recent statistical report put together by the “recorder” of the meeting, the average attendance at meeting for worship each week in 2009 was seventy-eight.<sup>22</sup> I counted anywhere from between forty to over a hundred people in meeting for worship on various weeks. According to the report, in 2009 there were approximately one hundred and fifty members of the meeting and seventy active “attenders.” I have already described the meetinghouse in Chapter 3; as discussed, meeting for worship occurs in the room called the meeting room, which contains rows of wooden benches, arranged facing each other.

##### **4.2.4.1 Act Sequence**

The first step in my analysis of my notes of meeting for worship was identifying events making up the act sequence of meetings. I then looked in more detail at three key events that make up the central portion of meeting for worship, namely “settling,” group “silence,” and the individual sharing of messages or “vocal ministry.” The following table lists the key events of the act sequence of meeting for worship with parts that make up these events identified in the second column. Following this will be a discussion of the characteristics of “settling,” “silence,” and “sharing” messages that I noted. Parts marked in parentheses may occur, but are not as common or not engaged in by everyone; for example, regular members/attenders do not read the directions that are posted in the vestibule for guests.

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<sup>22</sup> As mentioned, this includes approximately ten to fifteen people who meet in a worship group “under the care of the meeting,” but at a different location. This means that about sixty-eight participants regularly attended the meetings for worship at the meetinghouse.

Table 5: Act Sequence of Meeting for Worship (Continues on the next page)

Events	Parts of Events
1. Arrival	Parking Entering Hanging up coats in vestibule Finding name tags (Taking hearing devices that connect to amplification system) (Reading directions for guests) (Putting food in kitchen in preparation for “fellowship hour”) (Singing) (Group meetings)
2. Shaking the greeter’s hand	Shaking hands and saying good morning to greeter standing at the door of the meeting room
3. Sitting	Finding one’s usual seat Placing hands in lap Closing eyes
4. “Settling” into worship (“centering”)	Becoming still and silent Entering worship
5. The arrival of latecomers	Waiting with the greeter in the vestibule (if late) Entering together ten minutes after the hour
6. Sitting and “listening” together in “silence”	Listening Keeping eyes closed <i>or</i> looking around Praying
7. “Sharing messages” or “vocal ministry”	Standing and speaking messages Pausing between messages
8. Entering of children	Entering at ten minutes before the hour Sitting amongst the adults or on the floor
9. Feeling the end of meeting	Turning to those around one and smiling and shaking hands (initiated by a member of Ministry and Worship)

10. Saying names	Welcoming by a member of Ministry and Worship Going around the room and standing and saying names in concentric circles “Holding” each other in prayer (“Sharing” additional messages that were “rising” at the end of meeting)
11. Announcements	Sharing announcements related to “the life of the meeting” (when called on by member of Ministry and Worship)
12. Extended worship	Staying in worship after others leave
13. Waiting to start conversations	Walking to the “fellowship room”
14. “Fellowship hour”	Drinking beverages and eating snacks Conversations

As mentioned, the three events of meeting for worship that were the central portion of the act sequence were “settling,” sitting and “listening” together in “silence,” and the “sharing” of messages or “vocal ministry.” These events are also probably the most culturally distinctive portions of the meeting for worship, and for this reason they will be considered here in more detail.

#### **4.2.4.2 “Settling” into Worship or “Centering”**

After members have shaken hands with the greeter and found their usual seats in the meeting room, they begin the process of “settling” into worship, or what Taber (1992), in his pamphlet on meeting for worship, describes as “entering and centering” (p.12). This seems to be understood as involving a particular stilling of the body and an attempt to clear the mind. The process does not take a specific amount of time, and there is no specific sign that it has been accomplished in a meeting. Taber (1992) explains that

an “experienced Friend” can sense the difference between the initial period of “centering” and the beginning of worship, but there is “no outward signal or sudden burst of light which accompanies this deepening in the quality of the silence; if we even think about it at all, we just realize with quiet wonder that we have already ‘been there’ for a few minutes” (p.17). It is in this deeper “silence” that “vocal ministry” begins to arise.

The process that Friends described to me when asked about “centering” often involved relaxing and attempting not to focus on daily concerns or worries. Some Friends noted how the process begins before meeting for worship, perhaps even the night before or in the car ride to meeting, when they may sit in “silence,” try to clear their minds of problems, or read *Friends Journal*. One Friend observed that doing Bible reading with a group before meeting was good preparation. Another interviewee observed that when she sits down, she likes to look around and “see who I’m with,” and then she gradually enters a “deep relaxation,” similar to when she does yoga.<sup>23</sup> Although many members of the meeting mentioned that closing their eyes helped with “centering,” this Friend noted that she likes to keep her eyes open, but she does not focus on anything; instead she focuses “out into the trees” and waits, trying to clear her mind of thoughts. The positioning of the body is considered important; one Friend noted that he sits with his legs slightly apart and his hands together, and another observed that she always has her feet firmly planted on the floor in front of her in order to “ground” herself. One man explained,

I don’t know whether I have a systematic process. I sometimes just try to first go through, all the thoughts I want to just hold and release about people in my family

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<sup>23</sup> I have not cited specific interviews in order to protect anonymity. Also, my transcripts of portions of interviews are recorded in standard written form rather than in accordance with transcription methods for conversation analysis in order to focus on content and maintain flow in my description of meeting for worship.

and people I'm caring about. And, I like to get myself feeling comfortable, and my hands together and I sort of feel my body, and feel the presence. And then I like listening to the silence, to really hear, there's some amazing quality to a large group of people. Today, you know, there was like a hundred people in there, and they were really silent. They were creating this palpable silence, and so really feeling that helps to get centered. And I then tend to try to be more, Buddhist, I think, in my process. I don't think. I don't try to develop an idea, usually. I try to just sit and watch the thoughts, and let them go.

Along with focusing on the position of the body, some Friends mentioned breathing practices as a way of "centering." It is also considered important to be "present" in the moment. However, "settling" is sometimes difficult, especially when one is worried about something; several Friends explained that sometimes they "center" better than others. At times, one Friend explained, "there's just something that kind of immediately settles," but if she's having difficulty, she will look around the room at others there and, since she knows many of them well, she will "hold" them, or think about the difficulties she knows they are facing and pray for them. This may not be exactly "worship," she acknowledges, but it has a "depth" to it and sometimes leaves her with some "clarity" of what she can do to help. Another Friend described how there are occasions when a particular article in *Friends Journal* will "click" for him, and this helps him to focus and "center" through thinking about a particular issue or problem that has "nothing to do with [his] personal life, which often would intrude." In this way, "centering" seems to be connected to a focusing on the presence of others, rather than on one's own concerns.

#### **4.2.4.3 Sitting and "Listening" Together in "Silence"**

In terms of what Quakers in Glen Meeting experience in the silence, the focus of descriptions seemed to be on different types of thoughts or ideas, some of which disrupt the experience and some of which enhance it. One Friend said that as she sits in meeting,



she has a sense of thoughts flowing in or moving in “on the horizon,” and sometimes these will come together and form “something coherent.” In the silence, described another Friend, “there can be thoughts that go through one’s mind” that are “static” or “interference”; these thoughts he ignores or “specifically moves away” from them by “focusing on prayer,” but there are “other times when something rises up which feels beckoning” and he “allows that to stay with [him].” One member observed that when he has a distracting thought, his practice is to acknowledge it, but then to let it go. During a discussion at the meetinghouse, a Friend observed,

I’m not always intellectually grappling with things, as much as just sitting with them. But sometimes, something will just start to come, like an image of something that I can see happening, you know, I can see myself doing. Or, a relationship that I need to understand better becomes present to me. I think the only real visual thing that is a recurring thing for me is a deep blue light, like a field of deep blue light that I see.

This Friend also noted that there is a “kind of connection that’s happening in the room,” and “sometimes just to feel everybody around you and feel that amazing sense of everybody’s there, and the quiet is there. You feel part of it.” One interviewee described this feeling as “the energy moving in the room.” After describing a frustrating meeting, at which he thought nothing special had happened, only to realize that someone else had felt the meeting was “truly gathered,” a member noted that he started to “rethink” how he understood “what goes on there.” He said that there’s a kind of “practice and learning that you have to do in order to really be part of it,” explaining:

It is a very strange thing, the meeting for worship. Sometimes it’s just people sitting there and the whole thing is quiet, all the way through. And, even that is useful, because I can really try to sink down and try to ask what the great spirit has in mind for me, or I can think about, why is this so hard for me to listen effectively? Or, do I really believe there’s any great spirit there anyway?

Another interviewee observed that sometimes meeting is just “time to consider” what she’s doing next week and “time to make a plan.” For her, “planning from a centered place” is very important, and she doesn’t feel that it’s not worshipful because that’s “creating your life.” She explained that there is a kind of “freedom” there because no one tells you what you have to do in the silence. There is, then, a sense that participants are attempting to focus on certain kinds of thoughts or ideas and that these ideas are in some ways shared between people, but there are no strict restrictions regarding what one should or should not think about.

#### **4.2.4.4 Coordinating Stillness**

It seems important to briefly comment on the physical coordination of being still and silent that makes up the listening together during meeting for worship. Just as singing together in harmony requires synchronization, it seems that the practice of being silent together during meeting for worship also requires a purposeful coordination with others.<sup>24</sup> Although I do not have video recordings of meeting for worship to demonstrate the embodied stillness enacted there, I will, in the next chapter, describe in detail the “silence” that I audio recorded during meeting for business. I would also like to reference two recordings of Quaker “silence.” The first of these can be accessed online. It is the first twenty-five seconds of a music video recorded in a Quaker meetinghouse by a young Quaker poet and singer, Jon Watts, and can be found on his website ([www.jonwatts.com](http://www.jonwatts.com)). While the lyrics of the song itself, which is entitled *Friend Speaks My Mind*, may be somewhat controversial, the beginning of the video, called *Dance*

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<sup>24</sup> I will discuss the importance of bodily position in prayer in more detail with reference to the Catholic Mass in Chapter 8. Ommen (2006) considers the issues surrounding posture in revisions of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), the text that lays out the rules for celebrating Catholic Mass.

*Party Erupts During Quaker Meeting for Worship*, represents Friends performing the body positions and stillness characteristic of Quaker worship in the meeting room at Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat center in Pennsylvania. These Friends sit on wooden benches; they are positioned with straight backs, their feet squarely on the floor, and their hands in their laps. Their eyes are closed, and there is what could be described as a calm or peaceful expression on their faces. When the singer stands to begin singing, his standing and pausing before singing seems to imitate the way in which a Friend would typically stand to share a message. However, at this point he begins to sing in a way that is quite different from how messages are generally shared, although singing as a channel is sometimes employed for sharing a message. The dancing that follows in the video is also not a part of what typically takes place in meeting for worship. Through the inclusion of singing and dancing, however, the video actually demonstrates the way that the positioning of the body in expectant stillness during meeting for worship contrasts with other manners of holding the body. The swaying and tapping of feet, as Friends begin to respond to the singing, which progresses into dancing, represents other, different ways of moving.

A more serious example of recorded Quaker “silence” comes from a short film project of a college student in Massachusetts. This film was created by Joe Fenstermaker during his senior year at Hampshire College, and a clip of it is available online through his website on vimeo (<http://vimeo.com/joefenstermaker>). In this film, entitled *Film About Friends, Journeys Toward Peace*, made in 2009, the filmmaker interviews five Quakers from a meeting in New England about their experiences as Quakers, with a focus on the Peace Testimony. Approximately three and a half minutes into this film, a

group of six Quakers are shown sitting together in “silence” for about a minute and a half. The caption tells us that this is during a committee meeting. Although this example does not take place in a meeting room or during meeting for worship, it does again present Friends taking part in listening together in “silence” in a distinctively positioned way. In this film, we see the six Friends sitting on three couches that are arranged in a half circle facing each other. The Friends have blankets on their laps, and are sitting with their feet on the ground, their hands in their laps, and their heads bent slightly forward. The filmmaker zooms in on several of their faces. Most have their eyes closed and remain perfectly still throughout the entire filming; the only movement we detect is slow breathing and slight swaying of heads occasionally.

These video recordings reveal how the stillness during Quaker meeting is not simply an absence of speaking and movement, but a deliberate positioning of the body in coordination with others that enacts a certain way of listening that is deeply meaningful in this context. Although, these examples are not particularly long instances of this way of being silent, they hopefully serve to contextualize the notion that this practice requires a certain amount of learning and practice and is not simply the natural or default state of someone who is not speaking or moving. The coordination of being “silent” together is in this way a uniquely embodied cultural action.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4.2.4.5 “Sharing” Messages or “Vocal Ministry”**

I found that on average at the meetings I attended, someone stood to give the first message in meeting around twenty-seven minutes into the meeting. Messages were

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<sup>25</sup> For further discussion of Quaker silence and body position, see two articles from the March 2011 issue of *Friends Journal*, entitled “Words, Silence, and the Body in Quaker Worship” by Stanford J. Searl Jr. and “The Way We Sit in Meeting for Worship” by James Zug.

shared as early as ten minutes after the start of meeting at ten o'clock to as late as eleven o'clock or even later, and some messages were shared when we went around the room saying our names. The meetings I attended had on average five messages. I did attend three meetings at which there were no messages shared, and a meeting at which twelve messages were shared. Several Friends told me that they liked it when there were no messages in a meeting. A meeting with many messages can be referred to as a "popcorn" meeting, with Friends frequently "popping" up.

The *Faith and Practice* of New England Yearly Meeting instructs Friends to test a message before sharing it, in order to "discern whether the message is truly from Spirit or arises from their own intellect or emotion" and to "discern whether it is intended for the meeting as a whole, for another individual at a later time, or for themselves" (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 3). One member with whom I spoke observed that he considers whether what he has to say improves upon the silence. He distinguishes between something that is a personal "aha" moment versus a sense that "there's a flow that wants this to be given, and it's not exactly [mine], but it's something that's come in, maybe, from others, and goes back out." Another Friend said that when he gets the urge to speak, he waits "to see if it is really required" of him. Sometimes it is just "something in [his] mind" that does not "seem to rise up to the level where it was required of [him] to speak." In terms of having a message meant only for one other person, a Friend described the following experience:

I don't open my eyes in worship. And, I once had an experience, a message came up in worship. I mean, a person spoke and a message came up in me for that person. It was not for the whole group. So after meeting, I went over to where I thought the person had been sitting, and said to the person there, "Were you the one who spoke?" She said, "No she left right away." I said, "Oh." She said, "Why?" I said, "I've got a message for her, I think, and, it was just for her." She

said, “Well, why don’t you speak it to me?” And I did, and she burst into tears. She said, “That was for me.” It’s mysterious. It’s very mysterious. But I have followed. That’s why the messages don’t make sense. I have followed such leadings, of giving a message to somebody, that’s meant just for them. It’s not meant for the whole meeting.

From the perspective of a listener then, it is also possible that one hears a message that does not seem sensible because that message was not intended for that listener, but instead for someone else. During meeting, a member told me, she listens carefully when people have messages, trying to see if that message applies to her or her situation.<sup>26</sup>

If after testing, a person determines that a message is meant for the entire group, he or she will stand to share it. One Friend remarked,

The whole thing about, you know, a message coming, whatever it is that you feel compelled to speak, it’s quite mysterious. It really is. And it really is something that you feel in your body. This kind of like, “I guess I have to say this. I guess I have to stand up.”

Several Friends described the feeling of needing to speak as a racing or a pounding of their heart. One noted that the times when he has spoken he has felt quite “compelled to do so” and after he sat down again, he felt relieved. Another member observed that he used to hear people talk about how before they spoke they would have a real “inner impulse, something rising from within,” and he thought this was somewhat strange, but a few months after he was told this, he started having that feeling and got up and spoke. He said that unless he has this “inner pounding,” he does not speak. Another interviewee described the process in terms of ideas that come from “different directions.” Certain ideas “stay around” and may “start to build,” at which point someone may give a message

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<sup>26</sup> The idea of messages being interpretable by those for whom they are intended calls to mind Sequeira’s (1994) discussion of the public interpretation of instances of “speaking in tongues.” In the cases described by Sequeira (1994), examples of glossolalia are legitimated through interpretation by another community member. Interpretation of messages in Quaker meeting for worship appears to be more private and individualized. There is also the distinctive difference, of course, that messages are generally spoken in English in meeting for worship, which is widely interpretable to those present, as opposed to in “tongues,” which, by its nature, requires interpretation.

that “stimulates” these ideas because it is “related in some way.” The ideas may not fully come together before the meeting ends, or they may start to come together and then he gets “that thudding in [his] chest,” and he stands up to say something. Messages are in this way, for him, a pulling together of things that have come to him or have come up in the meeting, and he offers “whatever seems to be coming up through [him].” After he may feel that it was good that he “responded to what wanted to come out” and other times there may seem to be more to say “that didn’t come out.” He explains:

I remember one time when there was a series of about five messages, and they all built. I was about the third or fourth message in that. When I sat down, I felt very uneasy. I felt like, “This isn’t finished.” I stopped speaking and I stood there for a few of minutes, thinking more was coming and it just wasn’t coming, so I sat down. And then the next two people finished it out. So if you go from start to finish, it was a very complete message, but I was full of disquiet at the time I sat.

Participants also seem to go through different periods of feeling more or less frequent urges to speak. One woman said that she was speaking more frequently the last couple of years than she had in the past, while another said that he used to speak four to six times a year, but now he does not have the need as much, and he speaks less frequently, maybe only twice a year. It also seems that meetings as a whole go through periods of more or less speaking, as one Friend noted that Glen Meeting has less speaking now than it did at an earlier time.

In terms of form, some messages were very short, being only a couple of words, while others lasted several minutes. One member expressed the belief to me that God is not that “voluble” and “if you’re really, being informed by a spirit other than yourself, two or three sentences, generally, does it better than elaboration.” He noted, however, that he did not want to judge others who were speaking, and if a message had gone on longer than he could “consume,” he would simply let it “wash over” him and “let it go.”

Referring to the above idea of intended recipient, we might say that this particular message was not “meant” for him.<sup>27</sup> Some messages took the form of a poem or song lyrics, which were often spoken, but sometimes sung. Most were said in a calm, even tone at what I would describe as a typical speaking volume, rather than a whisper or a yell. Some members expressed frustration that they often had difficulty hearing messages, indicating that in general messages tend to be said at a softer, rather than a louder volume. Quotations from famous people such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Thomas Merton or well-known Quaker writers, along with citations from the Bible, were shared. The majority of messages took a less-structured form, consisting of short stories or a couple of ideas. Frequently, those that were less structured were summarized by a key phrase or statement at the end of the message. Metaphors were frequently drawn on.<sup>28</sup> There were normally at least a couple of minutes between messages, but sometimes there was not more than one minute between two messages. There were often short pauses during messages as they were said, and sometimes the speaker would pause for several seconds in the middle of a message.

As far as content, I did notice that sometimes subsequent messages would seem to build on an initial message, and a theme would emerge within a meeting. Some of these themes, described generally, included birth, death, community, water, silence, love, light, darkness, prayer, war, peace, and communication. Ideas also repeated themselves across

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<sup>27</sup> A Friend, whom I spoke with specifically about this idea of longer messages being less likely to be from the “spirit,” observed that length does not necessarily matter because it is the “source” of the messages that matters; this Friend felt that a long message is as likely as a short message to be from the “spirit.” However, a message that begins to include several different topics and “lose focus” is unlikely to be from the “spirit,” and this is more likely to happen with longer messages. In this way, it is more the form than the absolute length that is important, but a longer message could indicate a breakdown in form.

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of some of the key metaphors used by early Quaker ministers, see Graves (1983). I have not analyzed in-depth the metaphors in messages that I have recorded in my notes, but it seems that some do overlap with those described by Graves.



meetings, such as the history of the meeting, love, light, darkness, Jesus, the Bible, suffering, forgiveness, prayer, community, peace, pacificism, and war. Regarding who spoke, there were certain participants who shared messages more frequently than others, and there were some who never seemed to share a message. I was told in an interview that different people have different gifts, and, while some are gifted at sharing, others are gifted at what is called “holding” the meeting, or sitting in “silence” and praying for the meeting.<sup>29</sup> Different Friends seemed inclined to give different types of messages in terms of both form and content. For example, one Friend told me that his messages were often more “general,” and that he was more engaged by “general messages” than ones that dealt with personal issues. Another Friend told me that she likes to think about things that happen during the week, and these ideas emerge in her messages. In general, more women shared than men, but, as mentioned previously, there were more women overall in the meeting than men. In terms of age, the majority of those who shared were probably fifty years old or older, but this also represents the general age distribution of the meeting. I did not hear any of the children of the meeting share messages, but they were also in the meeting for less time since they only joined us for the last ten minutes. I did record a couple of teenagers “sharing”; one was a visiting young Friend who shared a message on a weekend when a young Friends group was using the meetinghouse as the site of their retreat. Guests who only attended meeting once would sometimes share. I

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<sup>29</sup> This distinction could be understood as related to the notion of appreciating all contributions made to a community, as discussed in Hoffman’s (2007) article on organizing at Benedictine communities where, she writes, “the expression of the dignity and importance of all jobs and ministries” reflects a valuing of equality (p. 198).

only once heard a person speak more than once during a meeting, and this was a guest, who spoke three times. I have read and was also told that one should only speak once.<sup>30</sup>

During the saying of names before announcements, some members would “share” messages that had been “rising” during meeting, but had not yet been shared. This type of message often closely resembled “vocal ministry” that was shared during meeting for worship, but was sometimes more personal, as in a speaker describing a difficult situation that he or she was facing and asking to be “held in the Light” by the meeting.<sup>31</sup> One member commented before “sharing” one of these messages once that at his old meeting they would ask for prayers either before or after the saying of names, but at this meeting he was not sure when this type of message should be shared, since there was not a designated time. Also, once while a guest was “sharing” a message during the worship period, a member sitting near her whispered to her that “we have announcements at the end.” This statement would seem to indicate that the member felt that what the guest was saying was more appropriate as an announcement than as “vocal ministry.” This guest had shared several different ideas during her message, and some of these had to do with events being held by outside organizations, so perhaps the Friend felt that these events were more appropriately shared during announcements.

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that Ministry and Worship, whose members are considered responsible for “holding” the meeting for worship, also keep track of issues to do with the quality of the worship. Members of this committee will consult about and approach and talk with those who frequently share messages that committee members or others feel do not come from the “spirit.” There was a case at this meeting where a member was “elderred out” of the meeting due to his messages being offensive to others. This process of “elderred out” a person takes a long time, and it seems very unlikely in general that this will happen. “Eldering” is a very old term among Friends that historically referred to being approached and corrected in one’s behavior by “weighty” Friends, but is now more commonly used to refer to giving advice and is sometimes used synonymously with “holding” a meeting, or sitting in silence and praying for the meeting during it. As I did not have access to meetings of Ministry and Worship, I have not included here an analysis of its role in the enactment of speech events in Glen Meeting. This type of analysis, however, would be fruitful to pursue in the future and could reveal a great deal about the characteristics that are understood to indicate that a message is from the “spirit.”

<sup>31</sup> This practice seems somewhat similar to the “petitions” that are offered for members during a Catholic Mass.

#### **4.2.5 Elicited Descriptions of “Gathered” or “Covered” Meetings**

It seems useful to cite here some of the descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings that were elicited during my interviews of members of Glen Meeting before analyzing the instances of “gathered” or “covered” meetings that I participated in and have identified in my notes. An analysis of these descriptions will form the basis for the analysis of the actual instances of “gathered” or “covered” meetings in the next section.

In interviews and conversations with Quakers at Glen Meeting, I would ask if they used the terms “gathered” or “covered” meeting, and if they had experienced a meeting that they would describe in this way. I often interviewed couples in pairs, and in one such instance, the husband asked me what I meant by a “gathered” meeting, and the wife responded for me, “a meeting where you really feel the sense of people being . . . on the same wavelength, that there’s a sense of sort of, it’s a palpable sense of worshipfulness.” Several other interviewees and people with whom I talked said that they would not necessarily use those terms in daily conversation, but they had a sense of what the concepts meant and the experience that the terms described resonated with their experiences. For example one Friend noted, “I guess I don’t use that language, that much, myself, but I can say, yeah, ok, yeah, I would call that a gathered meeting. You know, I don’t really go home and say ‘Oh [husband’s name] that was such a gathered meeting.’ You know, I don’t really, but I would say, ‘That meeting felt really deep today.’ Or something like that.” Several members and attenders also noted that it is hard to find the words to describe a “gathered” meeting. One explained, “I don’t know if I

really have words for it. I think it's more of . . . it's more something that I experience in my body." Another member recounted:

There are just other times when, you know, there is something, that you can almost touch, and that sense of covered meeting. I think I've felt that several times, certainly not all the time. And it can be a very good meeting for worship and not- but my sense of a covered meeting is when, somehow we're all, close to the same place, and sometimes it's that deep silence and sometimes it's, just, messages that, um, fold together, in a way of tremendously deep impact. And it's not the same as kind of the discussion group where you say something and [husband's name] nicely follows it with something, and I follow with something. It's different than that, and sometimes the sequence isn't good (but) it melds into a whole. I think it's just one of those things that, you know, some Quakers say, this I know experientially. I've felt it. And the attempts to describe it just don't- I think the silence has a lot to do with it.

Several other interviewees also described a sense of messages connecting to each other in a unique way in a "gathered" meeting. One noted, "But sometimes, an initial message will really spark a bunch of responses, which are really quite creative and that happens probably every three months. Very unusual." Another Friend described this notion of messages connecting, explaining:

What I feel sometimes is that, a meeting feels very centered and the messages—I mean to me, I don't know what it means to the whole group—but the messages feel like they really move from one to the next and it feels like they're messages that are given from a deeper place, and I feel a sense of quietness. What I feel mostly is this *qi*, you know I feel this vibration, and to me that feels then like it's a centered meeting.

This Friend introduces the idea of energy or vibration that moves through the group during a "gathered" meeting, and this movement was also identified in several of the other accounts given to me in interviews and conversations. This energy is often connected to an idea of a "spirit" or "presence" that is there. One Friend emphasized that, "a gathered meeting has some kind of sense of spirit working through it." When this "spirit" comes and how long it remains in a group is not believed to be predetermined or

controllable; thus “gathered” meetings are sometimes described as longer than regular meetings. In recounting the “most powerful example” of a “gathered” meeting that he could think of, one Friend explained, “The meeting really had a strong feeling about it. In fact when they stopped the meeting, many of us just went out on the back yard and continued the meeting, for another hour or so. It just went on and on and on.” He said that in this meeting there were more spoken messages than usual. However, despite the role of messages in some “gathered” meetings, often Friends remark that they cannot remember the topics of messages or themes of meetings. One Friend explained that it is not always the topic that makes it “gathered.” It seems, instead, that the emphasis is on the connection between messages.

I would also like to point out in the citations above, the focus on the rarity of “gathered” or “covered” meetings. Several Friends observed that “gathered” meetings were not very common. One said “meetings are different from week to week” and “some are gathered and some aren’t and you just keep trying.” This Friend did seem to think, however, that “gathered” meetings were more common now at Glen Meeting than they had been a couple of years ago. The idea of having to “try” would also seem to connect to the discussion above about the learning and practice that participating in meeting for worship requires. The concept of needing to practice comes up again in the description of another member, who observes that there is often something of a “gathered” nature in most meetings. She states:

I guess all I can say is that, there are times when, I feel that there’s been something moving in the meeting, that I can’t put my finger on, where people might describe it as, powerful, really deeply gathered meeting. I think most of the time there’s something, but either nothing or deeply gathered are the rare occasions. I can’t think of anything specifically, in one particular meeting. But I think as I said before, if you don’t make it a practice to come again and again and

again, the chances get slimmer that you're ever going to feel that gathered meeting, I believe.

Consequently, it seems that the experiencing of a "gathered" meeting is understood as something that requires dedication, or, as another described it, "faithfulness," on the part of participants.

Quakers at Glen Meeting also emphasized the quality of the "silence" in their description of a "gathered" meeting, or, as one described it, echoing the Friend above, "a palpable sense of our being centered." It is possible for a "gathered" meeting to be completely silent, according to several Friends. One used sound effects in order to describe the change in the "silence." She described "It's just the silence goes shu-shu-shu. Sometimes it goes chup ((claps hands))." This Friend also described the silence as going "down"; I noticed that "silence" was often assigned the directional attribute of downward, which would correspond with the frequent use of the adjective "deep." The direction of the "silence" thus seems to contrast with the idea that messages are understood to "rise." The dynamic between the "silence" and the messages is further defined in the following account, in which the two are described as working together:

One of the greatest senses of gathered meeting is the way messages sometimes work- and, sometimes they develop as an overt theme, like today the theme of the dog and listening to the call of the spirit, hearing God, sort of went through several of the testimony or sharings, and I like that. But I think one of the most powerful feelings in meeting is when you have allowed yourself to go into a thought or a concern, and then somebody else rises and speaks, and it's to that concern, and, you know, that doesn't happen a lot, but when it happens, that's just amazingly powerful. And you realize that there is some sort of group mind that's taking place, here. That we're trying to release the boundaries of our separate mind, and allow some joining to take place, and I think that's really great.

This description of a "joining" in the "silence" is echoed in another Friend's explanation that in "some of the extraordinary meetings, there's just a kind of I don't know what.

You just feel together, feel communion.” This Friend also described the “gathered” meeting as a “spiritualization” of baptism and communion. She went on to say:

And I don’t know whether you would say that what’s happening in the gathered meeting is both baptism and communion. I don’t know. That it’s both. You’re being blessed in some sense, and you’re together, drawn together in one big reality. And it’s a gift. You can’t make it happen. You can’t make it happen. And maybe that’s sort of foreign to the more liturgical churches like Roman Catholic or orthodox where you can make it happen. The priest makes it happen. It happens. There you go. And for Quakers you can’t make it happen. You can make yourself open to it, but (you don’t have) any control over it for sure. And that’s why it feels like such a gift when it happens.

In this way, the notion of communion with Christ in the Roman Catholic Church can be compared with the communion in the community of worshippers in a “gathered” meeting among Quakers.<sup>32</sup> We see here again the notion that the “spirit” or energy in a “gathered” meeting is not controllable, and it draws everyone present together through “silence” that has a certain quality and through messages that connect in unique ways.

When the terms of “gathered” or “covered” meeting were introduced in interviews and conversations, some Friends explained that those terms had particular relevance for them, not only in the meeting for worship, but even more so in other meeting speech events. These included the meeting for business and the practice of “worship sharing” during adult education hours or at other group gatherings. One Friend gave this account of the “gathered” meeting in meeting for business:

Well you know the meeting for business, sometimes we call it the meeting for worship for the conduct of business, and at its best it really does take on the feeling of a meeting for worship. And I think some of the most vivid examples of feeling that gatheredness in my experience have come during meetings for business. In particular, probably the most keen example of that is when the [Spruce Meeting] in [city name] was going through a process of trying to find out whether it should grant marriages to gay and lesbian couples, which was a conversation which went on for well over a year. And, finally came to an

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<sup>32</sup> This comparison will be elaborated in Chapter 8.

agreement that this should be done. That was in a very strong spiritual feeling in the meeting in which that occurred. Where they ultimately decided to do so.

Another Friend connected the experience of being “gathered” in the meetings for business that she clerked to people’s hearts being opened. She explained:

I would definitely say that the meetings I clerked, there were definitely some that felt that, you know, a spirit was alive in the meeting, and, there’s kind of like this deep hum to it or something, or you feel like you’re holding something that is, um- I don’t know how to describe it. It’s like maybe just that you are aware that it’s all kind of an offering. That it’s all very tender. That people have very- their hearts are very open. You feel it pulling your own heart open.

In this way, the making of important decisions and the changing of hearts could be viewed as taking place in the environment of a meeting for business that is “gathered.” It is necessary to observe, however, that I was also told by some Friends that they had never before considered the application of the concept of “gathered” to the meeting for business or they felt that only meetings for worship could demonstrate this quality. There are thus some differences in terms of understandings of to what event this quality can be attributed. For another interviewee, the idea of a “gathered” meeting made him reflect back on “worship sharing” experiences that he had been a part of. He explained:

But to me one interesting example of productive meetings of that sort is the worship sharing, which we sometimes get at the [adult education hour], and that you don’t have a discussion, but people just sort of give their own personal experiences about one or another thing, and sometimes those are really wonderful, worship sharing. And people do take off on each other’s ideas without discussing them, but sort of, either jog your memory, for some reason you come up with something new that’s really creative. Those are not decision-making meetings. Those are just sharing meetings.

The communication form of “worship sharing” is different from the sharing of “vocal ministry” in meeting for worship and from the process of “corporate discernment” that occurs in meeting for business. Instances of “worship sharing” can take place in different contexts, such as the adult education hour or the meeting for business. The event is



focused on a particular question or topic, and there are typically more messages shared than in meeting for worship. It is not a process for making decisions, but for sharing ideas. This speech event will be addressed in Chapter 5, and an instance of “worship sharing” will also be the focus of Chapter 7. Although, these events of “corporate discernment” and “worship sharing” will be described in more detail in subsequent chapters, it is significant to note here the connection made by members of Glen Meeting in our conversations about “gathered” meetings, in that, for some, the quality of being “gathered” is not just relevant in a meeting for worship, but, it seems also to be experienced and consequential in other contexts as well.

Meeting members were hesitant to speak for others when asked about their experiences in a “gathered” or “covered” meeting. Many placed a lot of emphasis on the fact that they were explaining their own experience, but they were unsure of what others might say. One man observed that he had had an experience, “at least once” that he would call a “covered” meeting, but “it could just be myself, who can prove anything, who can dissect it?” In comparing her experiences in “gathered” meetings with experiences in other meetings, a Friend observed that this distinction might be just her own impression. She stated,

Sometimes people will come in, and there’s a lot of messages, or, you know, someone gets up and stands in the middle of the room and sings or something like that, and then it feels less so to me. I’m never sure if there was like an objective thing that we would fill out that would make it a gathered meeting or it’s just my sense of how I’m feeling in the presence of the meeting. And I don’t actually know what a gathered meeting is, so I don’t know if it’s how I’m feeling in the sense of the meeting, or if there’s an objective thing that everybody would check off, that would be a gathered meeting.

In considering the shared nature of the occurrence of a “gathered” meeting, a Friend observed that often on the ride home, he and his wife will discuss the meeting they were

just at, and they will frequently agree on whether it was “deep” or not. There are times when one will describe a meeting as “wonderful,” while the other will feel that the messages did not “speak” to him or her, but there are also many times when one will say, “Oh wasn’t that a deep meeting,” and the other will respond, “Yes it was really deep.” Another member connected the difficulty of describing what goes on in meeting in words, to a way of identifying “gathered” meetings. She explained:

And it’s hard to describe because so much of what is essential you don’t see, and it’s not described. You just see the fruits of it. And also, after meeting, if there’s been a really gathered meeting, almost everybody will say, “Oh that was a really gathered meeting.” There may be some who don’t actually. But if it’s been an in-between meeting, it won’t be described in the same language. There’s not unity on one perception of what happened.

In this way, a distinction is made between one person having an experience of a “deep” meeting, versus many people describing an experience of a “gathered” meeting after it has taken place. One could have a feeling that a meeting was “gathered,” but it is in the description of multiple people following the meeting and in the consequences or “fruits” of the meeting that this is confirmed. A key concept here is that of the “unity” of accounts. The quality of this “unity” will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 5 with reference to the notion of “sense of the meeting,” which is the basis of decision making in the meeting for business. It does not, however, seem that absolutely everyone must describe a meeting as “gathered” for it to be so or for there to be “unity”; this distinction appears to connect to the difference between “unity” and “unanimity,” which will also be noted in the discussion of “sense of the meeting” in Chapter 5. “Unity” does not necessarily include everyone, and it appears that the description is left open to the possibility that some are still learning or “seeking” (see Chapter 7), and that each

person's individual experience will be in some ways different. Importance is placed more on the dedication, "faithfulness," and "openness" to the experience.

#### **4.2.6 Analysis of Elicited Descriptions**

Based on the above elicited descriptions, I would like to formulate a couple of cultural propositions and premises that appear to describe and inform ways of speaking about "gathered" or "covered" meetings for worship at Glen Meeting. This analysis was conducted by identifying sections in the transcripts of my interviews with meeting members in which participants described "gathered" or "covered" meetings. I separated these descriptions from the rest of the transcripts and closely scanned them for the use of repeated or potent cultural terms, as well as symbols that could be substituted for "gathered" or "covered." The following key terms or symbols were identified in the instances of elicited descriptions based on frequency of occurrence: "deep," "spirit," "silence," "moving," "powerful," "messages," "together," "same place," "open," "feeling," "palpable," and "experience." As they are used here it seems that "deep" and "powerful" describe a similar aspect of the "gathered" or "covered" meeting, namely that it is a strong or intense experience that goes beyond the ordinary worship experience. "Experience," "palpable," and "feeling" also seem to describe a similar characteristic of this type of meeting, in that there is an understanding that the sense of touch is involved and that in a "gathered" or "covered" meeting, the body feels something different. Notably, the word "touch" was also used in these excerpts. The term "moving" is often connected to the idea of the "spirit" or to some sort of energy or force that is present in the worship room. Other terms that came up in interviews with reference to this

“moving” include “vibration,” “humming,” or “*qi*.”<sup>33</sup> These symbols can all be connected when the idea of “together” or “same place” is added to the picture. “Same place” does not refer to a physical location, but instead to being in the “same place” in terms of participants’ thoughts and interpretation of what is going on. In other words: *In the “gathered” meeting, worshippers are in the “same place” and can “together” “feel” the “palpable” “moving” of the “spirit.”* This proposition can be complemented by the idea that *The “gathered” meeting is a “deep” and “powerful” “experience.”* It is important to add that “silence” and “messages” are the medium through which this “moving” occurs. Finally, in order for this “experience” to take place it is necessary that participants be “open” to it; in other words, in order to have this “powerful” “feeling,” it is necessary to be accepting of it and believe that the “spirit” can and will come.

Cultural terms that were identified based on potency, or association with central ideas and the history of Quakerism, include “worshipfulness,” “faithful,” and “experiential.” The term “experiential” connects to the symbols above of “feeling,” “palpable,” and “experience” and is used by Friends to describe the way in which what happens in a “gathered” meeting is something that is felt in the body and not necessarily something that can be known through the mind or through verbal descriptions. In an interview, a Friend cited the phrase, “This I know experientially.” In other words, this I know because I have experienced it, even if I cannot describe it to others in a coherent or logical way. Thus, in addition to the sense that everyone is “together,” there is also a personal and individual nature to worship, in that there is a focus on what *each* person experiences for him or herself. The key term “worshipfulness” can be used to describe

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<sup>33</sup> These terms did not occur as frequently and I have not identified them as cultural symbols, but they serve to more fully define the symbol of “moving.”

the “open” attitude of those who participate in meeting for worship, and, in a “gathered” meeting there is a potent “feeling” of “worshipfulness” that is shared. “Faithful” as a symbol in some ways takes on two meanings, in that Friends are “full of faith” or believe that the “spirit” will “move” in the “gathered” meeting, but also they are “faithful” in the sense of being consistent and dependable in coming to meeting for worship and believing that this “experience” will happen if they continue to come regularly “together” in “silence.”

Terms that could be understood as substitutable for “gathered” or “covered” include “deep,” “creative,” “communion,” “joining,” “unity,” “strong feeling,” and “experience” (both “deep” and “experience” also occurred frequently). The above analysis has already indicated that a “gathered” meeting is understood as an “experience” and that there is a “strong feeling” in the “gathered” meeting of the “palpable” presence of the “spirit.” The concepts of “communion,” “joining,” and “unity” build on the symbols of “together” and “same place” discussed previously. They stress the communal nature of worship. The notion of “creative” was applied in an interview to the way in which “messages” from the “spirit” connect in a “gathered” meeting in a way that is different from other meetings; but “creative” also represents the “gathered” meeting in that Friends emphasize that one can tell a meeting was “gathered” based on its “fruits”—in other words, what it causes to happen or *creates*. Thus, *The “gathered” or “covered” meeting is a “deep” “experience” that is a “creative” “joining” characterized by a “strong feeling.”*

Building on the cultural propositions formulated above and drawing on the terms for talk framework, as in the earlier analysis of written communication in *Friends*

*Journal*, I have attempted to associate certain cultural symbols with messages about communication, sociality, and personhood and then to articulate the cultural premises that these suggest. The four tables below summarize my analysis. In terms of premises of communication in the “gathered” meeting for worship, I have focused on ideas regarding the notion of a “creative” and “open” structure, but one that also emphasizes a coming “together” in “unity.” The focus is on how messages creatively fit together, and there must, therefore, be some structure in order for coherence. Although not formal, the tone of communication is serious, in that a “deep” and “powerful” experience is understood to be taking place and participants are in a state of “worshipfulness.” The communication is viewed as efficacious; through communication in “silence” and messages, something important is being accomplished. In terms of cultural premises of sociality, there is an emphasis in the “gathered” meeting on close and cooperative relationships between people, as revealed in the concepts of “communion,” “joining,” and “unity.” There is a sense that the experience is “powerful,” but, as has been discussed, this power is not about certain individuals having power over others, but on the power of the group working together to bring about a certain event. The “spirit” is “powerful,” but this power is “moving” in the group and based in the “joining” of the group. Preferred qualities of participants in the “gathered” meeting include being “open” and “faithful,” and appropriate conduct involves “silence” and “sharing” messages in a way that works toward “unity” and “communion.” A valued overall style of personhood thus involves one that is personal and intimate. These cultural premises are summarized below.

Table 6: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Communication in Elicited Descriptions

<i>Degree of structuring</i>	“creative” “open” “joining” “unity”
<i>Tone</i>	“deep” “powerful” “worshipfulness”
<i>Efficaciousness</i>	“creative” “powerful” “moving”

Table 7: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Sociality in Elicited Descriptions

<i>Solidarity/Power</i>	“together” “same place” “open” “communion” “joining” “unity” “powerful”
<i>Competitive/Cooperative</i>	“together” “same place” “communion” “joining” “unity”
<i>Closeness/Distancing</i>	“together” “same place” “communion” “joining” “unity”

Table 8: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Personhood in Elicited Descriptions

<i>Preferred/Dispreferred qualities</i>	“open” “faithful”
<i>Appropriate/Inappropriate conduct</i>	“silence” “messages” “worshipfulness” “together” “strong feeling”
<i>Styles of personhood: Impersonal and positional versus Personal and intimate</i>	“open” “together” “communion” “joining” “unity”

Table 9: Cultural Premises of “Gathered” Meeting Identified in Elicited Descriptions

<p><b><i>Messages about Communication in communication about gathered meeting for worship</i></b></p>	<p>In gathered meetings, communication is flexible and creative, but there is also coordination between participants, who share a sense of unity. Also, communication is serious and worshipful. In gathered meetings, communication is consequential in that it is powerful and creates things.</p>
<p><b><i>Messages about Sociality in communication about gathered meeting for worship</i></b></p>	<p>In gathered meetings, close relations between people who seek communion together are valued. In gathered meetings, solidarity, cooperation, and coordination are valued.</p>
<p><b><i>Messages about Personhood in communication about gathered meeting for worship</i></b></p>	<p>In gathered meetings, proper conduct includes silence, sharing messages, and being together with others. Participants are expected to be worshipping and to experience a strong feeling. In gathered meetings, preferred qualities include being open to the experience and faithful, both in coming to meeting and in believing that something important will happen. In gathered meetings, a style of personhood that is personal and intimate is valued.</p>

**4.2.7 Conclusion**

The first two sections of this chapter have presented an analysis of how “gathered” or “covered” meetings are communicated about in a wider Quaker community, as represented by writings in *Friends Journal*, as well as how these events are communicated about within Glen Meeting, as described in interviews with members



of the meeting. The second section also gave a descriptive account of meetings for worship at Glen Meeting. Overlap can be identified between the cultural terms, propositions, and premises identified in these two sections. Specifically, the cultural symbols of “deep,” “silence,” “together,” and “spirit” appear in both analyses. These would seem to be the central cultural symbols associated with the speech event of the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship. Additionally, there are some similarities in associations between other terms. For example, the terms “move” and “openness” occur in the analysis of written communication, while the terms “moving” and “open” appear in the analysis in this section. It does seem that “move” is used more to describe the worshipping group moving together in the analysis of written communication, while in this section “moving” refers more to the action of the “spirit” or energy. However, similar connotations exist between the two ideas. Also, “openness” in the analysis of written communication is directed more toward others, while here it involves being “open” to an experience in worship, but both elements appear to be central to Quaker communicative practices. It would seem that the idea of “spoken ministry” identified in the first analysis overlaps with the term “messages” present in the second, and that there is some connection between the symbols of “spontaneous” and “creative,” each from a different analysis. Finally, the concept of “worshipfulness” in the second analysis seems to link to the term “communal worship” in the first. In terms of the cultural premises, it would appear that these largely overlap in terms of messages about communication, sociality, and personhood in the “gathered” meeting for worship. While the analysis in the first part of the chapter gave a sense of the way in which the speech event of the “gathered” meeting is understood by a larger community of unprogrammed Friends, the analysis

here provides further insight into its occurrence in one particular meeting. We find that communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting in Glen Meeting is closely linked to communication in the larger community. This analysis provides support for the findings in the analysis of written communication, and also begins to narrow our focus to a specific community. The next section will sharpen the focus still further in an examination of the act sequence and participation framework of three meetings that were identified as either “covered” or “gathered” at Glen Meeting.

### **4.3 Part III “Gathered” or “Covered” Meetings at Glen Meeting**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

This final section of Chapter 4 will seek to answer the two research questions of: *What is the form of communication identified by Quakers as a “gathered” or “covered” meeting?* and *What cultural meanings are associated with this form?* The articulation of this form was already begun in the previous section in which the act sequence of meetings for worship in general was formulated. I will draw on this formulation in order to analyze the characteristics of one instance of a “covered” meeting for worship and two instances of “gathered” meetings for worship that I identified in my field notes. I will focus on the way in which the distinctive characteristics of these meetings compare with the descriptive account that I have formulated of other meetings for worship and what this reveals about the cultural meanings associated with this unique event. In this analysis, I move from examining communication about a speech event to concentrating on enactments of the event itself.

### **4.3.2 Methodology for Data Collection**

The primary data drawn on for the analysis in this section are the field notes that were collected over a period of about a year and a half of regular attendance at Glen Meeting and have been described in depth above. I also considered the interview data, analyzed in the previous section, that included elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings for worship. These descriptions helped me to be attuned to important characteristics of meeting for worship, as understood by members of the meeting.

### **4.3.3 Methodology for Data Analysis**

I will begin below with a description of the instances of “covered” or “gathered” meetings that I participated in at Glen Meeting. The analysis in this section is then divided into two parts, which emphasize two elements of Hymes’ SPEAKING mnemonic. The two elements selected for focus here are participants and act sequence. The first part of my analysis looks at the three meetings that were identified in terms of the notion of a participation framework, as articulated by Goffman (1981) and Levinson (1988). This discussion is then followed by a focused analysis of the act sequence of these three specific meetings, in comparison with the general act sequence that I formulated in the previous section. Together, these two parts of the analysis reveal cultural meanings that are active when Friends participate in these events.

#### **4.3.4 Instances of Use of the Term “Gathered” or “Covered”**

The terms “gathered” and “covered” in reference to the quality of a meeting as identified in the first part of this chapter were not used frequently among the Friends with whom I worked *during* actual meetings for worship. In my notes, I have only recorded two examples of the term “gathered” being used unsolicited during meeting for worship, and one example of the term “covered” being used in this way. The three times that I have identified here were instances when these terms seemed to be used in a manner similar to their use in *Friends Journal* as I have discussed previously. Both terms were also sometimes used with slightly different meanings, such as the group “gathering” together for worship, but those instances were not included here for analysis. My analysis seeks to describe the communication form of the “gathered” or “covered” meeting and to identify distinctive aspects of it in terms of elements of Hymes’ SPEAKING model in comparison with other meetings for worship.

I will begin with a description of the instance of the use of the term “covered” since this occurred first chronologically during my period of observation. I should note that the details of most messages have not been included in my descriptions in order to protect the privacy of those who shared them. This meeting took place in early fall. Based on my field notes, I estimate that there were between forty and fifty people present. I have recorded in my notes that it was slightly warm, but there was a breeze coming in through the open windows and the sun was shining. I could hear the cicadas outside. The initial silence of the meeting lasted for fifty-four minutes. The first message, which occurred after the children had entered, described the meeting as “covered,” and I have recorded in my notes that the man who shared it, spoke slowly,

saying that when we sit here and feel “touched” or “covered,” some of us say, “Ah Lord” or “Welcome, Spirit.” He noted that some of us say “Jesus Christ,” some say “Lord,” and some say “Living Seed,” but “You don’t care.” He ended by saying “We thank you One for coming among us so often.” The second message was about two minutes later. This was shared by a woman who requested, “Help me to do your work,” continuing “help my hands to do your work and my eyes to see what you want me to see.” The meeting ended with participants turning to shake hands a couple of minutes after she spoke. Following this, the member of the Ministry and Worship committee who invited us to say our names, started by saying a quote from Thomas Merton (1968), citing, “The deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words, and it is beyond speech, and it is beyond concept.” A woman who entered during the saying of names, and who had been listening to the meeting outside through one of the hearing devices, said that she had been late, but she thought that it was amazing because, even if you only hear a little of the meeting, you can tell when “it’s happening.” She said that when she first started listening, she could not tell if what she was hearing was silence “between lots of speaking,” but then, after hearing the second message, she realized “this is deep silence.”

The instance of the term “gathered” being used occurred almost exactly a year following the first instance described above. It was again in early fall. I have recorded in my notes that I counted over a hundred people present in the room at the end of this meeting. The initial silence of the meeting lasted for about twenty-six minutes. There were five messages shared during this meeting. The first message was a reflection about the events surrounding the marriage of a member of the meeting, which had been

performed in the Quaker tradition. The second message, occurring about fifteen minutes later, was told by a person who had recently been through the experience of having to put a family pet to sleep. The third message, which was shared about seven minutes following the second one, was a reflection on some of the essays of the Quaker writer, Thomas Kelly. The fourth message was three lines of a song, borrowed from another religious tradition, which was about singing and praying. This message came at about five minutes before eleven and was sung. The fifth message was only four sentences, two of them repeating, which emphasized the connection between love and grief, and it took place a couple of minutes after eleven. This final message was said at a higher volume and in a more forceful tone than is typical, and there were around three to five minutes of silence following it. The member of Ministry and Worship who asked us to say our names, observed that we would continue in our “gathered presence” as we did so. There was another message about a recent passing away of a friend that was shared during the saying of names.

The third and final example that I am including took place in late fall, two months after the second meeting described above. I observed in my notes that there seemed to be fewer people than typical in this meeting, perhaps around forty. There were eight messages shared during this meeting. The first occurred after fifteen minutes of silence, and in it, a woman shared how nice it would be to have someone who could take over for you in your life when you were suffering. She described how one can help out others who are suffering and be a “divine presence” in their lives. The second person spoke approximately eight minutes later about her sense as she greeted people in the meeting this morning that they would take care of her if she ever had any trouble. She said that

she felt that these people would help anyone else in need also. The third message was about two minutes later. The man sharing it said that there have been times in his life when he has prayed to take on another's suffering, and he felt that this has helped the other person. The fourth person spoke five minutes later, sharing that she had been the recipient of prayers from members of the meeting, and that these prayers have worked and made her happy. She asserted that it was good to "hold each other in the Light," and people should do this more openly. The fifth person shared five minutes following this, and she observed that she had been reflecting back on events during the week. She said she was thinking about the difference between quiet and noise and how there seemed to be more noise in the world now than when she was younger. The sixth message was shared about five minutes after this, around 10:40 a.m. The man speaking it described how, when the early Jewish people had their temple destroyed by the Romans, their community then became their temple. He compared this situation to the way in which there is Light in each person in the meeting, not just in those who are on a lot of committees or who speak frequently in meeting. The seventh person to speak approximately seven minutes later expressed the feeling that it is sometimes difficult to know how to be a recipient of prayers. The final person to speak shared her message five minutes before the close of meeting. She said that sometimes we receive "leadings" to act in a certain way, and we do not know why, but it's important to be faithful to these leadings. She used a loud tone for one of her utterances as she emphasized how sometimes she did not want to follow a leading. The member of Ministry and Worship, who stood to ask us to share our names, commented that the meeting was made up of "gathered" company as she made this request. There were at least three messages shared

during the saying of names, one compared holding a baby to holding someone in the Light, and two asked the community to hold them in the Light due to difficult circumstances in their lives. During announcements, one Friend referenced a theme of “holding others in the Light” that she said had emerged during worship.

#### **4.3.5 Analysis of Messages in Terms of a Participation Framework**

Given that the participation framework in a meeting for worship is quite different from what is commonly understood as a typical dyadic communicative pair, I would like to briefly outline some of the important distinctions that seem to be at play in the understanding of footing (Goffman, 1981) or participant roles (Levinson, 1988) in the three speech events described above. This complements the descriptive account given of the three meetings, in that it delves more deeply into Hymes’ notion of the component of participants in a speech event. Shoaps (2002) draws on a similar idea in her discussion of the framing of prayers as earnest and spontaneous through the alignment of author and animator in Pentecostal services in the United States. Goffman (1981) explores issues of footing in situations in which “participant's alignment, or set, or stance, or projected self is somehow at issue” (p. 128). Rather than define participants in terms of speakers and hearers, Goffman breaks down these two categories into a set of categories known as a *production format* and a *participation framework*. Levinson (1988) finds that Goffman's framework is still inadequate in that it does not provide “sufficient distinctions,” and he expands this framework by incorporating other characteristics of participants, such as transmission, message origin, and recipientship (p. 171, 174). In this analysis, I have drawn on some of Levinson's (1988) defined participant roles that seem relevant to the



speech acts or utterances that composed the “messages” shared in “vocal ministry” during the speech events of these meetings. The table below identifies the participants in these events who seemed to fulfill these roles in each utterance. The category of “speaker” or “utterer” is defined by Levinson as the person who states the utterance. The “source” is the participant with whom the message originates and who is understood as having the desire to communicate the message. The “composer” is the participant who creates the format of the message. The “participant” role involves all those who have what Goffman (1981) calls a “ratified role” in the situation and the ability to receive the message, and the “addressee” is the participant to whom the message is specifically directed. I have distinguished between these roles in these acts in the following way:

Table 10: Participation Framework Active in Utterance Events in Meeting for Worship (Continues on the next page)

<b>Speech Act</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Composer (form)</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Participant</b>
<b>Covered Meeting Message 1</b>	Harry <sup>34</sup>	Harry	Spirit	Spirit (“Welcome spirit”)	Other people present and spirit
<b>Covered Meeting Message 2</b>	Joan	Joan	Spirit	Spirit (Imperative)	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 1 Message 1</b>	Kate	Kate	Spirit	Other people present (“many will remember . . .”)	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 1 Message 2</b>	Lou	Lou	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 1 Message 3</b>	Mark	Mark and Thomas Merton	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit

<sup>34</sup> All names are pseudonyms. There were three cases of overlap in terms of speakers who spoke during two of the three meetings described here, but I have given each speaker a different name to protect privacy.

<b>Gathered Meeting 1 Message 4</b>	Nell	Nell and other religious tradition	Spirit	Spirit (Imperative)	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 1 Message 5</b>	Oliver	Oliver	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 1</b>	Polly	Polly	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 2</b>	Quinn	Quinn	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 3</b>	Rick	Rick	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 4</b>	Sheila	Sheila	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 5</b>	Tonya	Tonya	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 6</b>	Victor	Victor	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 7</b>	Winston	Winston	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit
<b>Gathered Meeting 2 Message 8</b>	Xavier	Xavier	Spirit	Other people present?	Other people present and spirit

The distinctions in this table highlight key premises of communication in a Quaker meeting for worship. First, let us note the distinctions between roles in the production format. In the meeting for worship, the person who struggles with a message and then stands to share it is the “speaker.” However, there is a key difference here between who gives form to the message and with whom the message actually originates.

The form of the message, as discussed in the overview of the act sequence above, may be that of a song or quote adopted from someone else, for example, the third speaker in the first “gathered” meeting cites Thomas Merton, and the fourth speaker in that meeting cites a song of another religious tradition. The form might also take the shape of a story, often based on personal experience, for example in the case of the second speaker in the first “gathered” meeting, who talks about the death of his family pet. However, the “source” of the message, or that participant who wants this message to be shared, is understood in a Quaker meeting for worship to be the “spirit.” This assumption is a key cultural premise of the event as a whole, without which the event would lose its meaningfulness for participants. The idea of the “spirit” desiring that messages be shared was addressed earlier in an account of an interviewee, who noted that when he feels a message coming to him, he has a sense that there is a “flow” that “wants” this message to be “given.” The interviewee I spoke with from another meeting observed, “Now I only am the vessel through which I am per-, my being has permitted it to exude. It’s not going out and settling the affairs of the world, or I’m going to think about this today . . . It’s just being there and it comes.” The distinction between “composer” and “source” is also referenced in the Quaker citation that “The water often tastes of the pipes.” In other words, the message, or “water” is understood to come from the “spirit,” but in the process of being “shared,” it is shaped or formed by the composer through whom it “flows.”

The second major distinction highlighted by this framework is between the “addressees” and the “participants,” which is represented by the right side of the table above. Levinson (1988) identifies several other distinctions in terms of the recipient format, but these two categories seem to be the most revealing in this context. The

participants to whom the messages are directed, or “addressees,” were not always stated in the messages I have recorded in my notes. In the case of the first message in the “covered” meeting, the speaker directly addresses his recipient by saying “Welcome, spirit.” In the instances of the second message in the “covered” meeting and the fourth message in the first “gathered” meeting, the speakers issue directives, which appear to be directed to the “spirit,” such as “Help me to do your work.” The first speaker in the first “gathered” meeting begins with the observation that many of those present would remember a specific event, thus indicating an “addressee” of those people present in the meeting. In other cases in which there was not a directive or reference to those present, I have suggested that the “addressees” to whom the message was directed were those people present. However, it also seems that in these cases the “spirit” was also addressed, given the belief recorded in many Quaker writings that it is the “spirit” or the Light of God in each person that recognizes and “communes” with the Light in others. In some ways, therefore, the “spirit,” as the source of the message, is addressing itself in other people, with individual participants as “composers.” Finally, the “participants” in the event, or those with what Goffman (1981) calls a “ratified role,” include all those present as well as the “spirit,” whose presence is particularly felt during a “gathered” or “covered” meeting. The important aspect of this category to note here is that “participants” in Quaker meetings include potentially anyone who wishes to participate in the event, as there is an underlying premise that all can hear the voice of the “spirit.” In other words, the “channel” is open to anyone who listens and anyone's presence is potentially ratified, in contrast with participation in other events to which one must be specifically invited in order to participate. Again we see reinforced the central premise

that the “spirit” is present as a “participant” in these meetings drawing the group together into a community of worshippers.

This analysis of the distinctions in roles enacted by participants in the meeting for worship during particular speech acts or utterance events reveals the way in which central premises of communication, involving the way the “spirit” speaks to people and who is able to hear this speaking, are active in communication. It provides an example of how cultural premises inform interaction on a micro-level. Without these assumptions about distinctions between “speaker,” “composer,” and “source,” the act of speaking in meeting for worship would lose its cultural meaningfulness for participants. If there were not a sense of multiple “addressees” and “participants” in the event, the communal function (Philipsen, 1987, 1989) of the event as it draws people together as a community through the workings of the “spirit” could not be accomplished. These distinctions in roles define the uniqueness of this event and of the utterances that compose it and differentiate it from many other forms of communicative action, in particular those that take place in other religious communities, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

#### **4.3.6 Analysis of Act Sequence of “Gathered” and “Covered” Meetings for Worship**

I will now finally analyze the three meetings identified in my field notes in terms of the act sequence of meeting for worship outlined above. The most distinctive aspect of the meeting for worship described above as “covered,” in comparison with the act sequence and description of other meetings for worship that I participated in, would seem to be the length of the initial silence. There were approximately fifty-four minutes before the sharing of the first message in this meeting; in contrast with the average of twenty-

seven minutes. Although I did attend three meetings for worship at which no messages were shared, the lack of spoken messages does not seem to guarantee that a meeting will be “covered.” Rather, the length of the silence appears to indicate that a silence could be experienced as “deep” by a group. In this particular case, there is evidence in the content of the spoken messages that the “quality” of this silence was noteworthy for those who experienced it. This “deep” quality is expressed in the messages during the meeting, as well as in messages given during the saying of names. There is also a sense in the messages shared during this meeting that the “spirit” is present in the group, and that it has come and been welcomed without speaking. The “spirit” is actually directly addressed in both of the messages spoken in this meeting. That this “deep” silence and these messages in this context represent a form of meaningful communication for those present is also expressed in the citing of Merton’s writing preceding the saying of names, and in the excitement of the woman during announcements, who notes that you can tell when “it’s happening.” In this way, both the silence and the content of the spoken messages of this “covered” meeting are unique when compared with other meetings for worship.

The second instance described above, in which the term “gathered” was used, may appear less distinctive in that there is not as lengthy a period of extended silence at the beginning of the meeting. There is also not an unusual number of messages. However, there are three elements of the act sequence that seem important to note. The first of these is that the final message occurs beyond the period of one hour. As discussed in the first part of this chapter on written communication about the “gathered” meeting and in the analysis above, there seems to be a dimension of time that is important in the

way in which worship is understood. Meaningful, “deep” worship takes place on “God’s time” and is not restricted by the traditional hour of worship. The second aspect of the act sequence that I would like to emphasize is the connection that did seem to exist in terms of a theme between two of the messages during worship and the message that was shared during the saying of names. There appears to be a theme of “grief” resonating among the participants here. As noted above, this idea of messages building on each other was mentioned several times by participants in Glen Meeting and in other Quaker literature, as a characteristic of “gathered” meetings. Finally, the form, in terms of channel and key, of the final two messages shared during worship was slightly atypical, in that one was sung and the other was said very loudly, with a forceful tone. Although singing is a channel that is sometimes employed, I only count six other recorded instances in my notes of a message being sung during a meeting; singing is thus somewhat unusual. The use of a loud voice in meeting for worship was also uncommon and contrasted with the soft and slow style that is often used for sharing messages. I only find two cases in my notes when I recorded that a message was given in a loud or forceful tone. Thus, the first example of the term “gathered” being used during the meetings for worship that I attended took place during a meeting that did not have an unusually long silence, but did have distinctive message form and content, as well as an extended duration of worship.

Finally, the third instance examined here in which the term “gathered” was also used in this context could again be understood as demonstrating certain slightly atypical characteristics. Probably the most distinctive aspect of this meeting was the theme that emerged across messages. It seems that at least seven of the eight messages shared

during this meeting in some way connected to this theme, and it is possible that the eighth message also shared this theme, although the central ideas of that message were less clear to me, so I was not able to remember and record it in as much detail. This theme was also explicitly stated during the announcement period. The direct acknowledgement of such a clear theme was not a regular occurrence, but it did happen during at least three other meetings that I attended. It might be significant to observe as well that the messages began somewhat earlier than normal during this meeting. In my notes, I have recorded that out of the fifty-five meetings that I attended at which messages were shared (at three meetings no messages were shared), none were shared before ten minutes and ten first messages were shared between ten and fifteen minutes. The sharing of the first message at fifteen minutes in this meeting is consequently a little earlier than usual.<sup>35</sup> As mentioned previously, there were on average five messages shared during meeting for worship. The example described here contained eight spoken messages, which is not unusual, but on the higher end of the range. There were also more messages than usual shared during the saying of names, and these seemed to connect with the theme. Also, the final message of this meeting did have a sentence that was said in a louder tone, which, as mentioned above, is a somewhat atypical form. We can, therefore, see some similarities between the distinctive characteristics of the second and third meetings described as “gathered,” specifically in terms of the content of messages.

In these ways, the event of a “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship can be identified as unique when analyzed in terms of the act sequence of meetings for worship

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<sup>35</sup> Another meeting that was described as “gathered” to me in an interview, but which I have not included here because it was not explicitly described as “gathered” during the event itself, also started earlier, after approximately thirteen minutes. That meeting was the only one that I have attended at which more than eight messages were shared.



at Glen Meeting. Although this type of event is described as connected to personal experience and even though members told me when describing it that they were not always sure that others had experienced the same thing (or they had not experienced the same thing as others, as in the case of one interviewee), there do seem to be certain characteristics that can be identified as making a meeting distinctive, which can be observed by an outsider. Although these characteristics are not always exactly the same, they could be understood as a constellation of related elements that create the event. These characteristics include the quality and length of the silence, the form and content of messages (involving the acknowledgement of the presence of the “spirit,” descriptions of the “silence,” and the development of a theme across messages), and the length of the meeting. It is interesting to consider again the notion of “learning” and “practice” here, as mentioned by several interviewees. It would seem that the “gathered” or “covered” meeting is an event that members learn to participate in through practice and that is experienced to varying extents by different people as a result of individual differences in learning. Identification of “gathered” meetings also seems to depend in part on the “unity” of subsequent descriptions by participants, but a distinction may be made between “unity” and “unanimity,” in that not everyone need agree. The above analysis indicates that the “gathered” or “covered” meeting is nevertheless a “real” observable event that is experienced by the group and plays a role in group interaction and process. It is a coordinated and coordinating communicative event that enacts the communal function of communication.

#### **4.3.7 Conclusion**

The analysis in this chapter began with an examination of writings about meeting for worship in the broader Quaker community. It then focused in on the act sequence of meeting for worship and communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting at Glen Meeting, and finally on particular examples of meetings for worship that were described as “gathered” or “covered.” In their communication, Friends describe the “gathered” or “covered” meeting as a worship experience in which the “spirit” draws a group together for an indefinite period of time through silence that has a certain quality and through messages that connect in unique ways. Those meetings observed at Glen Meeting that were identified in this way were distinctive in terms of the quality and length of the silence that was enacted during them, in terms of the form and content of messages shared, and in terms of the length of the meeting for worship. While not all meetings described as “covered” or “gathered” shared the same characteristics, they each had certain identifiable attributes that were distinctive. Subsequent chapters will build upon this analysis in examining other communication events at Glen Meeting and connecting these to the cultural premises of communication analyzed here, which will ultimately form the basis for a Quaker code of communication. I will now turn to a second central speech event in this community, which is in part the means by which that which happens in meeting for worship is understood to be taken out into the world, namely the meeting for business.

## CHAPTER 5

### DECISION MAKING

#### 5.1. Part I Meeting for Business among Quakers

##### 5.1.1 Introduction

Many unprogrammed Quakers in the United States enact a unique decision-making process called “finding the sense of the meeting” or “corporate discernment” in their monthly meetings for business.<sup>36</sup> This practice is based in the activity of listening in communal silence for the will of God, which, it is believed, will be revealed to those present. That this communication practice has important consequences is evident in the impressive history of social activism of Quakers. Despite the distinctive nature of this process, little research has been done on decision making among Quakers and its underlying cultural assumptions from a communication perspective. Work on this practice has implications for research on silence, identity, and cultural communication. This chapter seeks to answer the questions of what the communication form identified as “corporate discernment” among Quakers is and what cultural meanings are associated with it, through an analysis of instances of use of the term as well as instances of its occurrence. The analysis explores cultural assumptions about relating, feeling, and acting that are active when this practice is engaged in.

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<sup>36</sup> There were and possibly still are some groups of Quakers who call their decision-making process “consensus.” Among the group with whom I work, and in much of the literature I cite, the process is called “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” and is clearly distinguished from “consensus.” “Consensus” is understood as a secular, rather than a spiritual, process. See Morley’s (1993) pamphlet entitled *Beyond Consensus, Salvaging Sense of the Meeting* for further elaboration of the differences.

Quaker practice in meeting for business has a long history in Christian tradition. Sheeran (1996) traces elements of the process back to the practices of the apostles and notes that similar ways of making decisions were much more common in the mid-seventeenth century, when Quakerism developed, than they are today. Sheeran (1996) explains that it is difficult to identify the exact origins of the tradition because there are “so many plausible candidates,” but he points to aspects of medieval Catholic practice and characteristics of Anabaptist traditions, as well as those of the Seekers, from whom silent worship is believed to have been adopted (p. 122). The goal here is to describe and seek to interpret the process as it is undertaken and understood by American Quakers of the unprogrammed tradition, and, specifically, those who belong to the meeting community where this research took place. In order to familiarize the reader with the general form of the process, I will first attempt to give an overview of its act sequence, as described in the literature, and specific elements or characteristics that have been emphasized by Quaker authors as central to the process. I will also provide a brief comparison with another form of decision making in order to emphasize the uniqueness of this process. This overview will be followed by an analysis of the specific meetings for business that I observed and audio recorded. In this way, the organization of this chapter will parallel the organization of Chapter 4, in that it will begin with an analysis of communication about a practice in the wider Quaker community, before narrowing the focus to an analysis of specific events at Glen Meeting.

### **5.1.2 Relevant Literature on Decision-making Processes**

The origins of the study of decision-making processes can be traced back to ancient Athens and the philosopher, Aristotle (Gutmann and Thompson, 2004). Since that time, a range of ways of making decisions has been studied by researchers. Sager and Gastil (2006) describe an “autocratic-participative continuum” along which lie the various decision rules that can be employed by groups (p. 3). According to these theorists, the decision rules known as “decision by authority” and “decision by expert” are at the autocratic end of the continuum, while “decision by consensus” is toward the participative end. “Decision by minority” or “decision by majority” are more in the center. In the United States, decision rules of consensus and majority rule are the most common and are often perceived as “fair” and “appropriate” (DeStephen and Hirokawa, 1988; Johnson and Johnson, 1997; Mansbridge, 1983; Nielsen and Miller, 1992, 1997, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006). One of the most well-known studies of American democracy is that of Tocqueville (1835/1945), who was impressed with the conditions he observed in the United States, but expressed concern regarding Americans’ love of equality and the tendency of democratic institutions to “awaken and foster a passion for equality which they can never entirely satisfy” (p. 201). Attitudes which stem from a belief in equality, according to Tocqueville, include a high valuing of majority opinion, since no one opinion is considered better than any other, as well as an emphasis on individualism and on materialism. He saw these as dangers facing the democratic system in that they could lead to despotism by the majority, to a weakening of societal bonds, and to a focus on personal success at the expense of political duties. Interestingly, in the context of this research, Tocqueville (1835/1945) cited religion “as a political institution

which powerfully contributes to the maintenance of a democratic republic among the Americans” (p. 300). According to Tocqueville, “despotism may govern without faith, but liberty cannot” (p. 307), and “while the law permits the Americans to do what they please, religion prevents them from conceiving, and forbids them to commit, what is rash or unjust” (p. 305). He thus viewed religious practices as having little influence upon laws and public opinion, but, he asserted that religion “directs the customs of the community, and, by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state” (p. 304). These issues of American democracy, equality, and religion are important to take into account as a context for Quaker meeting for business.

Given that Friends’ decision-making processes can be understood as similar to a consensus-style practice and decision by consensus is one of the most common forms of decision making in the United States, it is also necessary to examine research on characteristics of consensus. In considering the use of consensus in making decisions, Sager and Gastil (2006) make an important distinction between a “consensus outcome” and the “consensus decision rule”; the former “refers to group members’ unanimous agreement on a particular issue or course of action,” while the latter “is a complex, time-consuming social process during which members must reach full agreement prior to coming to a final decision” (Gastil, 1993, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006, p. 3). This distinction emphasizes the way in which decision rules are continually being “produced and reproduced through social interaction” and thus, serve as a structuring device (Giddens, 1984, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006). A primary difference between decision by consensus and decision by majority rule is the amount of time required. Decision by consensus can take a long time since members can choose to continue

discussion if they oppose a particular item, while in decision by majority rule, a majority vote can end discussion. Another key distinction is that majority rule often leads to a contest between the two most popular positions, but consensus often necessitates the integration of the positions of all group members into a “coherent whole that can earn unanimous support” (Sager and Gastil, 2006, p. 4). There is some evidence that participants are more satisfied when consensus is used than when majority rule is employed (Miller, Jackson, Mueller, and Schersching, 1987, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006), but research on whether or not the decisions made through this process are of a higher quality has not yielded definitive results, and some researchers have found that majority rule seems to lead to better decisions (Feddersen and Pesendorfer, 1998; Kameda and Sugimori, 1993; Parks and Nelson, 1999, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006). However, research has seemed to indicate that the consensus decision rule actually leads to a more deliberative process (Hare, 1980; Nemeth, 1977, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006); although there are also those who have found that the success of consensus is strongly linked to the context in which it occurs (Falk and Falk, 1981; Hare, 1980; Tjosvold and Field, 1983, as cited in Sager and Gastil, 2006). These factors of satisfaction, quality of decision, varying degrees of deliberativeness of a process, and the impact of context all have implications for the Quaker practice of decision making and the heavy emphasis in this practice on process over outcome and on the creation and maintenance of community, which will be analyzed later.

In terms of notions of community, research on decision making has focused to a large extent on the characteristics and processes of small groups. As Poole et al. (2004) observe, “people live in groups, work in groups, and play in groups” and “the study of

groups has been a focus across the social and behavioral sciences for over 50 years in psychology, sociology, management, communication, education, social work, political science, public policy, urban planning, and information science” (p. 3-4). However, what constitutes a group or a community is not a given, observe Witteborn and Sprain (2009), and processes of making decisions in small groups can also be processes of grouping that are enactments of social identities. Kelshaw and Gastil (2007) cite Schwartzman’s (1989) claim that meetings are important “yet taken-for-granted” communication events that “both reflect and (re)create larger organizational structures” (p. 4). Community, according to Witteborn and Sprain (2009), can sometimes be understood as more of a “social location” or “a way of being, acting, and relating that can be influenced by physical place and the opportunities presented therein” (p. 19). Citing work in the ethnography of communication, they tie speech communities to “distinctive ways of verbal and nonverbal interaction,” and communities “come into being and maintain themselves through those interactions” (2009, p. 15). Witteborn and Sprain (2009) draw on CuDA to examine meanings of place and personhood active in a group meeting that inform certain ways of relating, which are constituted through meeting interactions.

In a manner similar to Hymes’ formulation of the SPEAKING mnemonic in the ethnography of communication, other researchers have identified basic aspects of public meetings that must be identified in order to adequately describe and understand these meetings, such as “participants’ roles,” “participants’ expectations and perceptions of a given meeting’s goals,” “the nature of communication” in terms of its “content and direction of influence,” “the framework for communication determined by contextual factors,” and the “democratic genres of talk” (Kelshaw and Gastil, 2007, p. 6).



Townsend (2009) draws on the elements formulated by Hymes in order to examine the actual sequence of a New England town meeting and formulate norms for deliberative democracy based on empirical observation rather than an idealized notion of deliberation. Mansbridge, Hartz-Karp, Amengual, and Gastil (2006) also use an inductive method to examine the observations of facilitators who were shown recordings of small-group deliberations in order to identify “explicit and implicit norms” of deliberation that are not necessarily those emphasized in theoretical literature, which deductively derives an “ideal conception of deliberation from the abstract principles of rationality, liberty, and equality” (p. 1). The elements and norms described above will be taken into account when formulating a descriptive account of the Quaker meeting for business and seeking to interpret the cultural meanings active in it.

Since this study is based in a religious community, it is also interesting to consider the decision-making practices of other religious communities, such as the communities of Benedictine nuns studied by Hoffman (2007), who also call their process of decision making “discernment” (p. 200). Hoffman (2007) explores the way in which the daily communication practices of these nuns in the processes of organizing, such as relationship development, work assignment, and decision making, help them to negotiate the tensions that exist between their community values and the demands of the Roman Catholic Church. She cites the work of previous scholars on organizing and spirituality, understood as being “characterized by attention to transcendent questions” and distinct from, although sometimes compatible with, religion; she identifies certain themes of this research, including “making work meaningful,” “the central role of values,” “how time is conceptualized,” and “the development of meaningful relationships” (Hoffman, 2007, p.

189, 190-191). The themes emphasized by Hoffman (2007) all seem relevant to consider in a discussion of Quaker decision making in that all of the ways of acting and communicating in Quaker worship that have been analyzed can be viewed as connected to underlying premises and communal values, and the focus here will be on the way in which these come together to create action in the meeting for business that is considered “meaningful” in that moment and that leads to meaningful social action in the wider world. I have already touched on ideas regarding conceptions of time in the meeting community as a dimension of the “gathered” meeting, and understandings of time will also play a role in how decision making is accomplished. Also, ideas about sociality or how “meaningful relationships” are conceived in the community have been introduced in reference to the importance of being “together” in communal worship, and these ideas will continue to be developed with reference to the “corporate” nature of decision making. Hoffman’s (2007) specific focus on a theme of “community” in her analysis is significant in relation to the consideration here of the communal function of communication. As Hoffman (2007) explains, in the context of Benedictine life, “community does not exist for the sake of accomplishing other ends, it is an end in itself” (p. 194), and “Benedictine women believe that they are called to enact community as it could/should be lived by all people” (p. 195). This “end” will be considered in the context of the Quaker meeting. In light of the importance Friends place on listening together in meeting for worship, as discussed earlier, Hoffman’s (2007) observation that “‘Listen’ is the first word in the Rule of Saint Benedict—the document upon which Benedictines base their lives” would also seem significant to this comparison (p. 199). Hoffman (2007) asserts that “the vow of obedience taken by members [of Benedictine

communities] is understood as a process of listening—to the Holy Spirit, to one’s prioress, to one’s sisters, and to one’s self” (p. 199). According to Hoffman (2007), “the practice of listening is most evident in decision-making” in Benedictine communities (p. 200); in the process of discernment in these communities, “sisters listen to the wisdom of one another, and the prioress listens to the wisdom of the group” (Hoffman, 2007, p. 200). This practice of “true listening” is understood to be “inclusive” and ensure that all voices are heard. Although it takes “a great deal of time,” something is viewed as being “gained” through taking this time to enact the “process” (Hoffman, 2007, p. 200). Hoffman (2007) notes that “Benedictine life is marked by time for listening and contemplation, with periods set aside daily and yearly for ‘holding still’ (Krone, 2001). The daily prayer of Liturgy of the Hours includes periods of silent reflection, and each year communities set aside time for leisure and learning” (p. 201). Here we see “listening” in discernment being connected to “silent reflection” and “prayer.” Listening in the context of the Quaker meeting for worship and meeting for business would seem to share some qualities with the listening described by Hoffman, and it is useful to keep the Benedictine example in mind when considering Quaker practices. Finally, Hoffman’s (2007) exploration of the tension between the smaller Benedictine community and the larger religious organization of the Roman Catholic Church also serves as an interesting comparison with the bottom-up structure of Quaker meeting organization, which will be addressed in more detail in the discussion of meeting membership in Chapter 7.

Research specifically on Quaker decision-making processes has been undertaken by both Sheeran (1996) and Wick (1998). Sheeran’s analysis of the decision-making processes of the Quakers of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) will be discussed in

greater detail in the next section. In his work, entitled *Beyond Majority Rule*, Sheeran (1996) examines tensions between different spiritual beliefs, such as those held by what he calls “Christocentric” and “universalist” Friends, and the way in which the experience of the “gathered” meeting, which he argues is not felt by all Friends, plays a role in decision making. Wick (1998) looks at the distinction understood to exist in the decision-making practices of a Friends nominating committee between “spiritual process” and “secular process” (p. 104) in terms of the concept of agonistic patterns (Philipsen 1986; Carbaugh, 1988/1989). She links this distinction to a notion of personhood and sociality that focuses on the split between “self” and “God” and to the dual identities of “Quaker” and “everyday” (p. 118-119). Although past research has in this way examined practices of making decisions and identity among Friends, it has not focused on the concept of “corporate discernment.” Given that members of Glen Meeting expressed the belief that the Quaker process of making decisions was one of the key elements that differentiates Quakers from other groups, it seems necessary to examine “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” in terms of the characteristics that define it and the cultural means and meanings associated with it. This analysis will draw on past research on group decision making and community formation with the goal of expanding upon it through consideration of an extremely unique process that has been shown to lead to strong commitment and participation in social activism.

### 5.1.3 Description of Meeting for Business in Quaker Literature

#### 5.1.3.1 Setting, Act Sequence, and Norms

A good starting point for a discussion of meetings for business would seem to be the *Faith and Practice* of a Yearly Meeting. As mentioned before, a *Faith and Practice* is a book of Quaker practice written and periodically updated by members of a Yearly Meeting. I would like to note that several times during the meetings for business that I attended, participants made reference to consulting the *Faith and Practice* of their Yearly Meeting when deciding how to proceed. I have selected here to draw on the *Faith and Practice* of New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM), as members of that meeting are currently in the process of updating their *Faith and Practice*. As new chapters are written by the committee undertaking the revision of the 1985 version of the *Faith and Practice*, they are brought to sessions of the Yearly Meeting for preliminary approval. A draft of a chapter on “corporate discernment” was presented to the NEYM during its session in 2009. This chapter can be found posted online on the Yearly Meeting’s website (<http://www.neym.org/fandp/>).

When describing how decisions should be made through “corporate discernment,” the authors of NEYM *Faith and Practice* first describe the arrangement of the room in which the meeting for business takes place. They note that the clerk, who facilitates the process, and the recording clerk, who records the minutes for the meeting, normally sit at a table facing the group. The meeting begins as participants enter and “settle into worship.” The *Faith and Practice* then observes that “at an appropriate time,” the clerk begins to go over the agenda, which has been prepared before the meeting (NEYM Faith

& Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 2). The clerk calls on people to speak who raise their hands, and, in this way, sets the pace of the meeting. Here the authors of this chapter emphasize the importance of pace, when they write, “Allowing time to reflect between each contribution and addressing the clerk rather than the previous speaker help maintain an atmosphere of prayerful seeking” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 2). As a decision begins to emerge, the clerk and recording clerk try to formulate this “sense of the meeting,” or agreement that is arising among members of the group, into a minute. The stating of the minute tests “the united spirit of those gathered” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 2). The clerk asks if this minute can be approved, and if no one raises his or her hand to object to the minute or suggest a rephrasing, but instead participants indicate approval, the minute is written down. Sometimes, when a decision cannot be reached, a “minute of exercise” may be written, which “states where the meeting is at this time” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 2). Once a minute has been approved, it is recorded by the recording clerk and read back to the meeting so that participants can approve, modify, or reject it. The clerk is not the only one who can formulate the “sense of the meeting” into a minute to be approved by the meeting. *Faith and Practice* notes that “any member may offer a substitute for the clerk’s minute, and the meeting may approve, modify, or reject it, in exactly the same manner as if the minute were submitted by the clerk” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 2). The authors also explain that action on the item is not complete until Friends have approved the recorded minute. The group of Friends that is currently gathered for the meeting for business is best able to approve a minute, as this is the group that has just “achieved unity of purpose” (NEYM Faith &

Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 3). Those who are not present or a future group at another meeting for business are not able to experience the spirit acting among this particular group at this time, so they are unable to approve or reject the minute.

This chapter in *Faith and Practice* goes on to describe what could be called specific norms of the event (Carbaugh, 2007), which Friends refer to as “advices,” or statements made in a “declarative vein” that “grow out of the collective experience of Friends in trying to live their Light” and, unlike dogma, “are subject to revision as new experience sheds new light” (Smith, 2002, p. 1). Participants are instructed to avoid conversation when they initially enter the meeting for business. The authors write, “Take your seat quietly, entering a receptive silence” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 5). Participants are also told to listen carefully to what others say and not to “voice concerns or ideas which have already been expressed,” but, instead, to state “that Friend speaks my mind” when in agreement with what has been spoken; it is important, however, not to say this too frequently so that it “does not become a veiled means of voting” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 3). If one disagrees with what has been said, one is instructed to “show respect for those who have spoken by offering another viewpoint in a humble spirit” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 5). When speaking, participants should “Address the clerk, rather than another individual, and speak only to the matter at hand” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 5). In terms of this tone of respect and humbleness, Morley (1993) instructs that “Ideas should be offered and explained, rather than argued. They should be heard thoughtfully and respectfully, just as messages in meeting for worship are heard thoughtfully and respectfully” (p. 14).

At times when the “sense of the meeting” is not clear, the group may “enter back into worship to attempt again to discern the right course of action” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 3). If the clerk determines that a concern that has been brought up is important, or “weighty,” he or she may decide that it “stands in the way” of unity. *Faith and Practice* is careful to note that “‘standing in the way’ does not describe an action taken by an individual, but refers to the recognition by the clerk and the meeting that what has been brought forward indicates that further discernment is necessary” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 3). The clerk may decide that the “sense of the meeting” is unclear and that the item needs to go back to a committee for more “seasoning” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 4). The clerk might also decide that a particular concern is not “weighty” enough to prevent a decision. The authors explain, “At these times the clerk may need to remind the meeting that it is unity we seek, not unanimity. The sense of the meeting may be that the group feels led to a certain action with some Friends feeling discomfort. That discomfort is part of the sense of the meeting” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 4). A citation of a Quaker author included in this chapter of the *Faith and Practice* describes the role of “weight” in the process of formulating a minute, noting, “After due consideration has been given to all points of view expressed in the meeting, it is the duty of the clerk to weigh carefully the various expressions . . . not alone according to numbers but also according to the recognized experience and spiritual insight of the members” (Selleck, 1986, p. 8, as cited in NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 9).



The above act sequence can thus be summarized as entering quietly, initial worship, introduction of agenda, calling on people to speak, attempting to formulate the “sense of the meeting,” objection to/rewording of/approval of a minute, recording of the minute, reading back of the minute, objection to/rewording of/approval of the recorded minute, and finally repetition of the above process with each agenda item.

### **5.1.3.2 The Act Sequence of a Specific Decision in Greater Detail**

In his work on the decision-making practices of Quakers of PYM, Sheeran (1996) identifies certain stages of the process of deciding upon each individual agenda item. He notes that at first when an agenda item is introduced, there is a presentation of the problem and its possible solutions, often by a member of a meeting committee. This presentation is followed by what Sheeran (1996) calls “preliminary discussion” (p. 64), during which questions are asked and tentative alternatives are offered. Sheeran notes that remarks made against the proposal at this time are normally understood as exploratory rather than as actually against the proposal. This preliminary discussion is followed by a more serious discussion that is introduced through an informal transition when an individual begins to speak in a less tentative tone. Sheeran (1996) observes that it is at this point that the “tide” begins to build, and others who agree with something that has been said may say “I can unite with that” or “that speaks my mind” (p. 65). Sometimes, however, there are several currents or no current. Discussion continues until a dominant position becomes more evident or the clerk or another participant suggests that an agreement cannot be reached. Sheeran here cites the Quaker “rule” of “when in doubt, wait” (Sheeran, 1996, p. 65; Comfort, 1941, p. 3). If the shared ideas seem to be

heading in a particular direction, the clerk may make a judgment that the group is ready for agreement and will propose a tentative minute embodying the agreement that the clerk hears in the discussion. As mentioned above in the citation of New England Yearly Meeting's *Faith and Practice*, participants are then expected to ask themselves if this catches the drift of the discussion, and if it does not, they object. Participants must also ask themselves if they are comfortable with the trend of the discussion, and they may also object to this. Discussion follows this objection, and the clerk may then decide to repropose the original minute, withdraw the minute, or propose a substitute minute.

According to Sheeran's (1996) observations, moments during the process when someone objected, but then decided not to "stand in the way" of a decision, or withdrew the objection, were important in that they liberated the meeting to go forward and prevented "the polarization that normally arises at the moment of voting when one side becomes the victor, the other vanquished" (p. 68-69). Sheeran (1996) calls this a "moment of reconciliation" and notes that in the Quaker system, moments of polarization are rare "because those who have been unable to sway the group have the opportunity to join it. In joining the group, they truly do free it to act" (p. 69). If a person is unable to "unite with the proposal," the normal procedure is to delay. Important conversations can then occur outside of the meeting for business, during which other Friends attempt to understand the nature of the objection and engage in what is called "laboring" with the Friend. According to Sheeran, in many cases by the time of the next meeting, agreement is possible as a result of these outside discussions. Sheeran writes that a willingness to delay a decision depends in part on how important the objection seems to be and also on

the respect that the group has for the person raising the objection. Time restrictions and the number of objectors may also play a role.

### **5.1.3.3 Other Central Characteristics of Meeting for Business**

Another important resource for Quakers on Quakerism and the practice of other Friends, which was examined in detail in Chapter 4, is the publication, *Friends Journal*. I would like to cite briefly a recent article published in September of 2009 in the *Journal* by Humphries, a Quaker from New England who “travels in the ministry,” or visits other meetings and meets with members there, offering “whatever service or ministry lies within . . . her competence” (Smith, 2002, p. 31). This article is on what Humphries calls the “four pillars” of meeting for business. These pillars are: “that the meeting is rooted in worship; that the meeting is clerked; that there is enough time, a sense of spaciousness; and that decisions are made by sense of the meeting” (2009, p. 22). In terms of being grounded in worship, Humphries (2009) asserts that the meeting for business is “the corporate implementation of the skills developed in meeting for worship. Each time we sit together with others in corporate worship, we have the opportunity to further develop these skills. . . . Building upon the individual skills are the corporate ones of listening together for something more than what we hear individually” (p. 23). This sense of worship is introduced by the beginning acts of the act sequence of the meeting for business. Humphries (2009) writes “Every business meeting begins with a time of worship. At times the worship is perfunctory, but at its best, the opening worship is long enough to remind those present that we are listening deeply and seeking to hear the Spirit in the agenda items addressed” (p. 22). Humphries emphasizes the practice of “listening”

in the silence and how through “listening,” one learns to “distinguish between when something is only ‘a good idea’ and when it is the Spirit moving” (2009, p. 23). Morley (1993) also asserts that “Sense of the meeting requires listening rather than contending, weighing rather than reacting” (p. 14). “Being grounded in worship” during meeting for business is “critical,” according to Humphries (2009), and, “if the worshipful environment changes or discussion becomes heated, the clerk may ask for silence to give those present the time to go back to worshipful space” (p. 23).

In regards to the second “pillar,” Humphries describes in some detail the role of the clerk in the meeting; this role has already been discussed to a certain extent above in the overview of the acts that the clerk performs during the meeting for business. Humphries (2009) identifies the tasks of the clerk as being those that are “visible,” such as “preparing the agenda, calling on people to speak, and suggesting a sense of the meeting for those present to respond to” and those that are “invisible,” such as “the prayer and discernment that go into preparing the agenda, being in a grounded and centered place from which to attend to the motion of Spirit in the corporate body during the conduct of business, and hearing what is *not* said but is present in the room” (p. 23-24). Other Friends have noted that “The clerk is neutral with regard to the content but an ardent advocate for the process” (Snyder et al., 2001, p. 63). The role of the clerk is, thus, complex in that he or she is expected to put aside his or her own opinions and desires in terms of the decisions considered, but still be constantly alert to faithfulness to the process; there is obviously a great deal of skill required in clerking a meeting. Humphries explains that the clerk’s responsibility of deciding who to call on to speak involves deep, worshipful listening to the spirit in order to discern who should be heard

from. The clerk can use the process of calling on people to foster “waiting worship until the Spirit is ready” (Humphries, 2009, p. 24). Because speakers address remarks to the clerk, individuals feel less attacked by differing opinions, according to Humphries, and are better able to listen to those who disagree with them and to the Spirit, so that they can let go of their own position, if that is what is called for. Morley (1993) asserts that in this environment, participants’ self-esteem is nurtured, and they feel listened to rather than attacked, which “sharpens” thinking and “improves” articulation (p. 23). As a result people feel comfortable, “laugh a lot,” and “their friendships deepen, their loyalties strengthen” (Morley, 1993, p. 23). Humphries (2009) writes that it is key for a clerk to remain a “non-anxious presence” even when a situation may be stressful because “when disagreement or strong feelings are present the greatest hope for change comes when someone is able to remain in a place of centered calm” (p. 25). She explains that this does not mean avoiding tension, but being able to “hold” it while not “catching” it (2009, p. 25). Responding in this way to conflict enables “the full transformative potential of meeting for business and increases the likelihood that those present will be able to hear and respond to the motion of the Spirit” (Humphries, 2009, p. 25). Morley (1993) also explains that through the process of attaining the sense of the meeting, “transformation occurs” and “we are changed” (p. 24).<sup>37</sup>

The third pillar introduced by Humphries is that the process of meeting for business is given adequate time. The element of time as a dimension of a “gathered” meeting was discussed previously in Chapter 4, specifically when God’s time was contrasted with the traditional hour of meeting for worship. Humphries (2009) observes

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<sup>37</sup> Hoffman’s (2007) discussion of the role of the “prioress” as “serving” the Benedictine community reflects the notion that the clerk’s role in meeting for business is understood as one of service, rather than power.

that the reason meeting for business requires so much time is that it is a process of waiting for “hearts to change” and for participants to speak “their own Light” and then set aside “their own perspective” and “listen to the moving of the Spirit” (p. 25). For Humphries, this idea of giving enough time for the right outcome can be viewed as a sense of “spaciousness” in which people are given enough space to share their opinions without being challenged, so that change is possible. It is in this environment that Quaker tradition can act as a “guide for individual spirituality,” and each person can “put down” his or her own opinion (Humphries, 2009, p. 25). *Faith and Practice* of New England Yearly Meeting emphasizes that “The clerk must be careful not to let the seeming urgency of a matter undermine the faithful search for truth. While there are consequences for not reaching a decision, there are consequences for setting aside loving seeking in the name of expedience” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 3). In this way, taking adequate time is valued above efficiency.

Humphries’ final pillar is that decisions are made by a “sense of the meeting,” which has been discussed above. This element is possibly the most distinctive aspect of the Quaker decision-making process for those who come from traditions that typically rely on debating or majority vote. Humphries (2009) describes the “sense of the meeting” as ideally something more than the “best wisdom of the group” (p. 25). Friends believe, writes Humphries (2009), that the “sense of the meeting” is not a compromise, and it does not require “logical agreement” (p. 25). It is, instead, “what Spirit would have us do in this instance” and thus is understood to go “beyond” both majority vote and even consensus (Humphries, 2009, p. 25); for consensus can be understood as “based on the

work of human wisdom and reason” rather than on a seeking of the will of the Spirit (Grace, 2000, as cited in NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 7).

Humphries concludes with the assertion that through this process of “finding the sense of the meeting,” relationships within the meeting and the whole meeting community are strengthened. As is written in the *Faith and Practice* of NEYM, “What we are being asked to do is labor together in love and humility and to be faithful to divine guidance rather than simply decide on a particular course of action. When we work together in this way we build the trust and integrity so necessary for a healthy spiritual community” (NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 4). An emphasis on the process of “finding the sense of the meeting” is important because it does more than bring about decisions, it creates a basis for sociality; in fact, a decision that is made without the experience of this process is felt to be of little value. One of the constituent meetings of NEYM explains in a recent newsletter, as cited in *Faith and Practice*, “Central to Quaker process is the understanding that our task is not so much to figure out what to do as to understand what the Spirit is asking of us as a corporate body. When we come to business meeting, committee meetings, or smaller meetings of individuals with this perspective, the focus shifts away from outcomes and towards community” (Westport Monthly Meeting newsletter, 2006, as cited in NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 6). Morley (1993) claims that he cannot think of “decisions made in business meetings that were more important than the process by which they were made” (p. 23). He explains that in meeting for business “any decision made is simply one part of a process that brings us together under the umbrella of that Spirit that resides within and over us all” (Morley, 1993, p. 11). He adds, “the decision is

a by-product. It happens along the way. The purpose of seeking the sense of the meeting is to gather ourselves in unity in the presence of Light” (Morley, 1993, p. 15). That this notion of community in the process of making decisions is often at odds with other traditions is acknowledged by Sheeran (1996) who observes:

People socialized into the atomism (or individualism) which has been fundamental to Western thought since the rise of liberalism need special abilities if they are successfully to shift into a subculture which expects a communitarian self-understanding. The Quaker who mistakenly reduces Friends decision making to democracy sees no advantage in the extra time taken by ‘quaint’ procedures. “Why not just vote and get it over with?” is the sort of question sometimes asked. The individual who must ask this sort of question is approaching Quakerism from the outside, from a thought-world alien to its very foundations. Such a person neither accepts the communitarian self-understanding nor the obligations which the decisions of the meeting for business place upon the individual. (p. 112)

The meeting for business among Quakers is in this way felt to be unique in its effort to build community through seeking the “sense of the meeting.”

#### **5.1.3.4 The Importance of “Silence”**

The notion that “silence” is a cultural symbol among Friends was explored in Chapter 1, and different characteristics of “silence” were discussed in descriptions of meeting for worship in Chapter 4. The centrality of worshipful silence in Quaker meeting for business has already been discussed above with reference to the silence that occurs at the beginning of the act sequence of the meeting for business and when the clerk calls for silence at times of disagreement. Humphries emphasizes the importance of silence in the beginning of meeting for business in order to establish a sense of worship and remind participants that the practice in which they are engaging is a process of listening for the spirit. She describes silence as a core element of Quaker practice and the time when important change occurs:



Quakerism is about listening in silence. Early Friends spoke about what happened in the silence and focused much less on the content of vocal ministry. It was in the silence that their hearts were broken open. . . . We need a vocabulary to describe the different textures of our corporate silence so we can better appreciate the experience. When we focus on the vocal ministry to evaluate the quality of our corporate worship we have looked to the fruits and missed the source. (Humphries, 2009, p. 23)

That the type of silence that Friends engage in is different is also argued by Smith (2002) in his glossary of Quaker terms, one of which is “silence.” Smith (2002) asserts, “It might be argued that Quakers have no right to appropriate this word as a special term since silence is, so to speak, in the public domain. But in a certain sense Quakers did invent silence—or at least they rediscovered a special kind of silence” (p. 28). He goes on to distinguish:

We must remember that silence is relative in any case. The silence generated in a Friends meeting has no meaning in the objective world: there may be sounds of nature, of children, of traffic, of a boiler factory next door. We are silent, but we do not imitate the silence of death. We have the special quiet of listeners, the special perception of seekers, the special alertness of those who wait. It is not merely absence of noise, but expectant, living silence. (2002, p. 28)

Humphries distinguishes specifically between two types of silences. She explains, “Sometimes our experience in the silence might be fragmented, distracted, or scattered, with our thoughts and focus jumping from one thing to another” (2009, p. 23). However, there are also other times when “a deep stillness” holds those present “at attention,” “perhaps like what happens in a yoga asana where the breath moves through us while the mind is quiet” (Humphries, p. 23, 2009).

In his work among Quakers of PYM, Sheeran (1996) observes instances when “surprising shifts of position, either by individuals or by the entire group” follow “long spontaneous silences” during meeting for business (p.83). This occurrence was not frequent, according to Sheeran (1996), and tended to happen in situations of “high risk”

(p. 83). He observed that meetings for business are often oscillations “between a superficial and a rather profound religious tone depending upon the topic under discussion” (1996, p.83). Morley (1993) asserts that silence is an indication that the process in meeting for business is complete. He explains:

When we feel the Presence settle among us, and silence overtakes us, we have arrived where we want to be. Silence is an inward and outward sign that the process has been completed. A sensitive clerk will allow the silence to linger. Transition to Light makes possible a gathered meeting. This is why Friends consider business meeting to be an extension of meeting for worship. The process of reaching unity in Light brings us close to the peace that passeth understanding. (Morley, 1993, p. 19)

Sheeran argues that the silence in meeting for business draws attention to the experience of the “gathered” meeting for worship, and it is this that defines the community and is the reason that Quakerism does not have or need a creed or dogma. He writes:

The whole emphasis of Quaker decision making as we have now sketched it draws upon this experience [of the gathered meeting]. Because Friends differ in their understandings of the experience, the devices used in the meetings are subtle invitations to reenter the experience rather than formal reminders of Quaker belief. The opening and closing silences and the moments of special reflection at times of impasse or conflict all recall those present to the experience, each remaining free to enter the experience through his or her own understanding. (Sheeran, 1996, p. 82)

Loring (1992) also draws this connection to the “gathered” meeting in a pamphlet published by the Quaker retreat center, Pendle Hill. She writes:

The basis of discernment in a meeting for business is unity. The unity sought is NOT simple agreement, consensus, compromise or irreducible minimum of views. What is sought is a sense of that deep, interior unity which is a sign the members are consciously gathered together in God and may therefore trust their corporate guidance. The experience known as the gathered meeting for worship is the basis of unity in the context of the meeting for worship for the conduct of business. (Loring, 1992, p. 8)

It was mentioned in the analysis of elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings for worship at Glen Meeting in Chapter 4 that some interviewees, when asked

about “gathered” meetings, said that they had experienced this sense in the meeting for business. However, as noted, some Friends also said that they had never before considered the application of the concept of “gathered” to the meeting for business. In his writing, Sheeran also recognizes that this understanding of meeting for business as grounded in the “gathered” meeting may be contested by some. However, the basis of the decision-making process in deep, worshipful silence is considered by all to be a central characteristic of the process, whether or not this silence is described as “gathered.”

#### **5.1.4 Comparison with Another Tradition**

Hymes (1962), in his call for ethnographies of communication, emphasized the value of comparison between different communication practices in different speech communities; and in order to call attention to the uniqueness of Quaker decision making, I will briefly contrast it here with another common alternative. As noted by both Wick (1998) and Sheeran (1996), Friends frequently emphasize the difference between their process of making decisions and other processes. One commonly employed guide for parliamentary procedures that rely on majority vote is Robert’s (1876/1951) *Rules of Order*, first formulated by a general in the US Army and now widely used by deliberative bodies in the United States. In a short book describing how the practices of Friends can be applied to other decision-making bodies, Snyder et al. (2001) contrast Quaker decision making with Robert’s *Rules of Order*.<sup>38</sup> Differences include the act sequence of the events, the role of the clerk or chair, and the relationships that are understood to exist

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<sup>38</sup> During one of the meetings which I attended and recorded for this research, a participant turned to me at one point and told me with a laugh that if General Robert could see this, he would not be pleased, indicating a perceived difference between Robert’s *Rules* and what happens in meeting for business.

within the group and between participants and ideas/decisions. For example, in terms of the act sequence, initially in a Friends meeting for business, many different ideas and information are shared, as a “sense of the meeting” begins to form. However, in a group employing Robert’s *Rules of Order*, a single motion “constrains the discussion” (Snyder et al., 2001, p. 61). Members of a group following Robert’s *Rules of Order* have few constraints “placed on the order or frequency of speaking,” while “norms limit” the number of times that a person asks to speak in a meeting for business among Friends (Snyder et al., 2001, p. 61). Also, discussion is in the form of a debate in a group using Robert’s *Rules of Order*, but, among Quakers, discussion focuses to a greater extent on “active listening” and “sharing information” (Snyder et al., 2001, p. 61). Debate is actively discouraged, and participants are instructed not to respond directly to each other, but to address their comments to the clerk and let the discussion “go through the clerk’s table.” When disagreement arises in a group using Robert’s *Rules of Order*, a vote may be used to settle the difference. In a Friends meeting, disagreement leads to further discussion. The clerk may try to articulate how he or she understands the disagreement and attempt to identify areas of agreement. This formulation by the clerk of points of agreement can form the basis for more discussion and possibly a decision. A final decision is reached through voting in a group following Robert’s *Rules of Order*, but among Quakers, as discussed above, the clerk formulates a minute and then the minute is recorded and read back to the group in order for it to be “tested” and perhaps reformulated. Overall the act sequence of a group making decisions in the manner of Friends is likely to be longer than a group employing Robert’s *Rules of Order*, since

disagreement is not solved by a quick vote, but leads to further discussion, and minutes are subject to further “testing” even after they have been recorded.

In terms of differences between the role of a clerk versus the role of a chair in a meeting, the chair is responsible for calling for a vote, while the clerk formulates a “sense of the meeting” into a minute and then asks for concerns or approval. If there is a tie in a group that is using voting, the vote of the chair can determine who wins. However, an objection in a Quaker meeting is considered by the clerk, who decides if the objection carries weight and should “stand in the way” of a decision. This difference highlights the important distinction regarding how relationships between participants are understood in each group. The clerk is frequently described as serving the Quaker meeting, and there is an emphasis on equality among all present. However, “weightiness,” or the quality of one who has experience with Quaker process and is gifted at listening for the spirit, can influence whether or not the clerk considers an objection raised by an individual as worthy of standing in the way of a decision. Within groups that employ Robert’s *Rules of Order*, there may be more of a sense of difference in status between the chair and the rest of the group, but there is less emphasis placed on the individual’s experience with the process (“weightiness”) in determining how votes are considered. In a group drawing on Robert’s *Rules of Order*, there is also a power differential between those in the majority who support a particular proposal versus those in the minority who oppose it. The process of voting suppresses a minority opinion. However, numbers play less of a role among those employing Quaker process, as an objection made by one person, if the objection is determined to be important by the clerk, can delay or stop a decision. Dissenting opinions are felt to be very important as they can indicate that the spirit is

moving in a different direction, which needs to be considered. Also, the relationship between group members and ideas is formulated differently among Friends than among groups using Robert's *Rules of Order*. Ideas or objections proposed by an individual Friend are not understood to belong to that person, but to the whole group. Names are not recorded in connection with particular proposals. In the same vein, decisions also belong to the whole group, which is considered responsible for that decision; decisions do not belong only to the "winners," as they would were a vote being taken.

The above contrast has highlighted certain distinctive attributes of Quaker process that reveal key assumptions underlying the practice, which will be examined below in more detail with regard to specific data. In particular, differences can be seen in the act sequence, in the way in which relationships between members of the group are understood, and in the way the relationship between the whole group and the final decision is formulated.<sup>39</sup> These differences have important implications for how ways of communicating, acting, and relating with others are valued in a Quaker community.

### **5.1.5 Conclusion**

This section has provided a wider context for understanding the decision-making practices that take place at Glen Meeting. I began with a brief discussion of the possible historical roots of Quaker practice and then gave an overview of other research on decision making and small group processes, specifically in the United States. Research on Quaker decision making was introduced, and a summary of key characteristics of the process, as emphasized by scholars and Quaker authors was provided. The act sequence

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<sup>39</sup> For another possible comparison, see the detailed account of the act sequence of a New England town meeting by Townsend (2009). This meeting draws on the rules in a handbook by Johnson, Trustman, and Wadsworth (1962/1984) rather than Robert's *Rules of Order* (1876/1951).

of “finding the sense of the meeting” and the roles and actions of participants, especially the clerk, were shown to be distinctive in the Quaker meeting for business. Finally, a comparison with another widely used set of practices served to highlight the underlying assumptions that inform Quaker process and are distinctive to this subculture. I will now turn to a recorded presentation on meeting for business at Glen Meeting in order to look in more depth at how this process is conceptualized in communication among Friends in this specific community.

## **5.2 Part II Verbal Reports about Glen Meeting for Business**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

The previous section gave a sense of how meeting for business and “corporate discernment” are treated more generally in literature about Quaker practices. Before presenting an analysis of actual recorded instances of meeting for business, it seems useful to explore the cultural meanings associated with this practice that are drawn upon specifically at Glen Meeting, as was done in terms of elicited descriptions about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship in Chapter 4. This analysis will also provide the opportunity to focus on another central speech event that takes place in Glen Meeting, the adult education hour, which has been introduced previously. The particular speech event considered here is a presentation about “corporate discernment” by two longtime Quakers during the adult education hour. It will be analyzed in terms of the series of contrasts that are found in the talk of the two speakers, and how these create dimensions of key cultural meanings associated with Quaker practice, as well as provide

a model for acting in meeting for business. The research question guiding this analysis is *What are the cultural meanings associated with the communication form of “corporate discernment” in communication at Glen Meeting?*

### **5.2.2 Methodology for Data Collection**

As mentioned, the adult education hour occurs after meeting for worship on one or two Sundays a month when there is not meeting for business or fellowship lunch. This event takes place in the Oak Room, which is smaller than the meeting room or the fellowship room and has windows on three sides and two doors, one connecting to the library, and the other leading outside to the back of the meetinghouse. I would estimate there were between twenty-five and thirty people present at the event analyzed here. Chairs were arranged for this event in half concentric circles, and the two presenters sat facing the innermost ring of circles so that they were facing the whole group. There were enough chairs for everyone present, and no one was sitting on the floor. This discussion of “corporate discernment” was audio recorded by a meeting member and made available to be taken out of the meeting library. I was present at this discussion itself, and I took out the audio recording and transcribed the event in full for this analysis. The event consisted of both a presentation by the two meeting members, which lasted about forty minutes, followed by a period of “worship sharing,” organized around a query posed by the presenters about people’s experiences in meeting for business. Many of those who attended this session were former clerks of the meeting or of a committee within the meeting.



### **5.2.3 Methodology for Data Analysis**

The data analysis for this section consisted of three stages. First, after transcribing the hour-long education hour, I looked back over the two sections of it (the presentation and the “worship sharing”), seeking to identify key cultural symbols used by the participants. In identifying these in the first section, I was struck that during their presentations when the speakers said “what was on [their] heart” about “corporate discernment,” both Friends drew on a number of contrasting descriptions in order to explain what “corporate discernment” was, but also what it was not. I, therefore, decided to organize a table in which I listed these contrasts. Drawing on the work of Philipsen (1986), Carbaugh (1988/1989), and Wick (1998), I used the concept of an “agonistic” pattern to understand these opposed ideas as dimensions of contrast that are at tension in the language of Friends. Analyzing the tables of agonistic ideas that I had identified in the data, I have formulated central cultural dimensions of Quaker communication that inform understanding of the process of “corporate discernment” and that are also often active when Friends engage in other communicative events. These dimensions can be understood as cultural premises of communication.

### **5.2.4 Analysis**

The transcripts of the sections of the presentation analyzed in this part are included here. As mentioned above, the hour began with the first speaker, Bonnie, giving an overview of the history of *Faith and Practices* in the area. She then asked her co-presenter to share what was “on his heart” about “corporate discernment.” In the approximately ten minutes that he talked, this Friend, Alex, first defined the terms

“discernment” and “corporate” because he noted that, although there were a lot of people in the room with experience in meeting for business, “we often use a lot of jargon among Quakers.” Consequently, he felt it was useful to spend time talking about the terms. “Discernment,” he noted, is a theological term that is used by many Christian churches. He then went through a series of contrasting ideas in order to define what happens in meeting for business and how this compares to the practices of other faith traditions and also how it compares to meeting for worship. He noted that in his opinion, Quakers have made “two major contributions” to “world spirituality or certainly to the Christian church” and these are “what we have discovered in meeting for worship and meeting for business.” These practices are “not quite copied anywhere else,” he explained. He followed his definition with the reading of a quote from an early Quaker, Edward Burrough, who was put in prison for being Quaker and died there in 1663. This citation will be discussed in more detail below since it was also structured through a series of contrasting ideas. The transcript presented here begins at approximately thirteen minutes and fifty seconds into the presentation, when Alex begins to speak. It will be followed by an analysis below.

153 So (.) um (.) I think that (.) uh (.) we often use a lot of um (.) jargon  
154 among Quakers. (.5) So I'm going to actually not assume- I know there's a lot  
155 of experience in the room. I'm just going to say a few very simple words.  
156 And what- first of all is the term corporate discernment? Cause I don't  
157 think those terms are necessarily familiar even if you've been to a lot of  
158 meetings for business. .hh (1) Discernment as far as I know (.) is a kind of a  
159 theological term. (.5) Uh (.) used a lot by other Christian churches (.5) which  
160 means trying to tell what God's saying to you (.4) and it has to do with  
161 sorting out (.6) uh (.) the word- the voice of God (.4) from (.) things like the  
162 voice of the devil (.) in some churches- they might think that's a voice you  
163 might hear (.) or I think for Quakers it's often trying to sort out from what  
164 your own personal ideas are (.6) or what the culture (.) is saying to you.  
165 Cause often we're very influenced by popular fads (.) and (.) things in the  
166 culture and things in politics and stuff like that (.) and to try and hear what

167 God's speaking- (if we) give him a moment. (.5) You know those signs that the  
168 UCC people have on their church that say (.4) ↑God is still speaking? (.8) Well (.)  
169 that's one of the big issues both for Quakers and also for Muslims and Christians  
170 and lots of other groups. (.4) Is do we think that God still speaks right now? (.5)  
171 Most groups do think that God does still speak to some extent now (.) but  
172 sometimes the weight is much more heavily on things like scripture (.) and other  
173 churches (.) and and and communities and traditions (.) put much more emphasis  
174 on present time (.) hearing what God is saying. (1) The other part (.) of that (.5)  
175 corporate discernment is the word corporate (.) and that doesn't have anything to  
176 do with corporations or anything to do- that's a word that really means  
177 community or the whole (.) uh- it's more than just an individual (.) because  
178 certainly also we emphasize individual discernment. (.) We- we emphasize the  
179 ability to hear (.) God in our own personal hearts. But Quakers have traditionally  
180 said (.) that (.) even though individual discernment is very important in terms of  
181 things like (.) knowing what you're led to do (.) knowing when you should speak  
182 in meeting. (.) Things like that. We believe that there's a certain- a- a kind of  
183 almost (.) you might call it (1.5) preeminence of the group's ability to try and  
184 discover God's voice. (1.3) Now (.8) I'm not like early Quakers (.) who kind of I  
185 think to some extent (.) felt that their (.) their approach to God was maybe a little  
186 bit (.5) better or stronger than a lot of other groups. (We're not-) I don't really  
187 take that (to) for that. (.4) But I do think that Quakers (.) have made two (.) major  
188 contributions (.) to (.) you might call it world spirituality or (.) uh certainly to the  
189 Christian church. (.5) And those two great contributions is that (.) what  
190 we have discovered in meeting for worship and meeting for business in  
191 my personal experience (.) is not quite copied anywhere else. (.5) There are  
192 other places where people experience (.) spontaneous (.) uh (.) unprogrammed  
193 worship (.) uh (.) for instance a charismatic service (.5) is a (.) is often (.) done in  
194 a uh (.) a non-programmed way (.) where people spontaneous say (.) and stand up  
195 and say what God tells them (.4) to say at the moment. (.) There's certainly  
196 worship (.) like uh (.) Zen uh: sitting within a group (.5) which some people in this  
197 meeting do (.) which is based on silence (.5) but um (.) there's something very  
198 very unique in my experience with the way in which we experience (.) these two  
199 great settings. (.) One is a way of worshiping and the other is a way of what we  
200 call church government (.) or making decisions in the church community. (1) I  
201 use the word church to mean (1) the group (.5) the c- the faith community. (.8)  
202 And (.) in meeting for worship (.) we basically gather (.7) hoping that God will (.)  
203 speak to us (.) or will touch us (.) together (.) as a community (.) but we don't  
204 have to agree (.) on what God's saying. (.) We we try to see (.) what God's giving  
205 us (1) through other people or in the silence (.) and we- we get a sense of being  
206 covered (.) by the holy spirit in the silence. (1) But (.) you know people's w- may  
207 end up with very different conclusions (.) as to what happened (.) in meeting for  
208 worship. (.5) In meeting for business on the other hand (.) we are (.5) trying to  
209 actually put that into words together. (.) To the point where at the end of the day  
210 (.5) we agree. Sometimes it's not as (.) s- solid or or permanent an agreement as  
211 we have in these books over here (.) but certainly at the end of a meeting for  
212 business (.) we have certain things that we've actually said (.) as- as a- as

213 Glen Meeting (.6) we agre- (.) agree on these particular things. We we (.) have a  
 214 feeling (.) that we have actually (1.2) in a provisional way anyway (.) this is what  
 215 God seems to be saying (.) to the twenty of us that are in the room to- together (.)  
 216 representing Glen Meeting on this particular (.) uh (.) first day (.) uh (.) at around  
 217 uh (.) what (.) twelve thirty one o'clock (.) in the afternoon. (1) Um (.5) so (.5)  
 218 that process of being able to hear together (.) what God (.) is saying to us as a faith  
 219 community at a given (.) time (.) at a given moment in history (.6) um (.) depends  
 220 on certain- what you might call spiritual disciplines (.5) within the (.) life of the  
 221 meeting. [*cut identifying information*<sup>40</sup> ..... ]  
 222 ..... ]  
 223 ..... ]  
 224 (1) Um (.) for those of you that like to read the Bible (.) I do (.) a lot of Friends  
 225 don't. (.5) Um (.) you will know that (.) the New Testament (.) a large portion of it  
 226 (.) is (.) the letters to ↑Paul (.7) and a large proportion of what Paul writes about  
 227 (.) is conflict within the (.) the (.) faith community. (.5) In other words (.) a lot of  
 228 these little churches that sprung up all over the (.) the Middle East (.) were  
 229 wracked by dissension. (.) Uh (.) were wracked by lack of unity (.) and he often  
 230 wrote to these churches (.) trying to encourage people to find a way (.) to be more  
 231 (.) united (.) in their (.) life together (.) in their (.) experience of what God was  
 232 saying to them. So even back then this was a big issue (.) and it certainly (.) as as  
 233 I'm sure most of you know who've ever been to a Yearly Meeting ↑session (.) or  
 234 even Monthly Meetings (.) know that it can be a big deal today (.) whether or not  
 235 (.) this process ends us with a sense of really deep (.) communion and unity and a  
 236 sense that we're all together (.5) uh: (.) or whether ((slight laugh)) we're really  
 237 sort of (.) at logger heads with each other (.5) and there's no guarantee that this  
 238 Quaker process that we come up with (.) will lead us to a place of deep unity (.) or  
 239 will lead us really kind of (.) at each other's throats so to speak. (.5) Um (1) so (.)  
 240 um (1) I just want to say (.) two or three quick words about (.) what that hints at  
 241 (.) um (.) obviously the ability of the clerk (.) to do a good job of being a servant  
 242 (.) of the group is very very very important. (.7) Um: (.) the clerk is just trying to  
 243 sort of articulate (.6) and guide this process (.) in a very very thoughtful way. (.6)  
 244 But also what happens with everybody else in the room is terribly important (.)  
 245 and part of that is wordless. (.5) You know how people (.) sometimes come in as  
 246 as [name] said this morning and (.) and try to pray for meeting for worship  
 247 beforehand. And often the- the (.) what happens in meeting for worship is deeply  
 248 affected by people who never say anything. (.5) By the prayer they're doing in  
 249 the- in (.) wordlessly during meeting for worship. (.) The same is true for meeting  
 250 for business (.6) and certain people (.) may never speak (.) during the hour (.) but  
 251 be praying for (.) people to speak in the right spirit (.) and for the clerk (.) and for  
 252 the process to go. Particularly if there's difficult issues that the Monthly Meeting  
 253 or the Yearly Meeting is dealing with. (1) But also what people say out loud is  
 254 terribly important. (.) And it has a lot to do with (.) the way in which people (.)  
 255 present their ideas. (.5) Um (.) it's very very important for people to kind of (.)  
 256 speak in a spirit that doesn't sort of (.8) in a sense prevent (.5) create closure (.)  
 257 like it k- doesn't kind of say like (.) this is the only right way and anybody who

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<sup>40</sup> I have cut information here that could be used to identify the meeting.

258 disagrees with this is (.) really out of it (.) and isn't a good Quaker (.) and all that  
 259 kind of thing. (.5) So I'm going to read you one passage and then my five minutes  
 260 is about up. This is from a guy named Edward Burrough (.) who was a first  
 261 generation Quaker (.5) who died in prison (.) um (.) back in the e- (.) mid-sixteen  
 262 hundreds. (.5) Uh (.) one of the greatest of the early Quaker ministers. ((reading))  
 263 Being orderly (.5) come together (.) not to spend time (.) with needless (.)  
 264 unnecessary or fruitless discourses. ((aside)) I've been known to do that  
 265 myself sometimes. (.6) ((laughter)) ((continues reading)) But to proceed in the  
 266 wisdom of God (.) not in the way of the world (.) as a worldly assembly of men (.)  
 267 by hot contest (.) by seeking to out speak (.) and over-reach one another in  
 268 discourse (.5) as if it were controversy between party and party (.7) of men (.5) or  
 269 two sides violently striving for dominion (.6) not deciding affairs by the greater  
 270 ↑vote. ((aside)) So he's saying this is something different than just majority rule  
 271 (.8) ((continues reading)) but (.) in the wisdom (.) love (.) and fellowship of God.  
 272 (.6) In gravity (.) patience (.) meekness (.6) in unity and concord (.5) submitting  
 273 one to another (.6) in loneliness of h- (.) ((aside)) I'm sorry ((continues reading))  
 274 lowliness (.) of heart (.5) and in the holy spirit of truth and righteousness. (1) All  
 275 things to be carried on (.4) by hearing and determining every matter coming  
 276 before you (.4) in love (.4) coolness (.4) gentleness (.4) and dear (.4) unity. ((stops  
 277 reading)) (1) [*cut identifying information*<sup>41</sup>.....  
 278 .....  
 279 .....] And (1.2) to me the most important thing in that (.) is that sort of  
 280 spirit (.) of meekness (.) and humbleness (.) that needs to pervade (1) and under  
 281 kind of gird (.5) each of the statements that are people are making on the subject  
 282 before the (.5) the uh (.) meeting for business uh time. (.5) Really makes a  
 283 difference to how people then receive it (.) and how people feel they can build on  
 284 it (.) as you're kind of (.) kind of working step by step towards hopefully reaching  
 285 unity.

The following table represents the contrasts highlighted by Alex in his defining of “corporate discernment.”

Table 11: Contrasting Concepts in Alex’s Presentation (Continues on the next page)

<b>Concept 1</b>	<b>Concept 2</b>
“voice of God”	“voice of the devil” (not Quakers)
“voice of God”	“your own personal ideas” or “what culture is saying to you”
“present time hearing what God is saying”	“scripture”
“corporate”	“corporations”

<sup>41</sup> I have cut information here that could be used to identify the meeting.

“community or the whole”	“just the individual”
“group’s ability to try and discover God’s voice”	“individual discernment” or “the ability to hear God in our own personal hearts”
“Alex”	“early Quakers”
“meeting for worship”	“spontaneous unprogrammed worship in charismatic service”
“meeting for worship”	“Zen sitting in a group” (“silence”)
“a way of worshipping”	“making decisions in the church community”
“not agreeing on what God’s saying” in meeting for worship; “a sense of being ‘covered’ by the holy spirit in the silence”	“trying to actually put into words together” the message in meeting for business
agreement reached in meeting for business	“solid or permanent agreement in books”
“process ends with a sense of really deep communion and unity and a sense that we’re all together”	“we’re really sort of at loggerheads with each other”
“a place of deep unity”	“at each other’s throats”
“people who never say anything” but pray “for people to speak in the right spirit and for the clerk and for the process to go”	“what people say out loud”
“speak in a spirit that does not create closure”	saying “this is the only right way”

The first agonistic relationship here aligns Friends to a certain extent with other Christian churches, but also differentiates them. Alex observes that discernment is employed by other churches, but often in those churches, group effort is focused on trying to hear the “voice of God” versus the “voice of the devil.” However, in the case of Quakers, he claims that the voice being distinguished from the “voice of God” in making

decisions is actually Friends' own voices or ideas from popular culture. A sense of Quakers as unique and different from other Christian traditions, as well as from the wider culture, is thus introduced here. This distinction is emphasized by another contrast with other religious traditions in the next pairing, which contrasts Friends practices from those that rely to a greater extent on the teachings recorded in scripture. Friends are described as drawing on "present time hearing what God is saying."

The next several pairs then seek to define what is meant by "corporate." This understanding of "corporate" is not in the sense of a "corporation," but rather in the sense of the "group." While Alex notes that individual discernment is important, for example in the case of deciding whether or not to speak in meeting for worship, in meeting for business, priority is given to group discernment. Alex then distinguishes himself from early Quakers, who might have thought that their practices were better than others; he claims not to be asserting any sort of superiority, but to be calling attention to the distinctiveness of Quaker practice. He observes that while in "charismatic service" there may be spontaneity, and in Zen meditation there may be silence, no other tradition is quite like the spontaneity and silence of unprogrammed meeting for worship among Friends. Meeting for worship is different from meeting for business, however, in part because of what each leads to. In meeting for worship, the group can have "a sense of being 'covered'" and "different conclusions as to what happened." However, in meeting for business, the group must agree on and write down "what God seems to be saying to the twenty of us that are in the room together." This conclusion is not as "permanent," though, as what is written in books; it is more "provisional," but it is still different from that which results from meeting for worship. Alex then discusses how meeting for

business can go wrong, leading people to be “at loggerheads,” but it can also lead to “really deep communion.”

The final two pairings contrasted above describe how people act in meeting for business and also give advice as to how one should act. These contrasts are based on the recurring dynamic of silence and speaking that has come up previously in this analysis. Alex explains the way in which those “who never say anything” can guide the process in meeting for business by praying that others will “speak in the right spirit” and by praying for the clerk. On the other hand, other participants make important contributions through what they say. These people who speak should be advised, though, not to say things that could imply only one correct path, but rather to make their statements in a way that “does not create closure.”

The agonistic form shaping the above definition of “corporate discernment” given by Alex reflects the form of the citation he reads at the end of his presentation. This quotation is from an early Quaker, who is writing with advice to other Friends about how meeting for business should be conducted. Again we see a series of contrastive notions:

Table 12: Contrasting Concepts in Reading from Edward Burrough

<b>Concept 1</b>	<b>Concept 2</b>
“proceed in the wisdom of God”	“spend time with needless, unnecessary, fruitless discourses”
“in the wisdom, love, and fellowship of God”	“in the way of the world, as a worldly assembly of men”
“in gravity, patience, meekness, in unity and concord, submitting one to another in lowliness of heart, and in the holy spirit of truth and righteousness”	“by hot contest, by seeking to out speak and over-reach one another in discourse, as if it were controversy between party and party of men or two sides violently striving for dominion”
“all things to be carried on by hearing and determining every matter coming before you, in love, coolness, gentleness, and dear unity”	“deciding affairs by greater vote”



The writing of this early Friend emphasizes Alex’s final two pairings listed above, which involve instructions for acting in meeting for business. Also like Alex, Mr. Burrough distinguishes between listening to and following God versus listening to and following “the way of the world.” The tension between community and individual is highlighted by the instruction to submit to others versus seeking to dominate them. Also, “hearing and determining” in “unity” through Quaker process is contrasted with the forms of decision making of other groups, who decide by majority vote. These contrasting ideas complement Alex’s definition. Alex ends by stating again the importance of speaking with “meekness and humbleness” so as not to stop communication, but to enable others to “build on” what one has said.<sup>42</sup>

The next speaker, Bonnie, who has already spoken a great deal at the beginning of the education hour about Quaker history, briefly shares her ideas about “corporate discernment” for approximately two minutes.

293 [*cut identifying information*<sup>43</sup>] I- I think I just want to say two things. One (2) is  
 294 that (2) it can’t really be (.5) over-stated (.) how radical hh (1) our business  
 295 process is. (1) It just is (.5) so different from (.) anything (.) else (1) and while  
 296 there are disciplines of it that can be used in other settings (.) and I’ve done that  
 297 (1.1) um (.5) the faith of it (.7) which undergirds the meeting for business in a  
 298 monthly meeting (.) is really central to it. (.5) We believe (.) that if we stand  
 299 somewhere with truth more will be given (.) and we stand somewhere and then  
 300 more is given (.5) so we constantly have this (.) both affirming where you are and  
 301 looking (.) ahead. (.5) The other thing (.) that (.) um (1.7) faith that our (1.2)  
 302 business practice is (.) based on is (.) not only (.) that (1.9) faith that (.) we can be  
 303 guided as individuals (.) that an inner guide (.) will speak to us (.) and help us (.)  
 304 lead our lives in a faithful way (2) but we also believe (.5) that (.7) God will speak  
 305 to us (.5) as a corporate body (1.3) and that (.5) truth (.9) that is given to the  
 306 corporate body (.5) may be different (.9) from the individual (.) truth (.) and that  
 307 (.) isn’t a conflict. (.5) Those two things can exist together. (1) Sense of the

<sup>42</sup> This description of a certain quality of speaking suggests the idea of a “way of speaking” (Hymes, 1989) in meeting for business that will be explored in more detail in the fourth section of this chapter.

<sup>43</sup> I have cut information here that could be used to identify the meeting.

308 meeting (.) in (.) a (.5) meeting for business (.8) is not (.) unanimity (.) and it  
 309 doesn't mean that everybody absolutely agrees with the action being taken. (1) It  
 310 means that (.) you know I've been part of senses of the meeting where I have  
 311 wished (.4) that the whole body could have gone further (1.8) but (1.7) it wasn't a  
 312 sense of the meeting (.4) and so if I love my meeting hh and I see ok (1.5) this: (.)  
 313 is (.) where (1.6) it is (.) it is a sense of the meeting (.) and I agree with it. I  
 314 myself can do something (.) different.

The dimensions that structure Bonnie's talk reflect those explicated in Alex's presentation.

Table 13: Contrasting Concepts in Bonnie's Presentation

<b>Concept 1</b>	<b>Concept 2</b>
"our business process"	"anything else"
"affirming where you are"	"looking ahead"
"faith that we can be guided as individuals"	"belief that God will speak to us as a corporate body"
"truth given to the corporate body"	"individual truth"
"sense of the meeting"	"unanimity"

Bonnie reiterates the notion that the Quaker contribution to religious practice lies in the business process, which is unlike "anything else." She notes that it involves a practice of both stating where the group is, or as Alex noted, recording an agreement, as well as recognizing that this truth may change as revelation continues. Two of her contrasting ideas mark the individual listening versus communal listening distinction emphasized above. She also, however, explains the way in which the "sense of the meeting" incorporates the understanding of truth of all of the individuals present, even those who disagree. Bonnie recounts times when she has disagreed with a "sense of the meeting" and chosen to act differently in her individual affairs, but she recognized that it

was the “sense of the meeting” of the community, and she agreed to it in the context of communal action. We see here a continued stressing of the differences between and yet complementary co-occurrence of individual and communal discernment.

### **5.2.5 Discussion**

In his analysis of the dynamic of “self” versus “society” in communication on the *Donahue* show, Carbaugh (1988/1989) stresses that it is not that either of the terms in an agonistic relationship excludes the other, but rather that they are both constantly at play together. The use of one idea calls forth the other so that at every moment “discourse is structured through two classes of symbols and a system of contrastive meanings” (Carbaugh, 1988/1989, p. 197). In her analysis of the practices of a Quaker nominating committee, Wick (1998) also discusses the co-occurrence of ideas about “spiritual process” and “secular process” that were part of networks of contrastive meanings that helped to define each other. Thus, the argument here is not that “individual discernment” negates “corporate discernment” or that any of the poles of the dimensions listed below overrides its counterpart, but that both are always working together in the ordering of Quaker understandings of what is going on and how people are relating. This interanimation is particularly noticeable in the presentation of Bonnie, who asserts that in meeting for business, the group both affirms where it is presently *and* looks to the future. She also stresses that a “sense of the meeting” includes both the agreement and disagreement that is present in a meeting for business, so that a “sense of the meeting” is not “unanimity,” but a dynamic tension upon which current action is built, while an openness to change through continuing revelation is still maintained.

Based on the above charts, we can identify certain key dimensions in terms of which Friends conceptualize their experience in “corporate discernment.” These include:

Table 14: Central Dimensions of “Corporate Discernment”

<b>Central Dimensions</b>
Hearing God (or the spirit) versus hearing one’s own personal ideas or cultural ideas
Continuing revelation versus scripture
Group abilities and practices versus individual abilities and practices
Unprogrammed silent meeting for worship versus other spontaneous/silent practices
Communion and unity versus disagreement
What happens through silence versus what happens through speaking
Speaking in a way that does not create closure, or being “open,” versus speaking in a way that does create closure, or not being “open”
Sense of the meeting versus unanimity
Quaker meeting for business versus any other decision-making process
Submitting and being “lowly” versus dominating
Deciding through unity versus voting

Carbaugh (1988/1989) identifies three universal aspects of the linguistic form of *deep agony*. These include:

1. The functional aspects: deep agony functions culturally through models of personhood and sociation, which mediate (and momentarily resolve) the social tensions of autonomy and union.
2. The structural aspects: deep agony is structured linguistically through the juxtaposition of two clusters of symbols, which creates an interrelated semantic system of contrastive meanings.
3. The cultural aspects: the models of personhood and sociation, the valuing and elaboration of autonomy and union, the juxtaposed symbols and their meanings, vary from scene to scene, culture to culture, time to time. (Carbaugh, 1988/1989, p. 206)

The structural aspect of this form as it is active in clusters of symbols in communication among Friends is laid out in the above table. The key contrastive dimensions described there create a structure of meanings that is both drawn on and changed in the processes of relating in meeting interactions. In terms of the functional aspect, the dimensions described above highlight a way of momentarily resolving in meeting for business the tension between the needs and desires of the individual versus the group. It seems that this shift in favor of group abilities and practices facilitates and strengthens a living and acting together as a community. However, this shift does not negate the importance of individual discernment, which also plays a role in the process. The difference between individual and corporate discernment serves, as well, as a way to understand the different practices of meeting for worship and meeting for business. Finally, the distinctiveness of these dimensions to the Quaker community embodies a cultural system of valuing certain ways of acting and relating that is unlike any other.

### **5.2.6 Conclusion**

Drawing on a seemingly traditional Quaker form of speaking or writing, as the above citation of one of the first Quaker martyrs would seem to indicate, the Friends who gave this presentation provided the listeners with not only a definition of “corporate discernment,” but with a whole system of agonistic relationships through which to conceive it. As Carbaugh (1988/1989) observes, this definition both functions to resolve tensions between autonomy and unity and structures a system of meanings. It provides a culturally unique way of understanding how people interact and communicate in a

particular context. In their presentation, these two Friends drew on key cultural meanings, giving their audience more than a definition, but also a model for acting. We will now turn to an examination of actual meetings for business at Glen Meeting in order to see how this described process plays out in this particular context.

### **5.3 Part III Enactments of Glen Meeting for Business**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

The first part of this chapter has been a detailed overview of writings about “corporate discernment” by Quaker authors and researchers of Quaker process, as well as a presentation on “corporate discernment” by members of Glen Meeting. This discussion has provided some background knowledge of local speech practices and highlighted key features that one can expect to observe when attending a meeting for business among Friends. However, as has often been observed regarding ideals of linguistic behavior, differences frequently exist between how participants’ describe their behavior and what is actually observed in recordings of naturally-occurring speech (Blom and Gumperz, 1972). In this section, recordings of speech during two meetings for business will be analyzed in terms of the act sequence of the events in order to examine what actually occurs when participants engage in “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting.” The research questions posed here are: *What is the communication form identified as “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” among Quakers?; What role, if any, does “silence” play in this process?; and What cultural meanings are associated with “corporate discernment” and “silence”?* The framework

for analysis was described in Chapter 2, with a focus on elements of the SPEAKING model and the concept of premises from CuDA.

### **5.3.2 Methodology for Data Collection**

The primary data analyzed here are audio recordings of two meetings for business that occurred during two consecutive months at Glen Meeting. Other data that have been considered in this analysis are interviews with thirteen members of the meeting, detailed field notes on fifty-eight meetings for worship and eleven other meetings for business (including a Quarterly Meeting for Business) collected over approximately a year and a half of observation, a recording of a group discussion organized by the meeting about “corporate discernment,” and numerous other casual conversations with meeting members and attenders. Each of the recorded meetings was approximately three hours long. Permission to record was requested and granted during a prior meeting for business and informed consent forms were signed at the beginning of each meeting, so that participants were aware they were being recorded. For each recording, the audio recorder was placed on the clerk’s table starting at the beginning of the meeting.

### **5.3.3 Methodology for Data Analysis**

Following recording, the two meetings for business were transcribed in full. I then reviewed the transcript of the first meeting for business, identifying speech events that composed the act sequence and writing these down in detail. This act sequence was used as a reference to review the transcript of the second meeting for business in order to determine if the events identified were again present. Reference was also made to notes

of previous meetings for business that had been attended, as well as subsequent ones.<sup>44</sup>  
This act sequence will be included below for reference.

In reviewing the act sequence of the meeting for business, I realized that decisions made during the meeting differed in terms of subject type and importance, and I subsequently formulated a list of three types of decisions made during the Quaker meetings for business that I observed. Next, I used the act sequence to identify times when “silences” occurred during the meetings for business. As discussed above with reference to literature on Quaker process, there did seem to be different types of “silences” during the meeting for business. I used the formulation of the act sequence to identify when these occur and classify them into two main categories, the second of which is subdivided into two further subcategories. Examples of these types of “silences” from the transcripts are included as part of this analysis. Drawing on the ethnography of communication and CuDA, cultural premises were formulated regarding the role of “silence” in “corporate discernment” and meanings associated with it.

#### **5.3.4 Analysis**

The first research question considered in this chapter is *What is the communication form identified as “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” among Quakers?* In order to answer this question and formulate a descriptive account in accordance with the practices of ethnography of communication and CuDA, I began by outlining the act sequence of the meetings for business that I had attended. The meetings

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<sup>44</sup> After about a year of my attending meeting for worship and meeting for business at Glen Meeting, a new clerk was nominated. The two year nomination of the prior clerk had ended. These recordings were made during the clerkship of the first clerk. There were differences between the styles of the two clerks, which were useful for me to observe, and these observations inform this analysis.



for business at Glen Meeting take place in the meeting room on Sunday afternoon on the second Sunday of the month at approximately noon, an hour after meeting for worship ends. The clerk and recording clerk are frequently the first to enter the room for meeting for business, as they are the ones that arrange and prepare the room for the meeting. While others spend time in the fellowship room, enjoying snacks and conversation during “fellowship hour,” the clerks move a wooden table into the middle of the meeting room and arrange their computers and notes on the table. They also bring in an easel that has the agenda of the meeting for business printed or written in large type on it and that was placed outside of the meeting room during meeting for worship for people to see on their way in to worship and on their way out to “fellowship hour.” During the two weeks immediately preceding meeting for business, announcements are made about meeting for business during the announcement time following meeting for worship, calling for agenda items to be sent to the clerk and recording clerk. The clerk of the meeting and the recording clerk are also in touch with the clerks of various committees by e-mail,<sup>45</sup> and the clerk and recording clerk frequently meet during the week preceding the meeting for business to organize the agenda.

After arranging the table, easel, computers, and papers, the clerks sit side by side in silence behind the clerk’s table facing the right side of the room while other participants enter. There is often a bell rung and an announcement made in the fellowship room about five or ten minutes prior to the meeting for business, announcing that it will be taking place soon and that people should begin to gather in the meeting room. During the meetings that I recorded, I stood outside the meeting room door distributing consent

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<sup>45</sup> I believe that clerks of committees and the clerk and recording clerk of the meeting also regularly meet as a group.

forms and asking for signatures as people entered the meeting room. Although a recent statistical report of the “recorder” of the meeting, as cited above, indicated that average attendance at meeting for worship in 2009 was seventy-eight,<sup>46</sup> many do not stay for meeting for business, so average attendance at meeting for business in 2009 was twenty-six. A couple of times I counted around fifteen in attendance, but the two meetings that I recorded were larger than usual, as indicated by the clerk’s comment in the first transcript that he had not made enough copies of the agenda for the thirty-one people present. This increased attendance was likely due to the fact that the yearly budget was being approved during this first recorded meeting.

Some Friends also told me in interviews and casual conversations that they did not attend meeting for business because it was often very long, and they had other obligations on Sunday. There were a couple of Friends who said that meeting for business did not interest them because they were not as interested in being involved in the business side of meeting, but rather they connected more to the meeting through worship, committee meetings, and other activities. Other Friends told me that they always attended meeting for business and that the Quaker decision-making process was a very distinctive and important aspect of the life of the community. Several observed that the process of decision making worked very well at Glen Meeting, and perhaps better than at other meetings they had belonged to.

Due to the complexity of clerking and the time and commitment required to clerk well, I was told that it was sometimes difficult to find someone who was willing to accept the nomination to be clerk of the meeting or recording clerk. When I recorded these

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<sup>46</sup> As indicated previously, this includes approximately ten to fifteen people who meet in a worship group “under the care of the meeting,” but at a different location.

meetings, the clerk and recording clerk had been clerking together for almost two years; the term for clerks at this meeting is two years. This pair seemed to work very well together and to rely a great deal on each other during the meeting for business, pausing several times during each meeting to consult about ideas or the direction of the meeting, as can be noted in the act sequence below. In my interview with him, the clerk noted that he was very grateful to the recording clerk for all of her work before, during, and after the meeting, when the final minutes are revised for “acceptance” at the subsequent meeting.<sup>47</sup>

Following is an outline of the act sequence that I formulated based on the recorded meetings for business and observations of other meetings for business at Glen Meeting. I have divided the act sequence into three main parts: the Opening, Agenda, and Closing. The Opening and Closing are significantly shorter than the Agenda portion of the meeting. The Opening may range between twenty and twenty-five minutes, while the Closing is closer to five to ten minutes. Meetings for business at Glen Meeting last on average two and a half to three hours, leaving around two to two and a half hours for the Agenda section.

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<sup>47</sup> For more detail on how clerks and other committee members are nominated, see Wick’s (1998) discussion of the decision-making process of a nominating committee at an unprogrammed Quaker meeting. The practice at Glen Meeting is to alternate each term between a male and a female clerk.

Table 15: Act Sequence of Meeting for Business (Continues on the next page)

<b>Parts</b>	<b>Events</b>
I. Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. People enter the meeting room and sit on the right side, facing the clerk's table in the center</li> <li>b. After most people enter, there is silence for approximately one to three minutes</li> <li>c. The clerk reads a quote</li> <li>d. There is silence for approximately two minutes</li> <li>e. The clerk often poses a "query" for "worship sharing"</li> <li>f. "Worship sharing" takes place; there is silence with people standing to speak for approximately ten to twenty minutes</li> <li>g. The clerk welcomes everyone and introduces the agenda (copies of the agenda are distributed)</li> </ul>
II. Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The clerk introduces agenda items and calls on others to come forward and present reports; infrequently he will recommend a time limit on a particular agenda item and ask someone to keep track of the time</li> <li>b. Participants come forward and present reports or other agenda items (extensive work is done in committees preparing these reports)</li> <li>c. If the speaker has a handout, pauses occur while the handout is distributed and read over before the speaker begins to talk (this can range from a couple of seconds to three minutes or more; there is murmuring and the rustling of papers while this occurs)</li> <li>d. The clerk asks for questions or comments once the presenter has finished; he will sometimes say specifically which part of the report or what topic the comments or questions should be focused on</li> <li>e. The clerk recognizes others to speak who raise their hands</li> <li>f. Participants stand when they are called on and speak; they make comments or suggestions, normally facing the clerk, but sometimes facing each other</li> <li>g. The clerk pauses sometimes before calling on people, setting the pace</li> <li>h. The clerk responds to some questions and calls on others to respond, if he is not sure of the answer</li> <li>i. The clerk periodically summarizes what others say or "where we are" in the meeting</li> <li>j. The clerk sometimes thanks people for their comments</li> <li>k. Participants may say "that Friend speaks my mind" when they agree with something that has been said</li> <li>l. The clerk may recommend that the group sit in silence if a "sense of the meeting" is not emerging (for approximately one and a half to two minutes); following silence he summarizes "where we are"</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>m. The clerk will remind people to wait to be called on by observing that discussion should “come through the clerk’s table”; he will also call the meeting “back together” if side discussions begin to take place</li> <li>n. The clerk attempts to move the discussion along even when he feels that a question has only “partially” been answered; he may also suggest that a decision cannot be made here, that the item should be “held over” to the next meeting or that it should go back to the committee to be considered further</li> <li>o. The clerk attempts to steer comments back to a specific topic, if other topics get introduced</li> <li>p. When he feels a decision is emerging, the clerk attempts to formulate the “sense of the meeting” into a minute; there are various terms for various actions such as “accepting,” “receiving,” or “approving” a proposal or report</li> <li>q. The clerk will pause during and after formulating this “sense of the meeting”</li> <li>r. Others may say “approve” or they may raise their hands to be recognized to speak</li> <li>s. If participants say they approve the minute that the clerk has formulated, he will ask the recording clerk to record it</li> <li>t. The clerk and recording clerk periodically “huddle” or whisper together to decide what to do next and for the clerk to see if the recording clerk is ready to read back a minute to the group; some minutes they write together; sometimes the clerk will ask for silence during this time</li> <li>u. The recording clerk reads back minutes</li> <li>v. After minutes have been read back, the clerk asks if they can be approved</li> <li>w. Others say “approve” or raise their hands to be recognized to speak</li> <li>x. Once a recorded minute has been approved, the clerk introduces the next agenda item</li> </ul>
III. Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The clerk asks the recording clerk to read a minute that approves all of the minutes as a whole</li> <li>b. The recording clerk reads the minute that approves all the minutes</li> <li>c. The clerk asks if this minute can be approved</li> <li>d. Other participants say “approve”</li> <li>e. Closing worship occurs; several minutes of silence with people rising to speak, making affirmations or raising concerns</li> </ul>

In reviewing the transcripts of the two recorded meetings and notes on other meetings in light of this act sequence, I noted that there are in fact several different types

of decisions made during the meeting for business, which are different in character, involve different events, and require different amounts of time. I identified three types of decisions made including:

1. Decisions about agenda items
2. Decisions about whether the process is being performed correctly
3. Decisions about the wording or rewording of minutes formulated by the clerk or written by the recording clerk

The first type of decision is what is understood to be the goal of the meeting of a deliberative body. This type of decision often required the most amount of time of any of the types of decisions and would most likely be considered the most important type of decision made. The nature of the decisions ranged from “receiving” a report presented by a committee about its activities over the past year to deciding whether or not the meeting should endorse a statement about immigration proposed by a local town. The second type of decision I identified involved whether or not the process of making decisions in the meeting for business was being performed correctly. I observed several instances in which participants made comments about having referenced *Faith and Practice* or the meeting handbook in preparing for the meeting in order to know how to correctly proceed. Sometimes Friends who had less experience would ask others who had been involved for a longer time in Quaker decision making for advice on how to proceed during the meeting. There was a careful distinction made regarding what type of action could be taken on each agenda item, for example whether the item was to be “accepted” or “approved”; the clerk was corrected if he said the wrong word or wrote the action incorrectly on the posted agenda. Reference was also frequently made, when deciding how to proceed, to how things had been done in the past. This second type of

decision emphasizes the importance of process that was mentioned in the literature discussed earlier. In coming to decisions of this nature, the clerk would often suggest a course of action and ask if others were comfortable with this.

The third type of decision identified here is about the wording or rewording of a minute formulated by the clerk or written by the recording clerk. In this type of decision, we see the distinction made by Sheeran (1996) when he notes that participants in the meeting for business must ask themselves two questions: If the minute formulated by the clerk captures the “sense of the meeting”? *and* If they are comfortable with the decision embodied in this “sense of the meeting”? While the second question represents the first type of decision already described above, the first question represents this third type of decision. This difference is interesting because it is possible for a person to recognize that the minute does in fact capture the “sense of the meeting,” while still disagreeing with that “sense of the meeting.” It was noted in the literature that the “sense of the meeting” can include the discomfort of some, who may still choose to approve the decision. Thus, the “sense of the meeting” captures where the whole group is at that time. In the revised chapter on “corporate discernment” in the *Faith and Practice of NEYM* cited above, the distinction between these types of decisions is emphasized. A member of the Yearly Meeting is quoted as saying, “The sense of the meeting is not unanimity—everyone present need not agree with the action being taken. I have had the experience of concurring in a sense of meeting with which I disagreed, knowing it was the sense of the meeting” (Hoffman, 1988, as cited in NEYM Faith & Practice Revision Committee, 2009, p. 8). Relying on “sense of the meeting” appears to highlight a subtle aspect of the possibility of creating and sustaining community in decision making among

Friends that might be overlooked when voting is relied on. While voting separates a group into those who agree and those who disagree, “sense of the meeting” seeks to include everyone, even those who disagree, recognizing that their disagreement is an element of the “sense of the meeting” and their presence is an important and valued part of the community. The third type of decision here allows for the rewording of a minute so that all may be represented in a decision. As I will now discuss, “silence” played a role in the making of all three of these types of decisions.

The second question posed in this analysis is *What role, if any, does “silence” play in the process of “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting”?* In order to answer this question, I first posed the question, *When does “silence” occur during “corporate discernment”?* which I was able to answer through an analysis of the transcripts and act sequence. I then used this to classify the “silences” into different types. The primary distinction that I found was between:

1. The “silence” that frames the event and occurs in the Opening and Closing parts
2. The “silence” that occurs during the process of decision making when Agenda items are being considered

The distinction between these two types of “silence” is made based on time of occurrence in the act sequence. There also seems to be a difference in length of the types of “silences,” with “silences” during the Opening and Closing generally being longer, around two to three minutes, and “silences” during the Agenda generally being shorter and having more variation in length, between around four seconds to a minute and a half. I also found in my analysis of these “silences” differences in what I will call the “quality” of the “silence,” or the amount of background noise and movement that occurred during the “silence” and the probability that it would be interrupted by someone speaking above



a whisper. Responses to interruptions of “silence” indicated a preference against interruption in general. However, as will be described in more detail here, there did seem to be different types of “silences,” the interruption of which was considered more or less acceptable. I have focused on this idea of interruption as a means of describing verbally a non-verbal action, but inevitably any attempt to capture a non-verbal process in words will be imperfect. However, it seems insightful to think about what is considered an interruption and what a preference against interruption indicates about the valuing of the action accomplished in “silence.”

In a quote cited earlier in Smith’s (2002) glossary, it was observed that the “silence” during Quaker meeting for worship would not necessarily be considered absolute silence in that it is not the “silence of death,” but the “quiet of listeners” (p. 28). Smith (2002) observes that what constitutes an interruption of this “silence” would not be the sound of nature, children, or traffic. However, as I observed during meeting for worship when I heard a child instructed not to enter the room yet because someone was speaking, there are certain events that could be understood as an interruption. I did observe times when children talked during the “silence” of meeting for worship or an adult spoke when others were taking part in a moment of “silence” at the close of a group discussion. In both cases, the breach of a norm was recognized when the child was told not to talk and the adult apologized and stopped talking. I also frequently observed people asked to be quiet in the hallway leading to the meeting room, either immediately before or after meeting for worship or immediately before meeting for business. Talking in this hallway while others were engaged in “silence” in the meeting room was understood as an interruption. The gurgling or crying of a baby, on the other hand, was

not considered an interruption, but was welcomed, as I observed when Friends spoke after a meeting in which this occurred about how nice it was to have a baby in meeting for worship.

The first type of “silence” identified above that occurred at the beginning and end of the meeting for business seemed to be similar in quality to the “silence” that occurs in meeting for worship. It was often longer in duration than other “silences.” This “silence” not only made up the initial period of worship, lasting a couple of minutes, but it surrounded moments when participants would engage in the sharing of a message during “worship sharing” after the clerk had read a quote and posed a question. These “silences” between speaking were frequently between forty seconds and a minute. It is important to note that the sharing of a message or a “spoken ministry” would not be considered an interruption of the “silence,” as both “silence” and speaking make up the practice of “worship sharing,” just as they also constitute worship during meeting for worship. After the initial period of “settling,” this type of “silence” was very unlikely to be interrupted by side-conversations, whispering, movement, or the rustling of papers.

The second type of “silence” identified above occurs during the middle portion of the meeting for business when agenda items are considered and was generally much shorter than the first type of “silence.” It also seemed more likely to be interrupted. Literature cited above discussed the way in which the first type of “silence” that occurs at the beginning and end of the meeting for business can be understood to establish a worshipful atmosphere and remind participants that the process they are engaging in is based in worship. In this way, the first type of “silence” could be seen as setting the scene for the second type of “silence.” The second type of “silence” sets the pace of the

meeting and seems to play an active role in the process of considering agenda items.

This second type of “silence” can be further divided based on likelihood of interruption into two subcategories represented below along with examples of each:

- a. Silence that may be interrupted:
  - i. Time given to read over handouts
  - ii. Silence after a person has spoken and before the clerk calls on another person to speak
  - iii. Silence after the clerk describes “where we are”
  - iv. Silence when the clerk and recording clerk consult
  - v. Silence following a question from the clerk
  - vi. Silence when the clerk pauses during and after formulating the “sense of the meeting” into a minute and before asking for approval of the minute
- b. Silence that is less likely to be interrupted:
  - i. Silence at the clerk’s request, often because a “sense of the meeting” has not yet emerged

In order to demonstrate the different qualities and characteristics of the “silences” described above and their place and role in the decision-making process, examples will be given of several of them below. These examples will be in the form of selected excerpts from my transcripts and will seek to clarify the distinctions outlined here.

#### **5.3.4.1 Examples of the First Type of Silence**

The first type of “silence” that has been categorized here is the longer “silence” that occurs at the beginning and end of meeting for business. Samples 1 and 2 below are excerpts from the second recorded meeting for business. Sample 1 is an example of the

Opening section of meeting for business, and Sample 2 is an example of the Closing part of that same meeting. I have marked “silences” in bold.

Sample 1: Opening

1 **(02:59.2)**  
2 **Clerk:** As membership in the meeting (.) is membership in a community (1.6) the  
3 test of membership (.) is compatibility (.) with the meeting community. (1.9)  
4 Members join (.) because they desire to fit into the pattern of behavior peculiar to  
5 the meeting (.) and (.) find themselves (.) able to do so. (1.3) .hh The test of  
6 membership (.) is not a particular kind of religious experience (.) nor acceptance  
7 (.) of any religious belie- any particular religious social or economic creed. (2.2)  
8 Sincere religious experience and right religious belief are both important (1.5) but  
9 they develop in the course of participation in the activities of the meeting. (3)  
10 Anyone who can become so integrated with a meeting (.) that he helps the whole  
11 (1.3) and the whole helps him (1.4) is qualified to become a member.  
12 **(01:53.8)**  
13 **Adam:** I find that definition to be (.) very supportive (.) of my understanding of  
14 membership (3.1) and this seeing us as a community of seekers (1.9) which  
15 together is helpful (.) to each of us.  
16 **(00:24.4)**  
17 **C:** I now invite all us- all friends here to (.) ((noise of computer starting)) join in  
18 (.) a (.) continuation of this worship and worship sharing with a query (.) as  
19 follows. (1.3) Based on (.) your experience and your observations. (1.1) What  
20 does it mean to be a member of Glen Meeting (2.7).hh What distinction do you see  
21 between being an attender (1.8) and being a member?  
22 **(00:37.4)**  
23 **Beth:** I- I have many questions about this (2.8) but I- I- I just want to say right now  
24 that (6.7) what you- what you read (1.4) and what (2) friend Adam said (.) eases my  
25 heart about this a lot.

The quality of the “silences” are difficult to portray in this transcript except in terms of their length. The first lengthy “silence” that occurs at the beginning of the excerpt in line 1 is the longest and contains a lot of background noise at first. Although people are entering and sitting quietly, there is still the noise of movement as people sit and arrange their belongings and papers. After approximately twenty-four seconds, the clerk whispers to another member to close the door. There is also some other whispering between other participants. At one point, someone coughs. This sound of movement and

whispering gradually decreases beginning around the one minute mark. As this happens, the sound of breathing and of people clearing their throats becomes more noticeable. The distant sound of cars on the road and of birds chirping can be heard around the two minute mark. There is a noise that sounds like the rumbling of someone's stomach about ten seconds before the clerk reads his opening quote, indicating the degree of stillness that has been achieved by this point. This transition from rustling papers, movement, and whispering to the sound of breathing, birds chirping, and a stomach rumbling represents the "settling into worship" of the meeting. The next two longer "silences," at lines 12 and 16, are shorter than the first, but they are not as marked by noises of movement or whispering. There is some noise of movement and a person coughs during the "silence" in line 12, but the predominate noise that can be detected is breathing and the sound of birds and cars in the distance. In this example of "worship sharing," someone shares a message earlier than is typical in the Opening section. Typically the clerk poses a query before verbal sharing begins. However, this particular Opening was distinctive in that there were many messages shared with less "silence" than usual between speaking. This distinction was mentioned in conversations after the meeting by participants who were surprised by the quantity and frequency of sharing during this particular meeting for business.<sup>48</sup> "Worship sharing" continued for approximately seventeen minutes following the end of this excerpt.

The fourth and final extended "silence" in this excerpt occurs in line 22. During this "silence," one hears the sound of the recording clerk typing. During meeting for business, the recording clerk often types in order to keep track of everything that is being said. This, however, does not seem to be viewed as an interruption, and, in this case,

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<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion of this specific "worship sharing."

there were many messages shared and a long period of “worship sharing” that did not seem affected by the typing. However, the sound of typing during this fourth “silence” marks it as different from the “silence” that occurs in meeting for worship when there is never anyone writing down what is being said. Thus, the first three “silences” are more representative of the “silence” that occurs in meeting for worship.

The above excerpt has provided an example of “silence” at the beginning of a meeting for business that is similar in many ways to the “silence” in meeting for worship and is also typically longer than “silences” at other times during the meeting. Although there is movement and whispering during the initial period of “settling,” this type of “silence” is much less likely to be interrupted. Another characteristic of the speaking in this excerpt that is distinctive is the many pauses of a second or more within each individual’s turn. This pausing could be described as an element of a distinctive “way of speaking” (Hymes, 1989) during “corporate discernment” that will be described in more detail in the fourth part of this chapter. The next example will be of “silence” at the close of meeting for business.

#### Sample 2: Closing

1784 **Clerk:** Thank you. (1.3) What we’re going to do is- is have a final minute which  
1785 approves our minutes as a whole (.) and (.) following that (.) we’re going to go  
1786 into a closing worship and invite (.) in that closing worship anybody who wishes  
1787 to raise a (.) uh (.) affirmation (.) or a concern to do so.

1788 (2.8)

1789 **Recording Clerk:** We approve the minutes as read by the recording clerk (.)  
1790 trusting the clerk and recording clerk to develop a summary for the worship  
1791 sharing on membership (.) item number two above.

1792 (3.5)

1793 **C:** Can we approve this minute?=  
1794 **Several participants:** =Approve

1795 (.)

1796 **C:** Ok (.) I just want to (.) as clerk (2.6) just kind of thank us all for- for holding  
1797 together well in a long meeting with a lot of different pieces in it maintaining a

1798 really nice spirit of attention and openness and (.) receptivity (1.5) uh (.) I think  
1799 we're a very good meeting for business (.) and it's a real (1.7) pleasure to (.) be a  
1801 part of it. (1) Thank you.  
1802 **(01:27.5)**

The beginning of this excerpt gives an example of the process of approving a minute. This particular example of “silence” at the end of the meeting in line 1802 is relatively short and there are no affirmations or concerns shared; the period of sharing affirmations or concerns at the end of meetings for business is generally longer than it was in this meeting for business, due most likely to the length of this specific meeting and the fact that participants were getting tired. In terms of quality, the “silence” that ends this meeting for business is very still. In the beginning, the recording clerk types very briefly, and there is someone who coughs and the noise of someone yawning, but there is very little movement or the rustling of papers. The ending of the “silence” is marked by increased movement and the beginning of whispering, which is followed within a couple of seconds by people speaking out loud. The noise of movement and talking gradually builds after this until the audio recorder is turned off. As in the second and third examples of “silence” in Sample 1 (lines 12 and 16), we see here an example of a type of “silence” that is longer and very unlikely to be interrupted; it also marks the end of the speech event and the transition into another event.

#### **5.3.4.2 Examples of the Second Type of Silence**

The next two samples will give examples of “silences” that represent the second category of “silence” that I have identified. The “silences” here are distinguished based primarily on their location in the act sequence. They are also generally shorter than the first type of “silence,” and they are distinctive in terms of the observation that they are

more likely to be interrupted. Although this second type of “silence” is more likely overall to be interrupted than the first type, I have further subdivided “silences” within this category into those “silences” that are more or less likely to be interrupted. The first sample demonstrates the characteristics and role of the first subcategory (those which are more likely to be interrupted). Several examples were given of this type of “silence” in the list above, and this sample is an example of number vi, or the “silence” that occurs during and after a clerk attempts to formulate the “sense of the meeting” into a minute. It is taken from the transcript of the first recorded meeting for business.

Sample 3: Formulating a minute

1777 **Clerk:** Ok I'd like to test (.) see where we are right now. (.) We hadn't expected to  
 1778 come to a (1.5) final discernment. (.) um (.) I think we've heard (1.4) a number of  
 1779 concerns that (.) reflect (.) uh (.) serious doubts and for which additional  
 1780 information will need to be sought. (1) Uh we've also heard some positive  
 1781 statements (.) that this might be a good thing to consider. (1) I would like to see  
 1782 if we (2.5) can agree that (.) the (1.5) to move forward from here asking the- the  
 1783 uh (.) meetinghouse committee to (.) take what (1.1) what we've learned (.) and  
 1784 move (.) forward in the questioning (.) of whether we should do this or not. (1)  
 1785 I- (.) I did not hear (2.4) a clear (1.8) uh (.) sense of the meeting that we should  
 1786 definitely not move forward. (4.2) But that- that we sh- we should cautiously  
 1787 move forward and digest this information. (1) Is that. (1.4) Craig ((calls on Craig  
 1788 to speak))

1789 (.)

1790 **Craig:** Um (.) given that they're asking to begin I believe in September (1) um it  
 1791 strikes me that it's (1.2) probably unlikely that we'll be able to resolve it  
 1792 (.)

1793 **C:** hmm=

1794 **Craig:** that quickly. (.5) um (.) especially given the concerns (1) um (1) I have a  
 1795 number of- (.)

1796 **C:** Mm-hmm

[ ]

1797 **Craig:** additional questions myself (.) which I'm not going to bother to ask but (.)  
 1798 um that's (.) that was my sense when I- when I heard all ( )

[ ]

1799 **C:**

Is- is that shared?

1800 (.)

1801 **Several Participants:** Yes (.) mm-hmm (.) yes

[ ]



1802 **C:** Ok so the word unlikely that we'll be  
1803 able to come to a (.) positive decision (1.3) by this September (.) will be in the (.)  
1804 minute (.) but that we're (.) we're not slamming the door. (2.8) Ok (.) Doug ((calls  
1805 on Doug to speak))  
1806 (1.7)  
1807 **Doug:** I'd like to speak for the meetinghouse committee that uh (.) we are um (.)  
1808 small in number and (.) and (.) um (1.3) I guess I'll speak for myself (.) have (.)  
1809 little energy or time to (.) devote to this. (.) It it seems like there's an enormous  
1810 number of questions that need to be resolved (1.3) or answered. (1) So if there  
1811 are friends that (.) we (.) we might minute (.) that if there are friends that (.5) feel  
1812 a calling to pursue this further (.) they might approach the meetinghouse  
1813 committee (1.2) to see how they might assist. (3.8) In in terms of (.) in terms of  
1814 evaluating (.) the (.) the (.) answering these various questions that have come up  
1815 (.5) logistics questions and code (.) and (.) that sort of thing.  
1816 (3.6)  
1817 **C:** Ed ((calls on Ed to speak))  
1818 (1.9)  
1819 **Ed:** Given what Doug said (.) I (.) would be for just minuting that we do not see  
1820 our way clear to pursue this matter further at this time.  
1821 (.5)  
1822 **Fran:** (you're right)  
1823 **Greg:** yeah  
1824 **Ed:** And we have lots of other things to (.) deal with  
1825 (6.5)  
1826 **C:** Ok we'll test that one. (2.6) If we minute that we at this time do not see clear to  
1827 (.) move forward on this.  
1828 (.7)  
1829 **Louis:** yes  
1830 (.)  
1831 **Several Participants:** approve (.) approve (.) approve

This excerpt provides an example of the emergence of a “sense of the meeting” and the attempt of the clerk to formulate this sense into a minute in lines 1781-1787 and lines 1802-1804. Several participants, in particular Craig and Doug, raise concerns regarding the proposed minutes, indicating a different “sense of the meeting” that is then formulated by another participant, Ed, and finally “tested” by the clerk in lines 1826-1827. An example of the second type of “silence” can be found as the clerk “tests” proposed minutes. The clerk pauses frequently in forming the minutes; specifically, a pause of approximately four seconds occurs in line 1786, when he seems to be testing if

participants do not want to move forward with the proposal at all. That he is understood to be allowing “silence” and testing the minute in this line is evidenced by the fact that Craig responds to the “silence” by raising his hand in order to continue discussion, rather than indicate approval. Again this happens in line 1825, following Ed’s statement that the meeting should minute that they will not “pursue this matter.” The clerk does not call on anyone or respond to Ed’s comment for approximately six and a half seconds, giving participants time to absorb what has been proposed and time for the spirit to move in the group. He then proceeds to formulate the minute, and it is approved.

I would like to comment briefly on the relative shortness of this second type of “silence” with comparison to the first type of “silence” that occurs in the Opening and Closing sections. Although these periods of “silence” are shorter, it is important to note that pauses of as little as half a second have been observed by researchers in conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics to play a significant role in the interpretation of communication between conversants. For example, in their article on interethnic communication, Scollon and Scollon (1990) observe that in communication between Athabaskans and speakers of mainstream American or Canadian English, pausing practices that differ by around half a second can make it very difficult for speakers to interact in a manner that is considered satisfactory by both parties. Frequent interruption and misunderstanding seem to result from different cultural conventions of pausing.<sup>49</sup> I assert here, therefore, that this frequent use of “silence,” even relatively short pauses, plays an important role in the way in which the decision-making process unfolds. Rather than being that which happens when no one is speaking, “silence” here seems to be

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<sup>49</sup> Also, see Carbaugh 2005 for an analysis of cultural meanings of silence and pausing among Native Americans.

drawn on as the basis for action. It is probably useful to think of the two types of “silences” identified in meeting for business as on a continuum, with the first type setting the stage for decisions made using the second type, and both serving as the foundation for the overall speech event.

The final sample is an example of the second subcategory of the second category of “silence” that I noted in the recordings of the meeting for business.

Sample 4: Clerk calls for “silence”

792 **(23.6)** ((clerks whisper together))

793 **C:** I think we'll just take a (.) we- we we've added a lot of good (.5) information  
794 and sharing and it's it's at many levels and (.) I'd like to just take a few minutes to  
795 (.5) sit in silence with it (.) and then we will resume.

796 **(01:33.6)**

797 **C:** Thank you. (3.2) Ok (.) this is still (2.6) a discussion that starts with the (.)  
798 line in (.) uh property (.) operations for (.) capital improvement fund (.) transfer  
799 (.5) but as (.5) we've discovered it (.) expands out into (.) uh (.5) some broader  
800 issues (1) and uh (.) I think it's (.) good that we keep focusing on this. (1) Yes  
801 (.) Andrew ((calls on Andrew to speak))

This final excerpt from the data occurs after a participant has just made a more general observation regarding the budget and the values and philosophies that it represents. The budget discussion has been going on for about forty minutes at this point and will continue for another approximately fifty-five minutes following this excerpt. There is no immediate decision about the budget or any item in it following this “silence.” The excerpt gives an example of several elements in the act sequence besides the clerk calling for a moment of “silence,” including the consulting of the clerks, the summarizing of where the meeting is by the clerk, and the attempt by the clerk to focus comments on a specific topic. The “silence” in line 796 that is in response to the clerk’s request is longer than the “silences” in Sample 3 and similar in length to the “silences” in the first two excerpts discussed above. It is not interrupted by speaking, although there is some

whispering at one point, but this does not last more than a couple of seconds. During the “silence,” one can hear people clearing their throats and coughing along with the recording clerk typing. Immediately before the clerk ends the “silence” by saying “thank you,” there is a rustling of papers, probably by the clerk. The “silence” that occurs in this excerpt has been classified as an example of the second type of “silence” described in this analysis, despite its length, due to the time at which it occurs in the act sequence. However, it seems less appropriate to interrupt this “silence” than the “silences” in Sample 3, which I have consequently classified as a different subcategory. Since this “silence” is called for following a more general statement about the financial philosophy represented by the budget, which was made in response to several differing opinions that had been shared regarding what should be done about a particular budget line, it could be understood as an attempt by the clerk to refocus the meeting by allowing participants time to consider the different viewpoints that had been expressed. As there did not seem to be a “sense of the meeting” emerging at this time, the clerk could have been attempting to give some space for this to take place. This lengthier example of the second type of “silence” was more likely to occur when an agenda item was considered more important, and there were many differing views shared about it.

### **5.3.5 Cultural Premises of Communication in “Corporate Discernment”**

The first research question posed in this section regarding the nature of the communication form identified as “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” was addressed through a descriptive account and an outline of the act sequence of meeting for business. The second question examining the role of “silence” in

“corporate discernment” was addressed in reference to where “silence” occurs in the act sequence and through a description of the various types of “silences” that take place during the speech event. I would now like to draw on these two analyses in order to summarize key findings into cultural premises (Carbaugh, 2007) that will speak to the cultural meanings that are associated with both “corporate discernment” and the “silence” active during it.

In terms of the act sequence of the meetings for business recorded and observed at Glen Meeting, premises can be formulated regarding values associated with worship, the role of the clerk, the importance of process, and the making of decisions through a “sense of the meeting.” Premises include:

- During meeting for business, it is important to draw on and remain in a state of worship.

- During meeting for business, it is valued for the clerk to direct discussion and pace the meeting by calling on people to speak, calling for silence when a sense of the meeting is unclear, and formulating an emerging sense of the meeting into a minute for participants to approve of or respond to.

- During meeting for business, the making of decisions in accordance with Quaker process as represented in *Faith and Practice* is deeply valued, more so than the actual coming to a decision.

- During meeting for business, it is valued for all decisions to be made through a sense of the meeting, even if one disagrees with that sense, and for the minute that is recorded to represent that sense, including the disagreement that may have been a part of it.

Cultural meanings associated with “corporate discernment” and “silence” can also be drawn from the categories of “silence” identified in the meeting for business.

Premises the analyst can formulate include:

-Silence is valued during meeting for business as allowing space for the spirit to move at the beginning and end of the meeting, at times when the clerk formulates a sense of the meeting into a minute, as a way of pacing the meeting, and at times when the sense of the meeting is unclear.

-Speaking during worship sharing is valued, but other speaking as an interruption of silence is not valued, although it is sometimes more or less acceptable.

-The type of silence that occurs at the beginning and end of meeting for business, that is often longer and that is rarely interrupted is very valued and forms a basis for the shorter silences that occur during the middle section of the meeting for business.

These cultural premises draw together central ideas regarding the form of “corporate discernment” and the role of “silence” in it, highlighting the meanings that are active for those who engage in this process and the ways of communicating, acting, and relating that are valued.

### **5.3.6 Conclusion**

Making decisions through a process based in “silence” may at first seem contradictory and impossible from the perspective of one used to relying on debating or voting in deliberative bodies. This analysis of the Quaker practice of “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” seeks to provide a descriptive account

of the form of this speech event and to clarify cultural meanings associated with the process. An overview of the act sequence of the meeting for business, along with a description of the “silence” that takes place during it and a presentation of key excerpts from recordings, explicate the Quaker belief that the most important acts that take place during meeting for business occur during the “silence.” This belief can be understood in part through Philipsen’s (1989) “communal function” of communication, or the understanding of certain communication events as working to draw a group of people together with a sense of shared identity, as discussed in Chapter 1. Friends believe that the creation of community is a central goal of meeting for business. This community can and has been created through the enacting of a process that provides time and space for the spirit to move and speak through all present, guiding and uniting them. However, the spirit must be carefully listened for together. In this way “silence” is not an individual, solitary action, but a communal event that draws the group together and moves them forward. I will now provide a more in-depth analysis of the complex series of acts that lead to the reaching of a decision; this next section will further narrow the focus of this chapter, which began with a discussion at the level of the wider Quaker community, through an investigation of one specific decision.

## **5.4 Part IV Detailed Analysis of a Specific Decision**

### **5.4.1 Introduction**

The above example of the formulating of a “sense of the meeting” into a “minute” in Sample 3 is a particularly rich instance of the various elements that come into play

when decisions are made during “corporate discernment.” It seems useful to look in more detail at this instance in order to analyze the cultural assumptions about relating and communicating that play themselves out here on a smaller scale. This more fine-grained analysis of this particular instance will draw on concepts from the Coordinated Management of Meaning (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009; Cronen and Chetro-Szivos, 2002; Cronen, 2001; Cronen and Lang 1994; Pearce and Cronen, 1980), presented in Chapter 1, and will complement the analysis in the previous section. In particular, it will cite the concepts of *stories*, understood as models of and for acting, *logical force* in the forms of prefigurative force, practical force, reflexive needs, and reflexive effects, and *position*, in terms of drawing on and enacting certain participant roles. These concepts will give more of an insider’s perspective of what constraints and affordances come into play as participants formulate their utterances in an attempt to reach an agreement while taking part in the speech event of meeting for business. The presence of a distinctive Quaker “way of speaking” will also be proposed (Hymes, 1989).

#### **5.4.2 Methodology for Data Collection**

The primary data for this analysis are the recordings of two meetings for business at Glen Meeting. Specifically, this analysis focuses on the speech event of formulating a “sense of the meeting” and a “minute” about a particular agenda item that was introduced and decided upon around two hours and forty-five minutes into the first recorded meeting for business. This item involved a proposed collaboration with an outside group. It was initially introduced as an attempt to receive feedback on a course of action and not as something that would be formally decided upon during this meeting. The clerk initially



asked if the discussion could be limited to around fifteen minutes. However, the discussion extended beyond this point, and, as can be seen in the excerpt, a decision was reached not to pursue the suggested collaboration. This excerpt was introduced in the previous section as an example of a type of “silence” that occurs in meeting for business. Here it will be examined as a turn-by-turn sequence in order to study how the process of “corporate discernment” or “finding the sense of the meeting” actually plays out in the making of a specific decision.

### **5.4.3 Methodology for Data Analysis**

The analysis in this section builds on the analysis in the previous section, which began with a descriptive account of the system in which the event takes place, including who participated in the event and what acts made up the speech event. This account was based in the ethnography of communication and CuDA. In this section, I draw on CMM to analyze the descriptive account in terms of the concepts of stories, logical forces, and positioning that were active in the event. In particular, I look at the connections between stories, the way in which the logical forces created by one utterance shaped the formulation of a subsequent utterance or the reformulation of the understanding of a previous utterance, and how the taking of specific positions invited others participants to assume different positions. Focusing on these analytical concepts brought to light certain characteristics of the interactions between participants as it unfolded that revealed a specific Quaker “way of speaking” active in the event (Hymes, 1989). Also informative was the way in which relationships between the participants were being reinforced through this process.

#### 5.4.4 Analysis

The system examined here is that of the participants participating in the meeting for business, which was described in more detail earlier in this chapter. The larger system includes the wider meeting community, but those participants are less relevant here, except in that the decision made will be the one adopted by the meeting as a whole. The episode to be analyzed is the sample from the previous section, which is presented again below for reference.

#### Sample 3: Formulating a minute

1777 **Clerk:** Ok I'd like to test (.) see where we are right now. (.) We hadn't expected to  
1778 come to a (1.5) final discernment. (.) um (.) I think we've heard (1.4) a number of  
1779 concerns that (.) reflect (.) uh (.) serious doubts and for which additional  
1780 information will need to be sought. (1) Uh we've also heard some positive  
1781 statements (.) that this might be a good thing to consider. (1) I would like to see  
1782 if we (2.5) can agree that (.) the (1.5) to move forward from here asking the- the  
1783 uh (.) meetinghouse committee to (.) take what (1.1) what we've learned (.) and  
1784 move (.) forward in the questioning (.) of whether we should do this or not. (1)  
1785 I- (.) I did not hear (2.4) a clear (1.8) uh (.) sense of the meeting that we should  
1786 definitely not move forward. (4.2) But that- that we sh- we should cautiously  
1787 move forward and digest this information. (1) Is that. (1.4) Craig ((calls on Craig  
1788 to speak))

1789 (.)

1790 **Craig:** Um (.) given that they're asking to begin I believe in September (1) um it  
1791 strikes me that it's (1.2) probably unlikely that we'll be able to resolve it

1792 (.)

1793 **C:** hmm=

1794 **Craig:** that quickly. (.5) um (.) especially given the concerns (1) um (1) I have a  
1795 number of- (.)

1796 **C:** Mm-hmm

[ ]

1797 **Craig:** additional questions myself (.) which I'm not going to bother to ask but (.)  
1798 um that's (.) that was my sense when I- when I heard all ( )

[ ]

1799 **C:** Is- is that shared?

1800 (.)

1801 **Several Participants:** Yes (.) mm-hmm (.) yes

[ ]

1802 **C:** Ok so the word unlikely that we'll be

1803 able to come to a (.) positive decision (1.3) by this September (.) will be in the (.)  
1804 minute (.) but that we're (.) we're not slamming the door. (2.8) Ok (.) Doug ((calls  
1805 on Doug to speak))  
1806 (1.7)  
1807 **Doug:** I'd like to speak for the meetinghouse committee that uh (.) we are um (.)  
1808 small in number and (.) and (.) um (1.3) I guess I'll speak for myself (.) have (.)  
1809 little energy or time to (.) devote to this. (.) It it seems like there's an enormous  
1810 number of questions that need to be resolved (1.3) or answered. (1) So if there  
1811 are friends that (.) we (.) we might minute (.) that if there are friends that (.5) feel  
1812 a calling to pursue this further (.) they might approach the meetinghouse  
1813 committee (1.2) to see how they might assist. (3.8) In in terms of (.) in terms of  
1814 evaluating (.) the (.) the (.) answering these various questions that have come up  
1815 (.5) logistics questions and code (.) and (.) that sort of thing.  
1816 (3.6)  
1817 **C:** Ed ((calls on Ed to speak))  
1818 (1.9)  
1819 **Ed:** Given what Doug said (.) I (.) would be for just minuting that we do not see  
1820 our way clear to pursue this matter further at this time.  
1821 (.5)  
1822 **Fran:** (you're right)  
1823 **Greg:** yeah  
1824 **Ed:** And we have lots of other things to (.) deal with  
1825 (6.5)  
1826 **C:** Ok we'll test that one. (2.6) If we minute that we at this time do not see clear to  
1827 (.) move forward on this.  
1828 (.7)  
1829 **Louisa:** yes  
1830 (.)  
1831 **Several Participants:** approve (.) approve (.) approve

#### 5.4.4.1 Stories

As mentioned above, CMM understands participants' learning or knowledge as organized in certain *stories* that provide patterns of and for behavior (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009). These stories have a temporal dynamic and provide models for acting in specific episodes. According to practitioners of CMM, stories are hierarchically arranged, so that certain stories, such as stories about a person's identity, contain elements of "grammar" (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009) that are necessary for the

coherence of lower-level stories, such as that person's role in a particular situation. For example, if a person has a story about what "good" fathers do, this story will contain elements, such as models of appropriate action, that will inform his story about his role in a specific episode interacting with his son. The story of his own relationship with his son thus depends in part on his higher-level story of what "good" fathers do, which is often connected to wider, shared cultural stories, learned over time through interaction with others. Higher-level stories are often formulated as cultural propositions in CuDA. Examining cultural meaning in terms of the concept of stories highlights the way in which meaning is drawn on and recreated in concrete communicative action.

The concept of story can be useful here when we examine the specific utterances of participants in the speech event of formulating a "minute." Higher-level stories about what it means to be a clerk, a participant in a meeting for business, or a member of this meeting community inform particular stories active in this episode, for example how a "sense of the meeting" should be formulated and who should formulate it. The following table lists stories that I identified as likely active in this episode for various participants based on their utterances during the speech event. These stories are arranged hierarchically, with the lower-level stories that are specific to this episode being listed first.

Table 16: Participant Stories Active in Episode (Continues on the next page)

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Possible Stories or Models for Acting</b>
<i>Clerk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Story about the “sense of the meeting” that is emerging (“move forward” but question)</li> <li>-Story about what a clerk should do as a “sense of the meeting” begins to emerge</li> <li>-Story about the roles of other participants in the meeting for business and how the clerk should respond to their messages</li> <li>-Story about the clerk’s role in pacing the meeting</li> <li>-Story about the role of “silence” and “worship” in meeting for business</li> </ul>
<i>Craig</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Story about when the outside group wants to begin (September)</li> <li>-Story about his own concerns and additional questions regarding the project</li> <li>-Story about the “sense of the meeting” that is emerging</li> <li>-Story about how participants should respond when the clerk tries to formulate a “sense of the meeting”</li> <li>-Story about the amount of time it takes to make a decision in a Quaker community</li> </ul>
<i>Doug</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Story about the number of questions that need to be answered</li> <li>-Story about the process that is required to find answers to these questions</li> <li>-Story about his role as a member of the meetinghouse committee, as well as about the duties of those who are not members</li> <li>-Story about the size of the meetinghouse committee</li> <li>-Story about the “sense of the meeting” that is emerging</li> <li>-Story about how participants should respond when the clerk tries to formulate a “sense of the meeting”</li> </ul>

<i>Ed</i>	-Story about Doug’s concerns -Story about the “sense of the meeting” that is emerging -Story about how participants should respond when the clerk tries to formulate a “sense of the meeting”
<i>Fran, Greg, Louisa, Other participants</i>	-Story about the “sense of the meeting” that is emerging -Story about how participants should respond when the clerk tries to formulate a “sense of the meeting”

Evidence that these stories are active here and provide models for acting can be found in the specific utterances of the participants. In lines 1781-1787, the clerk attempts to formulate a “sense of the meeting” that the group should “move forward” while still “questioning” the proposal, and in subsequent lines, Craig and Doug respond to this formulated sense with further discussion. In lines 1819-1820, Ed formulates a different “sense of the meeting.” These statements indicate a certain understanding of who should formulate the “sense of the meeting,” namely both the clerk and participants, and how the “sense” should be responded to, either with further discussion or approval. In line 1799, the clerk recognizes Craig’s comment as a legitimate response to his formulation by asking if others share Craig’s view. In line 1819, Ed recognizes the appropriateness of Doug’s utterance, or story about the duties of participants who are not members of the meetinghouse committee, by citing it as the basis for the “sense of the meeting” he is formulating. In this way, there is direct evidence that particular models for acting are present.

We also see in this table that higher-level stories, such as about how participants should respond when a clerk formulates a “sense of the meeting” are shared by

participants in this episode, and they form the basis for coordinating action. There are certain higher-level stories that are directly cited by some participants' utterances, but not other participants' utterances; although it is probable, based on the acceptance of these utterances by other participants, that these stories are also active for them. An example of this type of higher-level story is the story evidenced in Craig's utterance in lines 1790-1791 and 1794 about the amount of time it takes for the meeting for business to reach a decision. This story that decision making requires a lot of time contains elements of grammar that are necessary for his lower-level story about the "sense of the meeting" that is emerging to make sense. That this higher-level story is shared is revealed in line 1801 when other participants respond in the affirmative to the clerk's question about it. We also see in lines 1786 and 1825 evidence that a higher-level story about the role of "silence" and "worship" in meeting for business is active for the clerk. In line 1786, the clerk pauses for approximately four seconds while formulating the "sense of the meeting," and, in line 1825, he pauses again for approximately six and a half seconds following the formulation of a "sense of the meeting" by Ed. These silences give evidence that a story is active here about how meeting for business should be based in silent worship, which can be enacted through "silence" that allows space for the "spirit" to "move" people and for those who are so "moved" to express their approval or to continue discussion. That no one interrupts these silences, as discussed in the analysis in the previous section, indicates that this higher-level story is shared. The possible organization of stories active in Craig's utterances is represented in the CMM analytical model represented in Appendix B, included as a visual complement to this analysis.

#### 5.4.4.2 Logical Force

As mentioned above, logical force refers to the constraints and affordances created and responded to by participants' stories and utterances in an episode. Analyzing an episode in terms of logical force calls attention to the clusters of connections between participants' utterances and stories that guide action. In the episode analyzed here, each utterance can be understood as simultaneously constrained and enabled by those that surround it. For example, if we look at specific utterances, those of Craig's response in lines 1790-1791, 1794-1795, and 1797-1798, we see that they are shaped by the prefigurative influence, or connections in the situation "as they are prior to the moment of utterance," created by the clerk's attempt to formulate a "minute" (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009).<sup>50</sup> Due to his stories about the episode and about his relationship to others in the meeting for business, as well his stories about the overall community and his larger Quaker cultural stories, as discussed above, Craig has certain avenues open for response, including the one he chooses of making a statement from personal experience that problematizes the clerk's formulation, while not directly referring to what was said or openly "disagreeing" with it.<sup>51</sup> Craig's action can be described as legitimate, in that there are several "acceptable possibilities" (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009) open to him, and he is not obliged to agree or prohibited from disagreeing with the "sense" as formulated by the clerk. From the perspective of CMM, moral operators, such as whether an action is legitimate, obligatory, prohibited, caused, or blocked, are essential distinctions to make in terms of how participants understand the options available to them and, consequently, how they can and do act into a situation. We see here that the formulation of a "sense of

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<sup>50</sup> See Appendix B for a visual representation of this specific part of this episode using the CMM analytical model.

<sup>51</sup> The concept of "disagreeing" in this context will be explored in more detail in the subsequent section.



the meeting” by the clerk is not understood as binding or as forbidding alternative action by participants in the meeting, but, instead, they still have several legitimate options for action available to them. Although as time passes and the “sense” builds among participants, the force *against* expressing a desire for discussion to continue can be understood to increase, in that participants are eventually expected to recognize and support a “sense of the meeting,” even if personally they would act otherwise, it does not seem that at any point it becomes prohibited for a participant to express a desire for the discussion to continue. This openness to alternative possibilities brings together ideas from several premises formulated above, including that one ought to share the messages that he or she receives from the “spirit” while “listening,” that one ought not to limit the time taken for decision making, that the “sense of the meeting” includes everyone, and that truth is constantly unfolding and revelation is continuing. It is, however, also legitimate for the clerk to decide that an expressed concern is not “weighty” enough to block a proposed action, and subsequently move forward with a proposal despite an expressed desire by another participant for discussion to continue. In my observations, however, it was more likely that discussion would continue if a participant expressed a desire for it to continue than that the clerk would decide to move forward with a proposal despite objection. The figure in Appendix C represents the possible legitimate responses to the clerk’s formulation of a “sense of the meeting” based on the CMM analytical model.

Going back to the utterances under consideration, the practical force of Craig’s statements, or the constraints and affordances that result from his expectations for what will happen after he speaks (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009), also shapes what he decides

to say. In this case, based on what he says, we can assume that it is likely that Craig expects discussion to continue and possibly a new “sense of the meeting” to emerge. His reflexive need, or the response necessary for his understanding of the situation to be maintained (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009), involves the clerk recognizing the “disagreement” implicit in his statement and acting upon that by changing his formulation of the “sense of the meeting.” This need seems to be recognized in the reflexive effects of the utterance, or the way in which responses change or develop understandings of a situation (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009), represented by the clerk’s first asking if other’s share Craig’s “sense” in line 1799, and then adding the word “unlikely” to the previously formulated “sense.” Consequently, if we then turn to focus on these next utterances, those of the clerk in lines 1799 and 1802-1804, the prefigurative force that guides these utterances is created by the constraints and affordances resulting from Craig’s utterances, which we have just analyzed. In this way, each speech act in the speech event of the formulation of the minute is molded by the situation created by the utterances that come before it and by the expectations regarding the utterances that will follow it. The meaning of utterances also changes as the speech event unfolds and prior utterances are reinterpreted in light of future utterances. The way in which the meaning of the “sense of the meeting” is unfinished is evident in this constant unfolding of speech acts, as represented by the serpentine interweaving of utterances and stories in the heuristic models included in Appendices B and C. As previously mentioned, Friends recognize this notion of meaning as constantly subject to change during “corporate discernment” in their understanding of “continuing revelation”; any “sense of the meeting” that is formulated into a “minute” and approved in the meeting for business is

always subject to reinterpretation and reformulation in the future as new “truth” is revealed to the “listening” group. In this way, wider stories are enacted in logical forces that shape utterances during meeting for business.

#### **5.4.4.3 Positioning and a Quaker “Way of Speaking”**

Another analytical tool that researchers working in the tradition of CMM frequently draw on is the concept of *position* as it is enacted in a specific episode.<sup>52</sup> As Cronen, Lang, and Lang (2009) write, in Shotter’s (1984) “original formulation, position referred to grammatical positions such as first person, second person, second person plural, third person, etc.” Cronen, Lang, and Lang (2009) explain that there are differences “in responsibility attendant upon taking a first person position and a third person position,” and these differences in obligation will become important in the analysis below in terms of how members of the meeting are positioned with reference to actions that will need to be undertaken if the proposed agenda item is approved. I would also like to note the connection to the concept of altercasting, which Cronen, Lang, and Lang (2009) attribute to McCall and Simmons (1966), as the way in which “the position from which a person speaks invites others to take positions in the system.” This notion of inviting others into certain positions will also be relevant in the analysis below when others are encouraged to approach the meetinghouse committee if the agenda item is approved. The analysis here will build on and go beyond the traditional CMM concept of position, considering positioning in terms of the constitutive force of discourse and the “provision of subject positions” by discursive practice (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 46).

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<sup>52</sup> The concept of position can also be understood as closely connected to Goffman’s (1981) notion of footing and Levinson’s (1988) formulation of a participation framework, which were both drawn on earlier in the analysis of meeting for worship in Chapter 4.

Davies and Harré (1990) explain that “a subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire,” and once a person has adopted a particular position or been placed in it, he or she “inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned” (p. 46). Analyzing this episode in terms of positioning highlights the alignment that is needed in the episode in order for a decision to be reached. The table below breaks down the positions taken by the various participants in the episode on a line by line basis.

Table 17: Positions Taken by Participants in Episode (Continues on the next page)

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Lines</b>	<b>Positions</b>
<i>Clerk</i>	1777-1788	-Positions self as clerk who feels that a “sense of the meeting” is emerging and attempts to formulate it into a “minute,” while incorporating “silence” into this formulation
<i>Craig</i>	1790-1791	-Positions self as a participant who wants to discuss further the “sense of the meeting” that the clerk has formulated
<i>Craig</i>	1794-1795, 1797	-Positions self as a participant with a number of remaining questions regarding the agenda item
<i>Craig</i>	1798	-Positions self as a participant who can formulate a “sense of the meeting”

<i>Clerk</i>	1799, 1802-1805	-Positions self as the clerk attempting to determine if a “sense of the meeting” is “shared” and reformulating the “sense of the meeting” proposed earlier
<i>Doug</i>	1807-1808	-Positions self as member of meetinghouse committee
<i>Doug</i>	1808-1809	-Positions self as speaking for himself
<i>Doug</i>	1809-1815	-Positions self as a participant who can formulate a “sense of the meeting” -Positions other participants as having a role to play should the proposal be approved
<i>Clerk</i>	1816-1817	-Positions self as clerk, pacing the meeting and calling on participants
<i>Ed</i>	1819-1820	-Positions self as aligning with the idea presented by Doug and as a participant who can formulate a “sense of the meeting” into a “minute” -Positions self as an expert
<i>Louisa, Fran, Greg, Other Participants</i>	1801, 1822, 1823, 1829, 1831	-Position selves as participants who can agree with and approve a “sense of the meeting” formulated by the clerk or another participant
<i>Ed</i>	1824	-Positions self as a participant in the meeting for business that has a long agenda

<i>Clerk</i>	1825	-Positions self as clerk, pacing the meeting and maintaining a sense of “worship” and a space for the expression of different ideas and “disagreement” or discussion
<i>Clerk</i>	1826-1827	-Positions self as clerk testing a formulated “sense of the meeting”

As mentioned earlier, written literature on meeting for business advises Friends not to directly respond to previous utterances during “corporate discernment,” but instead to say “that Friend speaks my mind,” when in agreement with someone else. Given this advice, positions that are particularly interesting in terms of this analysis are those that reflect an alignment between participants who support a particular “sense of the meeting” or those who would like to discuss it more, but who do not explicitly state their alignment or “disagreement.” However, the term “disagree” does not seem to accurately describe the complex action taking place when Friends decide to continue discussion because of a different understanding of the “sense of the meeting.” Sanders, Pomerantz, and Stromer-Galley (2010) analyze the multi-faceted practice of what they call “taking issue” with what someone else has said in a group deliberation. These authors explain,

The dictionary meaning of “disagreement” is that two incompatible opinions (or ideas or policies) are being advocated, such that each side has a position that they favor over the other’s position. It seems from our data, however, that people may *not agree* with something being said that they regard as defective in some way, and *take issue with its being said* without necessarily *disagreeing* in the strong sense of being committed to some alternative. . . . Hence, we have replaced the term *Disagreement* with a broader term, *Taking Issue*. In general, when persons take issue with something said, they directly or indirectly expose defects, for example that something the other has said has unwanted implications, is procedurally or substantively inconsistent with the purpose at hand or is counter-

productive, is too narrow or too broad, includes conceptual or factual mistakes, and so forth.

In the research here, my focus is not so much on “disagreement,” but on how Friends indicate that they sense a need for discussion to continue, and this indication is acknowledged and acted upon by the clerk and other participants. Noticing these types of alignments between participants highlights the way in which the formulation of the “sense of the meeting” develops through the various participant turns without agreement being explicitly acknowledged.

Positioning can be understood as a subtle art in a Quaker meeting for business given that there is an emphasis on having the discussion come “through” the clerk’s table and participants are advised not to respond directly to each other’s comments. In lines 1790-1791, Craig positions himself as a participant who would like to further discuss the “sense of the meeting” proposed by the clerk. However, Craig does not state that he “disagrees” with the proposed “sense of the meeting.” In fact, he does not directly refer to what has been said at all. Instead, he uses a first-person position to observe that he has been “struck by” the issue of timing, which would make it difficult for the proposal to be accomplished by September. Much Quaker literature on “corporate discernment” also emphasizes that participants should speak humbly, from their own experience, and not contradict what others have said, but instead share messages that have come to them. Craig accomplishes this in lines 1790-1791 and 1794 with a reference to time. He adds to this by drawing on his own current feeling that he has a number of questions that cannot be answered now. It is important to note that he does not position himself as asking for the support of other participants. Rather, he is speaking from his own experience, and it is the clerk, in line 1799, who actually asks whether this observation is

shared. In this way, Craig subtly indicates “disagreement” (or, more accurately, a desire for the discussion to continue) and the clerk acknowledges this implicit “disagreement” and acts upon it. This instance draws attention to the skill necessary for hearing “disagreement” in a Quaker meeting and acting on it productively in the role of the clerk. It is also evident that wording “disagreement” in a way that neither refers directly to a prior utterance nor attempts to rally support among the listeners also requires a certain degree of skill and practice. Craig seems to accomplish this successfully in this case, in that the clerk and others recognize his contribution as acceptable, and the clerk reformulates the “sense of the meeting” based on it.

Another example of this way of accomplishing “disagreement” in order to continue discussion, evidenced by Craig, is found in Doug’s utterances in lines 1807-1815 in which he describes the help that the meetinghouse committee would need were the proposal to be approved. Doug *seems* to be basing his request on the idea that the proposal will be approved. He first elicits support from certain other members of the meeting, those who belong to the meetinghouse committee, by positioning himself as a member of the meetinghouse committee. As if recognizing that this eliciting of support could be viewed as a violation in this context, he quickly moves away from this alignment and positions himself instead as “speaking for himself,” asking if others who are interested in the proposal would approach the meetinghouse committee to help. Although he may not be directly stating that others should become more involved, he is implying that, should the group decide to approve this proposal, there will need to be others who come forward. In other words, other participants are being more directly drawn into the action that would follow were this proposal approved; they are being



invited into a particular position that carries new responsibilities.<sup>53</sup> Doug's utterances may *seem* to stem from an assumption that the proposal will be passed and may *not* seem to explicitly "disagree" with the proposal. However, the fact that the clerk interprets these utterances as possibly representing "disagreement" is indicated by the approximately three and a half second pause by the clerk following Doug's statement. Through his utterances, Doug indirectly expresses possible "disagreement" by subtly implicating others in the action that would follow from the approval of this proposal, without directly pointing them out as necessarily responsible. This implicating could be viewed as an enactment of positioning that reinforces a sense of group responsibility and community involvement, causing others participating in the meeting who are not on the meetinghouse committee to view the proposal from a new angle—that of being one who must act in a specific way if it is approved. The cited difficulties of the meetinghouse committee and the new positioning of members not on that committee are interpreted as possible "disagreement."

After allowing a pause following Doug's statements, the clerk calls on Ed to speak, and another short silence follows his calling. This silence can be understood as space that is being given by both the clerk and Ed for the "spirit" to "move." In the next line, Ed directly refers to what Doug has said and formulates a "minute" that the proposal *not* be approved. This direct reference to a prior statement, which results in open alignment with another speaker, combined with a direct expression of "disagreement" with the proposal, seems to breach the norms of the way of practicing "disagreement" that has been identified here and enacted by Craig and Doug. However, it is essential to

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<sup>53</sup> It seems important to note, however, that this repositioning is described as stemming from their own individual sense of being "called," rather than from any order from the group. In this way, a sense of individualism is maintained at the same time that group duties are called on.

note that Ed is a longtime member of the meeting with a lot of experience in Quaker decision making. Given his position as an expert, his utterance could be heard as advice for the clerk on how to proceed in this type of situation. His willingness to so directly state a proposed “minute” could possibly be linked to a position of power within the community, as one whose opinion is highly valued. Others indicate that his utterance is acceptable in lines 1822 and 1823 when they say that he is “right.” The clerk demonstrates a recognition that a “sense of the meeting” has been formulated by allowing six and a half seconds to pass before he suggests that the gathered group “test” the “minute.” The clerk’s use of “silence” in this instance also serves to slow down the meeting or reestablish a pace that is amenable to “worship.” It is important to note, however, that although Ed’s statement was direct and it increased the pace of the meeting, he did position himself within it as speaking from his own experience. The response of other participants appears to indicate a valuing of this individual’s experience.

In this way, through drawing on the concept of positioning, it is possible to identify a way of doing “disagreement,” which could be understood as part of a Quaker “way of speaking” or “style” (Hymes, 1989) in meeting for business that relies on a certain subtlety or indirectness in the formulation of “disagreement” and in the alignment with others. In an interview conducted with a longtime member of Glen Meeting, she described a “way of speaking” that she called “Quakerese” and noted that it was not “just words,” but the “tone” of how an utterance is said. She observed that you could hear this “language” very distinctly in the speech of another member who had been raised Quaker, and she identified this way of speaking as being “the language of corporate discernment,”

which is “very neutral” and “de-personalized.” She went on to explain that when using this language you “keep drawing back to a sense of the whole,” as Doug did in his implication of others in the action that would follow if this proposal were approved, and she noted that, as a clerk, employing this language enables you not to “favor” anyone.<sup>54</sup> This Friend gave an example of Quakerese during a hypothetical nominating meeting, when a participant could state in response to the proposed nomination of another member, “that name would not have occurred to me,” but really mean “Heavens, not him!” A common example that has already been discussed would be saying “that Friend speaks my mind” or “I can unite with that,” while meaning “I agree.”

In my interview with a member of another unprogrammed, liberal Quaker meeting who was a “birthright” Quaker—she had been raised in a Quaker family—the idea of a unique Quaker way of speaking was also proposed. This interviewee observed that she believed that “I think you would find probably, as a class, if one looked into it, more Quakers than the average population that can say something, and stop, and not to have to go on to explain it, or to pause, so the other person can cerebrate, and take it in.” She went on to observe that if you recorded four or five Quakers talking versus four or five members of the more general population conversing about the same subject, you would probably find that the Quakers paused more often and were less likely to interrupt

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<sup>54</sup> In further support of this idea that the clerk adopts a specific “way of speaking” in meeting for business, at the start of her term, the clerk that was nominated following the one who took part in these recordings stated that she was going to do her best to always use the third person in referring to herself. She said she would do this in order to emphasize that in the role of clerk a person tries to put aside their own opinions and serve the meeting. Another Friend during an interview told me that “there’s something that happens when you’re clerk that means you repress your own opinions . . . and you simply open yourself to everything that is there.” In other words, you serve the meeting by setting aside your own opinions and focusing on the whole so that you can find the “sense of the meeting,” and this is reflected and created in how you speak.

each other in order to “get their idea in there quickly.”<sup>55</sup> These observations connect the style of pausing and speaking that we see evident on the micro-level in this example of the formulation of a “sense of the meeting” during a meeting for business to a wider communicative practice in the community.

It seems important to emphasize in this discussion of a Quaker way of speaking that the Friend whose talk was described above by another member of Glen Meeting during an interview as a particularly good representative of a unique Quaker style was also a “birthright” rather than a “convinced” Friend, who had been raised speaking Quaker “plain speech” with his family in a relatively small Quaker community. “Plain speech” or “plain language” was described previously in the historical account in Chapter 3. This way of speaking is not common among unprogrammed, liberal Friends, and I did not hear instances of it being spoken by members of Glen Meeting. However, this Friend who was raised speaking it and his wife revealed to me that they both continue to speak it with each other in private, with the man’s sister when they visit her, and with their children, although their children do not respond with “plain speech.” I do have a couple of very short recordings of “plain speech” being spoken from the interview that I conducted with the member of another meeting (who was also a “birthright” Friend). This interviewee’s son was present in her home during the interview, and, although he did not participate in the interview, she did address him several times in “plain speech” during the interview. One occasion occurred when her son was downstairs preparing lunch, and he called upstairs with a question on the telephone through an intercom system. The interviewee’s side of the conversation was recorded as follows: “Whenever

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<sup>55</sup> As further evidence of Quaker “brevity of language,” a Friend who read this cited the traditional Quaker wedding certificate, the wording of which has remained almost the same since the beginning. For further discussion of this document see Comfort (1941).

thee is ready to get close enough to the stove to heat it, I am well ready to eat. I left a half package of crackers on the card table. I was going to say, if thee can find, I think there's one more package in the box. ((son's response here is not audible on the recording)) Alright, thank thee." Immediately after hanging up the phone she told me, "Now I can turn on my Quaker language without batting an eyelash. I use it- English is the only European language that has lost the intimate. I use it with family. I've quit using it with Quakers because that's discriminating. If I say thee and you, I'm saying you're an outsider." The member of Glen Meeting mentioned above who had been raised speaking "plain speech" also noted that, as a child, he had no trouble remembering when not to use it in interactions with other children who were not members of the Quaker community. As he explained, it was "quite unconscious," and "I did not take *thee* and *thy* to school with me."<sup>56</sup> The interviewee from another meeting described how, prior to World War II when the Religious Society of Friends was more of a "closed" society, many Quakers in her community used "plain language." Describing an example of how her family used "plain language," she recounted, "One time I was out in Arizona. My father called up on the phone, and I couldn't- it was a lousy connection. I didn't get his voice. He was pretending he was a current boyfriend. And the second I heard- got his voice, I said, 'how is thee?' I would have no more said 'how are you,' than I would have slapped him in the face." These examples represent the importance of using plain speech historically, as well as the type of relationship indexed by it.

The wife of the member of Glen Meeting who had been raised speaking plain language in his community had not been raised Quaker herself. She had learned about

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<sup>56</sup> These comments about the ease of switching into and out of "plain language" call to mind research on the skill of multilingual individuals in code-switching; for example see the work of Zentella (1997) on bilingual children in New York and "Spanglish."

Quakerism after meeting her husband and getting to know his family and had eventually converted. This member noted that, while her husband's grandparents wore "plain dress" and the entire family used "plain speech" in the community, by the time of her husband's generation, "plain speech" had become "a family thing, like the French *tu*." She observed:

There was a way of communicating that I learned as I was learning plain language. You weren't using *thou*, and there was a grammar to what verb you use too. And learning that *you* is the plural. And then the other part of plain language is using First Day, Second Day, Third Day, you know like that, and month. And so when [husband's name]'s parents would write a letter, they always put Third day- Third month, Second day, or something like this.

She explained that for her in-laws the use of "plain language" came "naturally." She also described how her beginning to address her husband as "thee" when they were dating was very significant for him because it "set up an intimacy" between them. However, the couple observed that, unlike early Friends who addressed everyone with "thee," as described in Bauman's (1983) historical account, children of their generation only used "plain language" within the community. In addition to the use of numbers for the days of the week and months<sup>57</sup> and the use of "thee," titles, such as mister, miss, mrs., professor or doctor were never used.<sup>58</sup> There was also a "grammar" used when speaking to an elderly Friend; in this case, you would always use both first and last name, without a title, in order to be "formal."<sup>59</sup> The wife also connected this to Friends' social testimony, but

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<sup>57</sup> Friends objected to the use of the names of the days of the week and the months because it was felt that they originated mostly from non-Christian sources and war.

<sup>58</sup> It also should be noted that women were not referred to using Mrs. followed by their husband's first and last name. According to a Friend at Glen Meeting, women were understood to change their names only in accordance with secular custom, as a woman was considered by Friends to be "her own spiritual being."

<sup>59</sup> The importance of address terms in these instances calls to mind Sequeira's (1993) study of the meanings of personal address in an American church community. Person-referencing practices in meeting for business, including the calling on of speakers by their first names by the clerk, as well as the injunction to avoid directly referencing what someone else has said, might play a role in the Quaker "style" discussed

she explained that it had become “archaic.” The use of plain speech by this couple with each other and their children now is “about an intimate relationship” within their family. This explanation by this couple reveals again the familial association of plain speech as it is used currently by a small number of unprogrammed, liberal Quakers.

Although the use of “plain speech” is very uncommon in the community now, the former existence of this “way of speaking” gives support for the idea that there continues to exist a certain Quaker style.<sup>60</sup> This style has been linked in this analysis to a specific manner of indirectness, of indicating “disagreement,” of giving priority to “listening,” and of pausing frequently or practicing “silence.” It is probable that recordings of Friends in other meeting interactions outside of meeting for business would also provide evidence for this way of speaking, as discussed in other chapters here, and future research could seek to identify other characteristics of this style and explore connections with underlying premises regarding the value of “listening” and allowing “space” for the “spirit.” The existence of this style indicates that communicative practices continue to be an important index of Quaker identity.

I should also observe that a breach of the norms of this “way of speaking,” as represented by Ed’s direct contribution above, highlights differences in the positions of various participants in terms of their roles in the community. While this way of speaking is based in notions of equality in the community, “corporate discernment” in meeting for

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here. Future research could examine the meanings behind present-day person-referencing practices in Quaker communities, as well as Quaker educational institutions.

<sup>60</sup> Some Friends of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries also used a distinctive style of speaking when sharing “vocal ministry” during meeting for worship. For further discussion of this “chanting” style, called “tones,” and other attributes that characterized it, see the article by Hayden published in *Friends Journal* in November 2010. In response to this article in the Forum of the January 2011 *Friends Journal*, a reader, Beals, notes that members of some present-day conservative Friends meetings sometimes give their ministry in “tone.”

business also relies to a certain extent on the knowledge and experience of longtime Quakers, or, as they are called in the community, “weighty” Friends. Again we see tension between individual inspiration and communal norms. As discussed in previous analyses, what is sought in meeting for business is unity, not unanimity; in other words, not everyone will agree *in* a “sense of the meeting,” but they will *all be a part of it*. A detailed analysis of talk reveals that, in this context, there are some Friends whose messages are more closely attended to.

#### **5.4.5 Conclusion**

This analysis has applied analytical concepts from CMM to the descriptive account of meeting for business formulated in previous sections and, specifically, to an example of the finding of a “sense of the meeting” during the Agenda portion of the meeting. Focus on the concept of “stories” reveals the way that models for action are shared by participants in the listening group. Use of the concept of logical force emphasizes the interconnectedness of all messages during meeting for business and the way these fit together to build a “sense of the meeting.” Finally, an analysis applying the tool of positioning reveals a distinctive way of doing “disagreement” that can be viewed as an element of a Quaker “way of speaking.” This supplementing of the ethnography of communication and CuDA with CMM has facilitated an examination of the subtle details of interaction during meeting for business that draw on and create deeply felt cultural propositions and premises. Through a slow narrowing of focus, the analysis in this chapter has emphasized the connection between communication about “finding the sense of the meeting” in the wider Quaker community and the particular utterances of



interactants during the making of one decision. The next chapter will further elaborate on the cultural premises and the Quaker style that have been described in Chapters 4 and 5, through an analysis of another Quaker communication event, the telling of “spiritual journeys,” which is also considered an important activity at Glen Meeting.

## CHAPTER 6

### TELLING “SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS”

#### 6.1 Introduction

Since the publication of Fox’s *Journal* in 1694, Friends have frequently used the sharing of personal experience as a means of teaching both outsiders and each other about Quakerism. One way of sharing this experience has been through the form of published journals, as modeled by Fox. Comfort (1941) observes that since the focus in Quakerism is “inward,” it is difficult to “picture it,” but he notes that “In the self-revealing journals and travels and in the field of biography, however, Quaker literature is very rich. It is there that the world must seek for a true portrayal of Quakerism from the beginning to almost the present time. No religious sect of its size has a literature comparable in amount to that of the Society of Friends” (p. 74). Brinton (1972) writes that the journal, also known as the religious autobiography, “has been the most characteristic form of Quaker writing” (p. ix). Like Comfort, he also links this to Quakerism’s basis primarily on inner personal experience rather than on any creed or ritual. Birkel (2004) observes as well that “given the inwardness of Quaker spirituality, the reflective nature of journal keeping is a natural fit for Friends” (p. 89); and, according to Punshon (1984), “the Quaker approach to ministry is most clearly illustrated in the many Journals, or spiritual autobiographies that the great ministers left behind. So numerous are these works that we might almost call them a distinctive Quaker art-form” (p. 139). It is also interesting to note that Quakers have historically written their journals specifically to be read by others. Cope-Robinson (1995) cites Fran Taber as observing that “journals to be published may

be unusual in the community at large, but have been the rule among Quakers, becoming the most characteristically Quaker form of writing” (p. 170-171). The understanding of sharing personal accounts as a form of ministry could also be linked to the view sometimes espoused that Quakerism should be “caught and not taught.”

Another means of sharing personal experience along with the journal is through the telling of a personal “spiritual journey.” This practice also connects well with the “inwardness” of Quaker spirituality and provides a model for outsiders, young Friends, and all members of the community of how one Friend has lived the testimonies in his or her life. The event of telling one’s journey is also more social than writing a journal in that it brings a group together to *listen*, which, as has been discussed in previous chapters, is understood to be a primary means by which one can receive messages and learn. The telling of narratives as a means of sharing one’s spiritual experience can be connected, as well, to the indirect manner of expressing disagreement identified in Chapter 5 as an element of a Quaker style. In discussing direct and indirect conversational styles in her book *Everyday Talk*, Tracy (2002) explains that telling a story is “an indirect way to make an argumentative point. It leaves it up to the listener to figure out the exact point for telling the story” (p. 142). In this way, using the telling of a story as a way of getting an idea across can be understood as another element of an indirect Quaker style. This practice also emphasizes the listener-centered character of Quaker communication practices, in which the burden of interpretation and understanding is placed more on the listener, and the speaker’s burden of explanation or elaboration is de-emphasized.

The telling of “spiritual journeys” or parts of “spiritual journeys” happens fairly frequently at Glen Meeting, especially during the adult education hour. The analysis in

this chapter will be of recorded examples of this speech event as they connect to wider premises of communication in this speech community. The questions guiding this analysis will be *What is the communication form identified as telling a “spiritual journey” among Quakers?* and *What cultural meanings are associated with the form of telling a “spiritual journey”?* I will begin with an overview of related work on the practice of telling narratives or personal stories, which will inform this analysis of cultural premises underlying the telling of “spiritual journeys.”

## **6.2 Related Work on Oral Narrative**

Much work on oral narrative stems from the seminal piece of Labov and Waletzky (1967). In these analysts’ definition, a minimal narrative must contain at least two independent clauses that form one temporal juncture. Labov (1972) identifies six components of a fully-developed narrative, namely an abstract, an orientation, a complicating action, an evaluation, a result, and a coda. Labov’s early interest in narrative focused on the evaluative clause, which defines the point of the story, or why it is considered reportable. Although the Labovian model “has become paradigmatic to personal narrative study,” Langellier (1989) notes its shortcomings in leaving out both context and audience (p. 247). She goes on to identify four other theoretical positions that have developed in theory and research on personal narrative; these are, “personal narrative as storytelling performance; personal narrative as conversational interaction; personal narrative as social process; and personal narrative as political praxis” (Langellier, 1989, p. 244). Three of these positions seem particularly relevant for this analysis, including personal narrative as storytelling performance, personal narrative as

conversational interaction, and personal narrative as social process, and all three positions characterize an aspect of the telling of “spiritual journeys.”

The first of these views, or narrative as storytelling performance, emphasizes *how* a story is told and the way in which its telling relates to an audience. Hymes’ (1975) essay entitled *Breakthrough Into Performance* played a major role in the development of this perspective. Another key theorist in this tradition is Bauman (1977, 1986), who emphasizes both the poetic nature and the social relations involved in a storytelling performance. A distinction is made between the narrative event, or the event in which a narrative is told, and the narrated event, which is the event that is being told. In telling a narrative, the narrator signals to his or her audience that his or her utterances should be interpreted in a special way, and the narrator takes “responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill” (Bauman, 1986, p. 3). Rather than highlighting temporal relations, this view focuses on whether or not a personal account is being performed.

The third approach described by Langellier, that of narrative as conversational interaction, emphasizes how narratives “occur in the ongoing stream of naturally-occurring talk” (1989, p. 256). Work from this standpoint has been undertaken to a large degree by discourse and conversation analysts, stemming from the research of Sacks (1986) and Jefferson (1978). These researchers emphasize the turn-by-turn development of a story, which can in fact proceed from collaborative co-narration. An example of a conception of narrative as “an informal, conversational mode of communication” (Langellier, 1989, p. 260) can be found in the dimensional approach of Ochs and Capps (2001). These authors focus on narrative as a “sense-making process” rather than as “a finished product in which loose ends are knit together into a single storyline” (Ochs and

Capps, 2001, p. 15). Although they acknowledge that “the best candidate for distinguishing narrative is chronology, in that temporal sequencing of two or more events is considered by many to be a hallmark of narrative,” these researchers focus on dimensions of narratives, including dimensions of tellership, or “the extent and kind of involvement of conversational partners in the actual recounting of a narrative”; tellability, or “the extent to which [narratives] convey a sequence of reportable events and make a point in a rhetorically effective manner”; embeddedness, or “the extent to which a personal narrative is an entity unto itself, separate from prior, concurrent, and subsequent discourse”; linearity, or “the extent to which narratives of personal experience depict events as transpiring in a single, closed, temporal, and causal path or, alternatively, in diverse, open, uncertain paths”; and moral stance, or “a disposition towards what is good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world” (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p. 18-45). Wortham (2001) also approaches narrative from an interactional perspective in his exploration of how the paralleling of representational content and interactional positioning in the telling of an autobiographical narrative can function to construct the teller’s self. Central to Wortham’s argument, and key to many analyses of narrative, is the concept of positioning, as it is accomplished both in the narrated and narrative event.<sup>61</sup> According to Wortham (2001) interactional positioning in autobiographical narrative provides the mechanism through which self is performed.

The fourth approach explicated by Langellier examines the telling of narrative in terms of what it engenders in the social world. In other words, narrative is here understood as a reflection of the “social organization and cultural values” of a speech

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<sup>61</sup> This concept was introduced earlier from the perspective of Coordinated Management of Meaning, with reference to positions adopted during the decision-making process in meeting for business. Here it is applied specifically to narrative interaction.

community (1989, p. 261). As Langellier explains, “the personal narrative shifts from a unit of discourse, whether detachable, continuous text of Labovian and performance theory or the transfix of conversational analysis, to a type of discourse among other types that comprise the talk of a culture” (1989, p. 261). The focus here, then, is on “the social uses and functions of personal narratives” (Langellier, 1989, p. 262). A particularly insightful analysis of the social and cultural contexts of narrative can be found in the work of Basso (1996) on the meanings of stories and place names among the Western Apache on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona. According to Basso (1996), a native model of storytelling “holds that oral narratives have the power to establish enduring bonds between individuals and features of the natural landscape, and that as a direct consequence of such bonds, persons who have acted improperly will be moved to reflect critically on their misconduct and resolve to improve it” (p. 40). Thus, “two symbolic resources—language and the land—are manipulated by Apaches to promote compliance with standards for acceptable social behavior and the moral values that support them” (Basso, 1996, p. 41). Carbaugh (2001) adopts a similar perspective in his analysis of a narrative told by a member of the Blackfeet in Montana. He argues that,

If we want to grasp some of the meanings people claim about themselves, their world, its objects and people, then we stand to benefit from treating narrative texts as cultural and communicative resources. We thus hear in them deeply organized symbolic statements being crafted to address the contingencies of everyday living, meeting life’s challenges in revealing ways and thus engendering the courage to go on. ( p. 123)

In this way, narrative meaning must be interpreted in the context of social and cultural meanings. Another compelling example of the way in which cultural meaning is organized in stories is in the work of Carbaugh and Rudnick (2006), whose examination of the failure to include Blackfeet stories in tour guide talk about Glacier National Park

reveals how certain cultural narratives of those with power can erase from history those with less power. This notion of cultural narratives connects to Philipsen's (1987) concept of myth as discussed above in terms of cultural communication. In the case of the Blackfeet in Glacier National Park, the myth of manifest destiny removed the Blackfeet from their native lands.

Research here will draw on elements from Labov's study of narratives, as well as studies of narrative as storytelling performance, as conversational interaction, and as social process, with a specific focus on the telling of "spiritual journeys" by members of the meeting during the adult education hour. As will be shown below, the telling of a "spiritual journey" during the adult education hour following meeting for worship constitutes a certain form of performance before an audience of community members as the teller represents different stages of his or her life that are understood as important and representative. The dimensions outlined by Ochs and Capps (2001) will also play a central role in this analysis. Models of analyses of religious narratives can be found in the works of Sands (2004) and Harding (1992). Sands (2004) draws briefly on the notion of "spiritual journey" in her analysis of narratives of mothers discussing their daughters' conversion from moderate to Orthodox Judaism. This use of the idea of a "spiritual journey" is perhaps different from how the concept is conceived among Quakers, but it nonetheless provides an example for this type of analysis. Harding's (1992) chapter about the story told to her by a Baptist minister in his attempt to convert her is also informative, in particular in Harding's reference to the knowledge and assumptions necessary for understanding the cultural narratives of born-again Christians. As above in the discussion of the work of Basso (1996) and Carbaugh (2001), the emphasis is on



narrative as a communicative means imbued with cultural meanings. The premises that Harding (1992) identifies as necessary for the minister's story to make sense differ greatly from the cultural premises I will present in this analysis.

### **6.3 Methodology for Data Collection**

The primary data for this analysis consist of six instances of members of Glen Meeting telling their "spiritual journeys." As mentioned, these instances were recorded during the adult education hour that occurs after "fellowship hour" at Glen Meeting. This event takes place approximately forty minutes after the end of meeting for worship on Sundays when there is no meeting for business or "fellowship lunch." It is held in the back, Oak Room, which connects to the library. The instances recorded here varied in length between forty-two minutes to one hour and fifty-seven minutes. Generally they lasted around an hour. They were recorded by a member of the meeting between February of 2008 and January of 2010. I was not present during the first four tellings, but I participated in the last two. I transcribed all of the recordings in full.

### **6.4 Methodology for Data Analysis**

The data analysis is divided into three parts. In the first part, I draw on elements of Hymes' SPEAKING model to provide an overview of the telling of "spiritual journeys" as a particular kind of speech event. I then look in more detail at the content and form that makes up these journeys by abstracting common topics, identifying recurrent themes, and analyzing specific personal stories about joining Friends. Finally, I

formulate cultural premises that were assumed in the personal stories told and that were modeled in the telling of the “spiritual journeys.”

## **6.5 Telling a “Spiritual Journey” at Glen Meeting**

### **6.5.1 The Story-telling Event: Setting, Participants, Act Sequence**

The speech event of telling one’s “spiritual journey” can occur on many occasions, varying in degree of formality. Sharing one’s past religious and/or spiritual experiences was a common occurrence that seemed to be meaningful for members of the meeting, and the telling of a “spiritual journey” appeared to represent a more formalized version of this sharing. Participants were invited to share their “spiritual journeys” at various community gatherings, in particular when new members or attenders were meeting each other for the first time. Variations of this form could also be argued to connect to the popular Quaker “form” of journaling, as mentioned above. There were a couple of occasions, including in the instances transcribed here, when participants expressed confusion about what telling a “spiritual journey” should consist of. One attender said once that she did not think she had a “spiritual journey” to tell. However, adult education hours that were focused on the telling of a “spiritual journey” were well attended, indicating that this type of event carried wide appeal in the community.<sup>62</sup> Thus, this telling was generally understood and interpretable. In my interviews with members, I often drew on this term at the start of an interview in order to learn more about

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<sup>62</sup> However, I did have a Friend confide to me that he was not really interested in hearing “spiritual journeys.” I think this was probably more of a comment on the frequency of the occurrence of this type of event and perhaps a concern that this form was over-used, rather than a genuine disinterest in other people’s stories.

participants' histories and interactions with Quakers; when I did this, no one expressed confusion regarding what the term meant, although some would check with me after talking for a little while to make sure that the information they were sharing was what I was interested in recording.

The analysis here will focus on the more formal occasion of the telling of “spiritual journeys” during the adult education hour. In this context, those who tell their journeys are asked by the committee in charge of organizing the adult education session to share their journeys.<sup>63</sup> In these examples, two of the people who told their journeys were women, and four were men. They ranged in age between fifty and eighty. According to their “spiritual journeys,” five of the six have been attending the meeting for at least sixteen years, often more. One had only been attending for approximately six years, but had attended another meeting for worship prior to this one. At least three of the six had attended meeting for worship at another meeting prior to this. All are listed in the October 2008 Meeting Directory, two as members, one as a member of another meeting, and three as attenders. Approximately two or three journeys are shared each year. These seemed to be the most popular of the events held during the education hour, as they had the highest attendance. Although not everyone who attended meeting for worship was also present at the telling of the “spiritual journeys,” the room was often very full for these tellings, containing perhaps forty or fifty people. At the beginning of my transcripts of these events, the members telling their journeys often comment about the crowd. For this event, chairs are arranged in concentric half-circles, with the person

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<sup>63</sup> This process differs from the selection of topics for other adult education hours. Normally for the adult education hour, another meeting committee approaches the committee in charge of the adult education hour with a topic and the committee in charge approves it and schedules a date. My understanding is that in the case of the telling of “spiritual journeys,” the committee in charge “lets names rise” during their meeting and then approaches those people whose names rose to ask if they would be willing to share.

telling his or her journey sitting somewhere in the innermost half circle. This arrangement means that the person telling a journey often has his or her back to about half of the room. The audio recorder is often set up in the space in the middle of the half-circles. Due to the crowding, there are frequently people sitting on the floor.

This event consists of an introduction, a telling, a question and answer period, and a concluding moment of silence. The initial introduction is made by a member of the committee in charge of the adult education hour, who describes the event as a telling of a “spiritual journey.” For example, at the beginning of one of the recorded “spiritual journeys,” the Friend making the introduction explains,

1 Um (1.2) pretty much know that the tradition (.) for (1) people to share (.) their  
2 spiritual journey. (.5) Um (.) people of varying (.) ages and (.) um varying paths (1)  
3 take time to do that. Not only in the summer program which is a wonderful (.5) more  
4 recent in the last few years addition to our (.) community (.) uh for the children (.) but  
5 um for (.) everybody uh the [adult education hour] (.) has um offered (.) two or three  
6 (.) a year whenever possible (.) and [name] (.) uh graciously offered to share (.) her  
7 spiritual journey with us today.

The member or attender of the meeting then begins to tell his or her “spiritual journey.” This telling in these six cases lasted between twenty-one minutes and an hour and fifty-one minutes. Following the telling, the audience was invited by the teller, in four of the six cases, to ask questions. This lasted between five and thirty-six minutes. Friends will also sometimes interrupt the person speaking to ask for clarification while the “spiritual journey” is being told. The event is relatively informal, and there are often jokes told and laughter during the gathering. The ending of the event consists of a short period of silence and applause.

### 6.5.2 Themes and Personal Stories in “Spiritual Journeys”

After transcribing the six instances that I had collected of members taking part in this event, I attempted to identify and summarize key parts of each journey that was shared. I organized these into an outline for each journey so that I could compare them. I noticed that a central defining characteristic of all of the journeys was that they were in general organized chronologically, beginning with the member’s childhood and ending at some point in the recent past. As mentioned earlier, Ochs and Capps (2001) identify chronology as a “hallmark” characteristic of narratives in narrative research. In their analysis, they include “linearity” as one of the five dimensions that often characterizes narratives of personal experience.

I have not included the outlines that I created here in order to protect the privacy of those who shared their journeys. However, based on these outlines, I further abstracted topics from the key parts, and I have included three lists of these topics below.

Table 18: “Spiritual Journey” Topics (Continues on the next page)

<b>Spiritual Journey 2</b>	<b>Spiritual Journey 4</b>	<b>Spiritual Journey 6</b>
Children	Childhood	Queries
Childhood	Religion	Prayer
School	Difficulty with education	Childhood
Reading	Reading	School
Animals	Athletics	Drugs/Violence
Volunteering/Activism	College	Army
Death	Marriage	College
Music	Child	Job/Trouble with job
War	Career	Marriage
Religion	Spiritual experience	Children
Attending Friends meeting	Death	Joining Glen Meeting
Traveling	Coming to Glen Meeting	Relationships
Co-housing communities	Adventures	Volunteering

Marriage	Nature	Reading
	Buddhism	Bible story
	Activism	Quotes/Poems
	Grandchild	Farming
	Traveling	Quaker concepts
	Illness	
	Relationship with parents	

Based on my outlines and lists of topics in the narratives, I identified several central themes that seemed to recur in most of the six journeys told. I identified these in part based on themes that the tellers themselves used to organize their own sharing. These included ideas related to childhood experiences, education, religion, animals/nature, activism, relationships, traveling, spiritual experiences, reading, marriage, children, career/job, violence, and death. In a recounting of one's life, it would be expected that ideas regarding childhood, education, marriage, relationships, children, career/job, traveling, and death would be major, anchoring themes. Also, when one is asked to talk about one's "spiritual" life, it makes sense that a focus is placed on spiritual experiences and religion. The common occurrence of ideas involving activism, violence, animals/nature, and reading might seem somewhat less expected. I would, however, connect all of these to key ideas of Quakerism, including the Peace Testimony, the Testimony of Simplicity, and the emphasis on being socially active and respecting one's environment. As was discussed earlier, Friends often engage in the reading of journals and other Quaker literature as a way of learning more about Quakerism and about the practices of other Friends, so this recurrence of a theme of reading can be understood as representing a communal value.

The topics and themes described here were abstracted to a large extent from numerous short personal stories told within the larger event of telling one's "spiritual journey." In order to give more concrete examples of these themes and to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the form and content that makes up the telling of a "spiritual journey," I will analyze some examples of these personal stories. I identified these stories by drawing on Labov's (1972) definition of a narrative as containing at least one temporal juncture and consisting of an abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. I also drew on Ochs and Capps' (2001) five dimensions of tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance. Some of the "spiritual journeys" consisted of many of these stories represented as distinct events, while in others, the stories were more heavily "embedded" in surrounding talk (Ochs and Capps, 2001). One type of personal story that I identified as occurring in all six of the "spiritual journeys," which would seem to be particularly important and noteworthy in this context, was the story of when a teller first started attending Quaker meeting or this particular meeting. I also noticed that in the second and third recorded journeys, when the teller did not immediately share this type of a story, she or he was asked about it by an audience member during the question period, indicating that it was an expected element of the "spiritual journey." I will here provide examples of this type of a story, along with an analysis in terms of the themes presented above, which will form the basis for a formulation of cultural premises of communication, sociality, and personhood in the speech community of Glen Meeting.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Although these personal stories of beginning to attend meeting for worship seem to have been an important and expected part of the telling of "spiritual journeys," it would seem that compared with other accounts of religious conversion they are relatively unmarked. For example, there is no reference to one particular moment in time when the person was converted. Instead, people begin to attend meeting over a

In the “personal stories” told, two Friends described coming to the meeting because they had come to the area looking for work or they were in the process of deciding what to do next in their lives. One of these noted that while he was initially hesitant, he ultimately decided to join the meeting because of the war. He explains:

787 I’m stuck in (.) [town] (.) without (.) a uh (1.2) probably the first eight years I- six or  
788 eight years I lived here I had to (.5) commute to [city] (.) to find work or [state] (1.5)  
789 and uh it was a struggle. (.8) Uh (.5) and I (.) visited Glen Meeting (.5) a couple of  
790 times .hh (.8) and I (.4) and I remember looking at you guys and thinking (1.7)  
791 they’re too comfortable. ((laughter)) (3) No (.) no (.) I’m not going to do this.  
792 ((laughter)) (2.7) um (1.2) and then the war- the war forced me here.

This particular Friend noted here that he was at first uncomfortable in the meeting, which contrasts with others, who describe immediately feeling comfortable and enjoying the silence. Another Friend, who first came to the meeting for a memorial service for the husband and child of her friend, described being impressed with the practices of Friends.

She explains:

137 it was just an incredible service (.) and the place was mobbed. (.5) I thought (.) hmm  
138 (.) this is pretty good I like this (.) you know. I think I’ll come back. ((laughter))  
139 (1.2) And so over thirty years ago you know (.) over the years (.) I’ve come and I’ve  
140 gone and I’ve (.) but there was always (.) Glen Meeting.

Another teller also connects joining Friends to a response to war and to seeking a community that supported her beliefs. She recounts:

105 . . I opposed the second world war (1.5) when I was I guess about thirteen when the  
106 war (1.5) was going on. (.) My parents were opposed to the war (.5) and that brought  
107 me together with my parents cause we went to (.) peace meetings and (.)  
108 demonstrations and all that sort of thing (.8) um (2.5) but I started going to meeting  
109 (1) um (1) I really felt the need of support from a (.) adult group. (1.5) And um (.)  
110 the [Pine Meeting] was within walking distance of my home. (1) So that’s where I  
111 started with- (.7) that’s how I (.5) got to (1.5) connected to the Quakers. (1) And um  
112 (3) it’s been a very important part of my life.

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period of time. This process seems to contrast sharply with Greenhouse’s (1986) description of conversion experiences in the Southern Baptist community where she conducted her ethnography. In this community, converts are understood to be “saved” or “born again,” and there was a point in the worship service at which those who had not yet been saved were invited to walk to the altar and become members.



In this way, we see both social issues and an appreciation for the worship practices of Friends leading tellers to begin attending. There is also a desire to be connected to a community. All of these ideas are present in the account of the following teller who connects his coming to Glen Meeting to the birth of his first child.

293 . . . we decided to have our first child (1.2) and that was a very significant decision  
294 because (1.5) [name] came and things do change. (1) And that brought the issue  
294 back to me about having a spiritual (real) community because I needed to (.5) raise a  
295 child (.) not the way that I was raised. In terms of (1) I was (about) to give her  
296 choices (.6) you know. (.8) Then I (.4) with [wife] we (.) we started doing some kind  
297 of (1.5) shopping around in terms of spiritual (guidance). (2) And um (1.5) I went to  
298 (1) different locations. (1.6) And I came here one day. (2) I like what I saw though  
299 (.) I liked the silence. (1) And (.) I continued to come and then I- I began to learn  
300 about (1.5) simplicity and social justice . . .

Also evident in this story is the wish to learn a new way of doing things and break with past practices, in particular the spiritual practices of his parents. The role of a child is also central in the next account:

173 . . Let me just go back (1.1) to me joining Glen Meeting. (.6) Um which happened  
174 I started coming to Glen Meeting uh- (.5) I said- mentioned that we got married we  
175 also had a daughter (.6) um (1) and our ((laughter)) daughter (.5) uh (1) when we  
176 moved to this area (1) had a friend who was Quaker (.6) who um (1.5) went to (.5)  
177 [name] camp (.) so our- we sent our daughter to [name] camp along with her friend.  
178 (1.5) And (.8) at (.8) when she came back (.5) um (.) from one of these sessions at  
179 [name] camp (.) she said (.) you know I'd really like to go to meeting. (.5) But I  
180 don't want to go by myself. (1) I said well I know a little bit about Quakers I went  
181 to this school (1) um (.5) but I even when I was at [school name] (.) working at  
182 [school name] (.) I had never gone to meeting (.8) uh (.) although I knew a lot of  
183 Friends there. (1) Um (2) so I said (.5) I'll go with you (1.5) and so I (.) went with  
184 [name] to meeting here (.) uh starting in (.) eighty-s- (.) five or eighty-six (.) I can't  
185 remember exactly when it was (1) and I've been coming ever since.

We see again that knowing someone who is a member of the community also influences others to join, as in the case of the memorial service above. In summary, then, the

following factors play a role in the “personal stories” of “convincement”<sup>65</sup> that Friends recount when taking part in the speech event of telling their “spiritual journeys”:

1. Being at a turning point in one’s life
2. Strong beliefs about social issues, such as war
3. An appreciation for Friends’ worship practices
4. A desire to belong to a supportive community
5. A desire to belong to a spiritual community that is different from the one that the teller was raised in or belonged to before
6. A desire to raise one’s child in a spiritual community
7. Knowing someone who is a Quaker

In their analyses of narratives, both Labov (1997) and Ochs and Capps (2001) consider the reasons why a teller chooses to tell a particular story. As Labov (1997) observes, “the difficulty is that there is no absolute standard of inherent interest.” Consequently, the analyst must look at the “pragmatic context of its performance,” as Carbaugh (2001, p. 123) writes, in order to understand what makes a story significant to those to whom it is told. Ochs and Capps (2001) explain that the dimension, which they call “tellability,” is “related not only to the sensational nature of events but also to the significance of events for particular interlocutors” (p. 34). Labov (1997) also discusses the element of “causality” in narratives, proposing the theorem that “narrative construction requires a personal theory of causality.” This idea is important in the way that it highlights what underlying assumptions must be accepted in order for the events

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<sup>65</sup> “Convincement” is the term used by Quakers to refer to the process of conversion to Quakerism.

that are linked together in a story to make sense.<sup>66</sup> In other words, it emphasizes that which is left unsaid because it is believed to be assumed. It should be noted that the focus in my analysis is on *cultural* assumptions of value that support the “reportability” and “causality” of a story, rather than on a “personal theory.” The characteristics of “reportability” and “causality” are also related to Ochs and Capp’s (2001) dimension of “moral stance” in narratives. These authors cite Burke’s (1962) claim that narratives are “selections” rather than “reflections” of reality, and explain, “Rooted in community and tradition, moral stance is a disposition towards what is good or valuable and how one ought to live in the world” (p. 45). According to Ochs and Capps (2001), “While moral understandings are transmitted through a variety of cultural forms such as proverbs, laws, maxims, advice, songs, and visual representations, everyday narratives of personal experience elaborately encode and perpetuate moral worldviews” (p. 45-46). This idea was already introduced in the discussion of stories as models of and for action with reference to the theory of CMM (Cronen, Lang, and Lang, 2009). Ochs and Capps (2001) go a step farther in comparing personal narrative to prayer, “in that both imbue experience with moral direction,” and “personal narrative provides a secular, interactive means of building a moral philosophy of how one ought to live” (p. 46).<sup>67,68</sup> They write,

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<sup>66</sup> The idea of a theory of causality can be understood as similar to the proposition that higher-level stories contain elements of grammar necessary for the interpretation of lower-level stories, as discussed earlier with reference to CMM (Cronen, Lang, & Lang, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Greenhouse (1986) describes one of the four forms of prayer of the Southern Baptists with whom she works as narrative. She writes, “Narratives are highly laden with social information in the same way that public prayer is. They are at the very least announcements that an individual has taken a matter to heart and is concerned, and the narratives permit the speaker a wider range of emotional expression than tends to be the case otherwise. Prayer narratives are very much a part of ordinary conversation among friends” (Greenhouse, 1986, p. 90).

<sup>68</sup> It also seems worth noting that in the New Testament, Jesus is recorded as having used parables in his teachings.

Everyday narrative activity offers a forum for grappling with the meaning of unexpected, often problematic life events. Narrating allows co-tellers to distill the details and logic of a particular experience and to reflect upon the implications of the experience for the future. As such, a narrative of personal experience does much more than codify a remembered past; it anticipates life's continuing dramas. . . . narrative activity draws interlocutors into probing moral dimensions of human experience. In shaping their accounts, co-tellers not only give temporal and causal order to events, they also evaluate events from a moral perspective. Once a person's comportment is incorporated into narrative, it is portrayed in relation to standards of right and wrong and is vulnerable to public moral accountability. . . . For some, the search for moral meaning involves matching personal experience to traditional ethical canons. For others, narrative activity depicts moral dilemmas whose contours are obscure and whose solutions are not readily at hand. In both contexts, the moral shaping of a particular lived experience helps co-tellers to understand how they should conduct themselves in similar circumstances in the future. In this manner everyday narrative activity offers moral guidelines for overcoming obstacles and achieving goodness for oneself and one's community. (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p. 225-226).

This idea of moral direction is reflected in the introduction to the fifth spiritual journey I have recorded. The teller explains:

10 I tend to divide my life into- into (.) um (.) the part where I didn't know I was Quaker  
11 (.) and then the (.) the part where I did and I (1) and I always (.) habitually think well  
12 the- (1) that it was harder when I didn't understand it. (1) Um (.8) and I don't know  
13 that that's true because (.) part of becoming a Quaker is becoming aware of a- a path  
14 (1.5) a narrow path (.) and um ((clears throat)) (2) um (.) and and having to be (.)  
15 mindful of uh where I am on the path.

For this Friend, then, becoming a Quaker means following a "narrow path," which we can understand as one that is constrained by certain ideas of right and wrong. In this way, personal stories can be understood as a communicative form that embodies what is assumed to be noteworthy and valuable in a community, and they model a moral viewpoint.

Since the "personal story" of "convincement" occurred in all of the instances of the telling of a "spiritual journey" recorded here and was asked for when it was not immediately provided by the teller, it would seem that this type of a story was considered

particularly reportable in this context in this community. Looking at the underlying cultural premises (Carbaugh, 2007) of these stories can give insight into the cultural meaning system of the group, specifically with relation to ideas about communication, sociality, and personhood. The reasons listed above that played a role in the “convincement” of the tellers rely on certain assumptions of “tellability” and “causality.”

These could be formulated as:

Table 19: Reasons for “Convincement” and Cultural Premises

<b>Reasons that played a role in “Convincement”</b>	<b>Possible Underlying Cultural Premises</b>
1. Being at a turning point in one’s life	Life is made up of periods of stability and times of change. During periods of change, a person has the ability to make choices about what to do next.
2. Strong beliefs about social issues, such as war	It is valued to have strong opinions that might differ from those around us.
3. An appreciation for Friends’ worship practices	Certain ways of worshiping with others, such as listening in silence, are valued. Communication with God or the spirit can occur in silence. God or the spirit continues to reveal “truth” to those who listen.
4. A desire to belong to a supportive community	Being a part of a community of people that help each other is good.
5. A desire to belong to a spiritual community that is different from the one that the teller was raised in or belonged to before	If one did not feel satisfied with one’s religious experience as a child, it is valued to find a new spiritual community.
6. A desire to raise one’s child in a spiritual community	It is valued to raise children in a spiritual community.
7. Knowing someone who is a Quaker	Personal connections with others are important to spiritual experience.

Scholars of communication have emphasized the importance of cultural means and meanings in shaping the form and content of narrative tellings (Carbaugh, 2001). As Basso (1996) demonstrates in his study of stories told by the Western Apache, when a tale is told to someone who does not share relevant cultural assumptions, the story is often incomprehensible. The distinctive communicative practices of subcultures within the United States offer numerous examples of the telling of culturally important stories that sometimes cannot be interpreted by outsiders. In her recounting of the stories told to her by a Baptist minister in his efforts to convert her one afternoon, Harding (1992) gives a striking example of a story that leaves an “unborn-again listener” with many unanswered questions. This story is about how the minister accidentally killed his fourteen-year-old son. Rather than emphasizing how his son died or what he felt when this event took place, as might be expected by certain listeners, in his telling, the minister stresses his relationship with God. Harding (1992) describes why this is so, based on certain practices of telling stories and underlying cultural meanings regarding the connection between personal stories and Biblical stories that are active in this community. The assumption that the occurrence of the death or the feelings of the killer would be the most “tellable” elements are based perhaps on a “popular” American way of communicating in which the “sharing” of feelings is considered central (Carbaugh, 1988).

It is immediately evident that the underlying assumptions active in the telling of “spiritual journeys” among Friends differs from the seeking to convince listeners to accept Christ as their personal savior through allusions to Biblical stories, as explicated

by Harding (1992), or the belief regarding the existence of a moral connection between listeners and the landscape as described by Basso (1996). Although both nature and spiritual experiences play a key role in these stories, the discursive connections within which these themes take shape are distinctly different from those guiding the storytelling of the Baptists or Western Apache. Thus, the cultural premises presumed among Friends become more apparent when we compare them with those informing stories in the work of Basso (1996) or Harding (1992). I present some other possible contrasting assumptions below that could seem plausible within some contexts. However, we see that the reasons for “convincement” presented in the “spiritual journeys” of Friends could not form the basis for a personal story if the following assumptions were true:

1. The pattern of life is not one of periods of stability and change.
2. A person does not have agency to decide what will happen next in his or her life.
3. Changing religions later in life is not good. Choosing to leave the religious community in which one was raised is immoral and detrimental.
4. God does not exist or he stopped communicating with people a long time ago.
5. Communication with God cannot occur in silence. Speaking is necessary for communication to occur.
6. Worship and spiritual experience are solitary activities that cannot be done when anyone else is present.
7. It is not good and perhaps even dangerous to have strong beliefs about social issues, especially strong beliefs that differ from others.
8. Belonging to a community hinders the potential of an individual.
9. Teaching religious beliefs to children can hurt their intellectual development or lead them to become extremists.
10. Children are more successful when they are raised to be independent.

I have formulated these premises simply to demonstrate that those described above as informing Quaker practices cannot always be assumed. It is possible to connect these to situations in which they might apply. The idea that life is characterized by periods of change and stability connects to Dewey's (1934) understanding of experience.

According to Dewey (1934), reason necessitates that there be a certain amount of change so that individuals can look back on situations and reflect on the consequences of them, but at the same time, there must be some stability so that they can then plan based on what their reflections reveal. However, it seems probable to assume that the notion that life involves these periods of stability and change, which informs the reason Friends give for coming to Quakerism as being connected to a turning point in their lives, need not be shared by all groups of people. This notion would appear to connect to the third premise that I have formulated that one ought not to change one's spiritual community later in life. That this change could be problematic is expressed by the teller of the third journey that I recorded, who was born in another country. In his journey, he briefly discusses how it is painful for him that his family still living in that country does not understand his religious conversion. It may be that for them religion, culture, and identity are differently connected in a way that perhaps does not recognize a later change as legitimate.<sup>69</sup> This notion of a freedom to change is related to the premise that a person has agency to choose what he or she wants to do in his or her life. There are communities in which this assumption does not hold, and the idea of free will is contested by some religious beliefs and practices. Harding (1992) indicates that the telling of stories among Baptists connects their lives to Biblical stories, in some ways suggesting that there is a prior plan

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<sup>69</sup> This last sentence is my assumption, and not necessarily the situation here. However, a failure to recognize his conversion does indicate that there is something problematic about changing religions in this community that challenges the valuing of a freedom to do this among Friends.



at work here. She writes that in telling stories and “aligning themselves with biblical figures, preachers (and believers) place themselves in the matrix of God’s design and give all to understand that their words and actions are a further working out of God’s plan for history” (Harding, 1992, p. 74).<sup>70</sup> The tension between agency and predetermination is also at play in the idea that God is or is not still speaking to humans. Obviously, atheists would presume that there is no God to do the speaking in the first place. In the transcript included in Chapter 5, one of the presenters during the adult education hour on “corporate discernment” actually discusses the idea that different religious groups have different beliefs about the extent to which God is “still speaking” and vary as to how much weight they believe should be placed on “continuing revelation” versus scripture. A consideration of whether or not God or the spirit is speaking naturally leads into questions regarding how a divine being communicates and how one can communicate with it, which was addressed to some extent in the discussion of research on religious language in the first chapter and will be expanded upon in Chapter 8. Given the emphasis placed on speaking versus silence in certain cultures, which was also introduced in literature in the first chapter and has informed the analyses up until this point, the statement formulated above that communication with God or the spirit cannot occur in the silence would seem to hold in some communities. On the other hand, other religious traditions that emphasize meditation and solitude would appear to presuppose a belief that togetherness is *not* a prerequisite or even facilitative of communication with God or the spirit. Thus, the valuing of silent group listening as a means of communicating with a divine presence is not everywhere shared. Building on the tension in the premises formulated here between communal and individual forces, we can also

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<sup>70</sup> For further discussion of the structure versus agency debate see Chapter 7.

question the statement that having strong opinions that differ from those of a surrounding group is good; the holding of these types of ideas would seem in some cultures to be presumed to be dangerous and inadvisable. In the stories recounted above there also exists, along with a valuing of strong individual opinions, a valuing of belonging to a community and of raising one's children in that spiritual community. This valuing would seem to challenge the agonistic relationship of "self" versus "society" identified in certain speech communities in the United States (Carbaugh, 1988). Also, competing child rearing practices come to mind, not all of which emphasize the role of the community; Philipsen (1992) examines some examples of different ways of raising children in his work in Teamsterville and among the Nacirema. Thus, we see that the underlying cultural premises outlined in the table above enable the links between events or the "causality" of the stories told by Friends to make sense, but they are not everywhere active. These premises also underlie the whole event of telling one's "spiritual journey," giving meaning to the event as a way of modeling central principles of Quaker practice and providing guidance for the following of a "narrow path."

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The analysis of the communicative event of telling one's "spiritual journey" in this chapter began with a descriptive account of the actual event of telling and then focused more closely on the form of the "journey" as being made up of the recounting of personal stories. One type of personal story, that of "convincement," was examined in terms of its content and in terms of how the reasons for "convincement" of the six tellers reveal certain cultural assumptions of value. The process of "convincement" and of

joining this particular Quaker community is understood to make up an important and deeply considered stage in one's "spiritual journey." The premises of value assumed in the personal story of "convincement" allow the telling of the larger "journey" to serve as a model of acting for listeners. When meeting members and attenders tell the story of how they became Quakers, they model for others a life guided by Quaker testimonies, responding to Fox's instruction to "let your lives preach" (Barbour and Roberts, 1973).<sup>71</sup> The communicative event of telling one's "spiritual journey" is, thus, as Ochs and Capps (2001) argue in terms of narratives, comparable to a "prayer." There is a moral stance taken in the telling that teaches others in the community how to live. The speech event of telling one's "spiritual journey" in the Quaker community is linked to assumptions underlying communication about proper relations between people, models of personhood, and the nature of communication. These premises stem from general notions about the individual and communal nature of spiritual experience and how one can and should learn about Quakerism and share that knowledge with others. The explication of these premises here expands upon the analysis of cultural premises in Chapters 4 and 5 and provides examples of how these premises that guide meeting for worship and meeting for business are understood to be active in the daily lives of Friends at Glen Meeting. The telling of "spiritual journeys" also gives further evidence of the indirect style of Quaker communication, in that teaching in the community often takes the form of showing through narrative, rather than explicit direction.

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<sup>71</sup> This phrase is often cited as "let your lives speak."

## CHAPTER 7

### “WORSHIP SHARING” AND IDENTITY

#### 7.1 Introduction

The notion of identity has come up in several of the analyses in previous chapters. For example, in the chapter on the telling of “spiritual journeys,” one of the members telling his journey explains that he divides his life between the time when he did not yet know he was a Quaker and the time when he realized he was. In his spiritual journey, this Friend notes that part of being a Quaker is being aware of a “narrow path” that one must follow. Becoming aware that one is Quaker is, consequently, from his perspective, *not* solely about becoming aware of any particular characteristic, but, in fact, also about becoming aware of a particular course of action. In the discussion of meeting for worship in Chapter 4, a Friend, in his reflection on a “gathered” meeting that he did not experience, despite being present, noted that participating in meeting for worship is something that is learned. The idea of learning to be a Friend was also mentioned in one of my first discussions with a Quaker, not at Glen Meeting, who observed that when she first started writing reports for Quaker committee meetings, she would give her reports to more experienced Friends to edit. They would change a couple of words here and there, she noted, and then the report would sound to her as if it had been written by a Quaker. This ability, she explained, was eventually something that she developed. In terms of shared actions, historical communicative practices of Friends that typically indicated “convincement” or conversion to Quakerism, such as “plain speech” as discussed previously, have largely faded out of use among unprogrammed, liberal Friends.

However, “Quakerese,” or specific terms and structures of speech, are still widespread, and, in the analysis here of a meeting for business in Chapter 5, elements of a specific Quaker way of speaking were identified. In this way, previous chapters have begun to develop the theme of how identity is defined and enacted among Friends.

The notion of a Quaker identity is interesting to consider from a social constructionist perspective of identity as performed, given that one of the central principles of Quakerism is that everyone has the Light within them, and, therefore, anyone can hear the voice of the “spirit” or God. This understanding of what it means to belong to a group is distinctive when compared with groups that define membership in terms of some outward characteristic or that view certain people as more worthy of inclusion than others. While many religious groups seek a wide variety of converts, the Quaker Testimony of Equality would seem to result in one of the most open understandings of potential members. Given that there is no written creed and Quakers are hesitant to explicitly define qualifications for membership, it is also somewhat difficult for newcomers to know how to become a Friend. There is a formal process of becoming a member at Glen Meeting, outlined in the meeting handbook. It is written:

It is not necessary to wait to be invited to join a Friends meeting; people decide for themselves when they are ready to commit themselves to membership. Frequently recording membership in a monthly meeting of the Society of Friends is only the recognition of a relationship that has already developed. A person who has been coming to Meeting regularly, who has been learning more and more about Friends through reading Faith and Practice and other Quaker literature, who is becoming active in the life of the Meeting, and who has come to feel at home in the Meeting and among its members, may feel ready to apply for membership. This is the time to write a letter to the Clerk outlining the feeling of being drawn into fellowship with Friends and of being in unity with Friends’ principles and testimonies. At [Glen Meeting], this letter is read at the next Meeting for Business as one way of helping the Meeting to become better acquainted with the applicant. . . . Ministry and Worship, at its next meeting, appoints a Membership Clearness Committee of two or three individuals. . . . The Membership Clearness

Committee reports to a future meeting of Ministry and Worship, which makes a recommendation to the next Meeting for Business. When the new member is accepted, Meeting for Business appoints a Welcoming Committee, customarily following the recommendation of Ministry and Worship . . . One of this committee's functions is to help the new member to assume responsibility for both service and support, as way opens. The Clerk may write a note of welcome to the new member. The new member should be introduced after Meeting for Worship.<sup>72</sup>

However, despite this formal process, the fact that many “attenders” remain “attenders” for years without joining; that it is often difficult to distinguish longtime “attenders” from members; and that many “attenders” are active on meeting committees and fully integrated into the life of the meeting indicates that being considered a Quaker by other Quakers does not directly correspond to membership in the meeting. Quaker identity is also interesting to consider in this context due to the bottom-up structuring of Quaker meetings. Being a member of a Quaker meeting is the basis for membership in larger Quaker organizations, but membership in one meeting does not directly transfer to or guarantee membership in another meeting; if a person moves, he or she must go through the process of applying to transfer his or her membership to the new meeting. Also, most important decisions are made at the level of the Monthly Meeting or the Yearly Meeting, rather than at the level of larger groups, such as Friends General Conference (FGC) or the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). Thus, priority is placed on the relationship with the local meeting, whether that be as a member or an “attender,” rather than with any larger organization. In this way, participation in meeting activities, such as meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour, are focal aspects of what it means to be a part of the community and a Quaker.

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<sup>72</sup> This paragraph is copied from the 2006 version of the handbook.

This chapter will explore the concept of Quaker identity in terms of the distinction between “member” and “attender,” as it was discussed among “members” and “attenders” of Glen Meeting during a recorded instance of “worship sharing.” This particular instance of “worship sharing” took place at the beginning of one of the recorded meetings for business that were analyzed in Chapter 5. The “worship sharing” was part of the introductory section of the meeting for business and focused on a particular question posed by the clerk. This event was considered noteworthy by those who attended it, and several participants commented afterwards in conversation that there was very little “silence” between speaking during it. It also lasted longer than “worship sharing” at the beginning of meeting for business generally does. The clerk commented as he ended the “worship sharing” that they had hit a “rich vein” and that this discussion should continue on another occasion. This analysis will focus on premises of being and relating that seem to underlie this communicative event. Research questions considered include *What is the communication form identified as “worship sharing” among Quakers? What meanings are associated with the concept of being a “member” or an “attender” in this community? Does being a “member” or “attender” relate to a Quaker “identity,” and, if so, how?*

It is essential to mention before beginning this analysis that some have experienced more difficulty feeling comfortable or accepted in meeting for worship as a result of a lack of diversity among unprogrammed, liberal Friends. Issues surrounding this lack of diversity were discussed in some of the articles analyzed in Chapter 4 (Powell, 2003; Fletcher, 2007) and are connected to historical practices of Friends in the work, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship, Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of*

*Racial Justice*, by two members of the Religious Society of Friends (McDaniel and Julye, 2009). Powell (2003) links this lack of diversity, in part, to an absence of evangelizing in recent history by unprogrammed Quakers; groups of programmed Friends have spread more widely to South and Central America and Africa as a consequence of their more active evangelizing practices. This avoidance of evangelical practices among unprogrammed Friends is evident in the stories of conviction and the cultural premises underlying these stories analyzed in Chapter 6. In light of the Quaker belief that each person has the Light within them, it is important to keep in mind issues surrounding who actually does or *does not* feel comfortable participating in meeting for worship while considering this analysis of Quaker identity.

## **7.2 The Concept of Identity**

Research drawing on the concept of identity will inform this analysis of Quaker communicative practices as these serve to construct and provide a basis for the performance of the identity of being a meeting “member” or “attender.” Social constructionist definitions of identity disconnect the concept from an innate nature or a homogeneous category, and, instead, emphasize the situated, relational character of identity. For example, in his research on ethnicities, Barth (1969) asserted that membership within an identity group is actually not based on similarities within the group, but on boundary management between groups. He noted that often even groups that intermingle a great deal are still understood to be separate. Boundaries are maintained and sometimes even strengthened despite frequent contact. Barth uses the concepts of self-ascription and other ascription to define the process whereby someone



claims that he or she belongs to a certain ethnicity group or is described by others as belonging to that group. A similar definition of identity can be found in Bailey (2000), who defines identity as counting as the same as others or counting as different from them. Ascription to a group can depend on many different features, but linguistic features are often central (Kroskrity, 2001). However, which features will be identified as important changes from group to group and situation to situation, thus emphasizing the contextual nature of identity construction (Carbaugh, 1996).

Expanding upon the relational nature of identity construction, Wortham (2001), in his analysis of interactional positioning through narratives, cites the work of Bakhtin (1981) on heteroglossia in order to assert that a person cannot become a self alone, but instead must become a self in relation to others. He explains that to become a self, one must speak, and to speak, one must draw on the words of others. This view of identity as social is very similar to the theory of Mead (1934), who claims that a self can only come into being in relation to others and through language, which he feels is the only process through which reflexivity is possible. The definition of identity from a social constructionist perspective can thus be summarized through five attributes of identity outlined by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) in their articulation of a sociocultural linguistic approach. These attributes are emergence, relationality, positionality, indexicality, and partiality. In other words, identity is constantly in the process of emerging in relation to others, and it is never complete or final.

It should be emphasized, however, that historical structures and physical characteristics also do play a major role in identity construction. Tracy (2002) presents this idea when she contrasts master and personal identities, which she views as more

stable, with interactional and relational identities. Several scholars have attempted to balance an understanding of the situated emergence of identity with a recognition of structural forces. For example, Bourdieu (1980/1990) draws on the concept of *habitus*, which he defines as “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures,” in order to capture both the stability and flow of identity work (p. 53). Ortner (1984), in her description of practice theory, defines practice as the site of situated identity emergence, which takes place within a structure that constrains it. However, the structure is created and changed through practice. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) believe that they have overcome the troubling dichotomy between structure and agency through their sociocultural linguistic approach, which asserts that no specific activity can take place outside of the constraints of structure, but structure can only be realized in the specific acts of individual agents. A useful way to conceive of identity is, therefore, as constantly emerging through social interaction, which both draws upon, reinforces, and recreates larger structures that in turn influence further action and emergence, but are also dependent on it.

### **7.3 Methodology for Data Collection**

As already mentioned, the primary data for this analysis consist of the “worship sharing” that occurred at the beginning of the second meeting for business that was recorded. The meeting for business was transcribed in full. This instance lasted approximately twenty-six minutes, and representative excerpts have been selected here for focused analysis. Also considered in this analysis are the findings regarding understandings of Quaker identity from the analyses in previous chapters. Other

instances of “worship sharing” that I participated in during the other meetings for business and adult education hours that I attended have also been taken into account.

#### **7.4 Methodology for Data Analysis**

The first part of this analysis will be a brief overview of the act sequence of “worship sharing” as represented in the data. This form has already been described previously with reference to the meeting for business, so it will not be examined in great detail. The second part of the analysis will involve a closer analysis of representative excerpts from the “worship sharing” that focus on the distinction between being a “member” and being an “attender.” This analysis will draw on the framework of CuDA and the concepts of key cultural symbols and cultural premises, as discussed in Chapter 1. Analysis will also draw on research on the concept of identity that was overviewed above. Premises of being or personhood that relate to notions of a Quaker identity will be explicated, as well as premises of acting and relating. Two norms for participation in the community will also be suggested

#### **7.5 Descriptive Account of “Worship Sharing”: Participants, Setting, and Act Sequence**

The analysis in this chapter will focus on a particular instance of “worship sharing.” The communicative form of “worship sharing” has already been introduced in the chapter on meeting for business. It was defined for me by one Friend in an interview as distinct from “vocal ministry” during meeting for worship because it is when all those present have agreed to “ponder upon” a “specific subject,” whether it be some area of concern, the life of a person who has died, or a couple who is getting married. Another

Friend in a casual conversation told me that “worship sharing” is more “all over the place” than “discernment” during meeting for business, which is focused to a greater extent on the agenda and reaching a decision. In this way, there seems to be an understanding of a continuum extending from the sharing of “vocal ministry” in meeting for worship that is less focused on a topic, to “worship sharing” in which a topic is more defined, to “discernment” in meeting for business in which a topic is clearly defined and a decision is sought.

The participants that engaged in “worship sharing” here were those thirty-five participants that took part in the second recorded meeting for business. The setting was, therefore, the meeting room and the scene was meeting for business. Like the telling of a “spiritual journey” discussed in Chapter 6, there do seem to be more and less formal types of “worship sharing,” with the “worship sharing” at a meeting for business being on the more formal end of the continuum. “Worship sharing” also occurs during the adult education hours and during other group meetings. The discussion of “corporate discernment” that I recorded during the adult education hour and analyzed in Chapter 5 was followed by “worship sharing” at the end of the event.

“Worship sharing” in the opening part of the meeting for business is initiated by the clerk who begins the meeting after approximately one to three minutes of group silence, by reading a quote, which is followed by another couple of minutes of silence. The quotes that I heard and recorded were from the *Faith and Practice* of the Yearly Meeting, the minutes of the Yearly Meeting gathering, *Friends Journal*, and the writings of Quaker authors. The clerk then poses a question for reflection, called a “query.” The stating of the query is followed again by a couple of minutes of silence. Participants then

begin to stand and share messages that center on their understanding of and response to the proposed query. Normally at least fifteen seconds of silence are left between each message. These messages can vary in length from between twenty seconds to over three minutes. They may take the form of a quotation or a personal story, but are typically less structured. This “worship sharing” usually lasts between ten and twenty minutes. I did attend a meeting for business in which no one responded to the proposed query, so the group sat in silence during the “worship sharing” time. The clerk ends the “worship sharing” by welcoming participants to the meeting for business and beginning to introduce the agenda.

## **7.6 Analysis**

After I had transcribed the speech event of “worship sharing” at the beginning of the second meeting for business that I had recorded, I examined the instances of sharing by participants for key terms or symbols, as defined by CuDA. Similar to the analysis of written communication and elicited descriptions in the first two sections of Chapter 4, these symbols were chosen based primarily on frequency of co-occurrence within the data and potency in terms of their relationship to ideas that are central to Quakerism. I also looked for terms that could possibly be substituted for the key term of “meeting membership.” The following terms met the criteria of frequency of co-occurrence: “commitment,” which also occurred in the form of “commit” and “committed”; “community”; “open,” which also occurred in the form of “openness”; “participation,” which also occurred in the form of “participate”; and “relationship,” which also occurred in the form “relation.” “Commitment” was the most frequently occurring of these terms.

The following terms were selected based on potency: “continuing revelation,” “faith,” “leading,” “personal,” “seeker,” “spirit,” which also occurred as “spiritual,” and “unity.” Those cultural terms found in the “worship sharing” that could in some way be substituted for “meeting membership” included several listed above such as “commitment,” “participation,” and “relationship” as well as the term “involvement,” which also occurred in the form “involved.” I have included here the full transcript of this approximately twenty-six minutes of “worship sharing” with the key terms that I have identified in bold. Following the transcript, I will analyze some of the excerpts that include the instances of the terms that I have identified in order to explore the cultural meanings that are active when Friends discuss “membership” in the meeting.

1 (02:59.2)  
2 **Clerk:** As membership in the meeting (.) is membership in a **community** (1.6) the  
3 test of membership (.) is compatibility (.) with the meeting **community**. (1.9)  
4 Members join (.) because they desire to fit into the pattern of behavior peculiar to  
5 the meeting (.) and (.) find themselves (.) able to do so. (1.3) .hh The test of  
6 membership (.) is not a particular kind of religious experience (.) nor acceptance  
7 (.) of any religious belie- any particular religious social or economic creed. (2.2)  
8 Sincere religious experience and right religious belief are both important (1.5) but  
9 they develop in the course of **participation** in the activities of the meeting. (3)  
10 Anyone who can become so integrated with a meeting (.) that he helps the whole  
11 (1.3) and the whole helps him (1.4) is qualified to become a member.  
12 (01:53.8)  
13 **Adam:** I find that definition to be (.) very supportive (.) of my understanding of  
14 membership (3.1) and this seeing us as a **community** of **seekers** (1.9) which  
15 together is helpful (.) to each of us.  
16 (00:24.4)  
17 **C:** I now invite all us- all friends here to (.) ((noise of computer starting)) join in  
18 (.) a (.) continuation of this worship and worship sharing with a query (.) as  
19 follows. (1.3) Based on (.) your experience and your observations. (1.1) What  
20 does it mean to be a member of Glen Meeting? (2.7).hh What distinction do you see  
21 between being an attender (1.8) and being a member?  
22 (00:37.4)  
23 **Beth:** I- I have many questions about this (2.8) but I- I- I just want to say right now  
24 that (6.7) what you- what you read (1.4) and what (2) friend Adam said (.) eases my  
25 heart about this a lot.  
26 (00:31.4)

27 **Chris:** When I was in the [area] (.) somebody told me oh meetings in the [location]  
28 are much more formal. (1.2) You have to be a (.) member of the meeting before  
29 you're allowed to go to the business meeting (.) for example. (1.5) Uh (.) so I was (.)  
30 very much relieved to get out here and (.) notice that in this meeting at least (2.2)  
31 nobody really pays (.) much attention to who's members and who's not members  
32 (1.7) and it doesn't seem to uh (2.4) correlate with much. (.) We have (1.5) people  
33 who are members who a lot of us have never even (1) seen (.) and we have people  
34 here who we see all the time who are not members (3) and (2.6) I tried resigning my  
35 membership a few years ago but (.) [name] talked me out of it. ((laughter)) (5.4) I'm  
36 still don't know whether I should have listened to [name] or not. ((laughter)) (1.8) I  
37 don't really believe in the concept of membership. (1.1) The only value I see in it is  
38 first of all (.) it satisfies a few [state] laws (.7) for certain people and (1) it's (.)  
39 probably useful for people when they (1.6) apply for membership (1) to have a good  
40 conversation with a clearness committee (.8) about their **relation** to the meeting. (3)  
41 As far as I can see that's (.) the only advantage of it.  
42 (6.8)

43 **Donna:** I guess I come from a- another (2) side on this (.) um (2.1) and I think I think  
44 the decision (.5) between (2.4) remaining an attender and becoming a member is very  
45 **personal** (.) and probably what it means is most (1.5) important to the person (.) who  
46 decides to come (.) become a member. (1.5) And I'm not particularly concerned  
47 about the legalities and the rest of that (.) but (2.2) for me (.) it's (.) a **commitment**  
48 probably similar to the **commitment** I made in marriage (1) that (.8) this was really  
49 where I was going to cast my lot (1) and uh (1.8) the best thing I could say (.) uh in  
50 my (.) marriage (.) vows was that I would try hard (.) and uh (1) probably is what I  
51 ought to have said about my membership but ((soft laughter)) (.) you know at  
52 twenty-two we're very (.) very brave about what we're sailing into. (.) Um (.) I'm (.)  
53 a very different member than I was all those years ago (.6) but the fact of casting  
54 one's lot (.) um (1.3) and making that **commitment** (1.3) does make a difference  
55 through the thick and thin (1) of things (.) and (1) just as I've been discouraged with  
56 marriage at a few points (.5) not many (.) ↑but some (1.4) I have been with the  
57 meeting too (.) and thought you know (.) if this is the way my meeting is going to  
58 behave (.) I'm not sure ((laughter)) (1.6) and then I would come back to saying (.)  
59 this is the way my meeting is behaving. I am part of this (.) and if there is something  
60 here (.) that needs attention maybe (.) I am the one being called to work on this. This  
61 is- this is mine (.7) and um (2.4) this is where I have cast my lot (.) and I expect to  
62 stay (2.1) and um (.5) and in doing that I've been (.) received and held.  
63 (7.8)

64 **Earl:** And it has (in each way) I received a gift (.) when I finally applied to meeting.  
65 [name of yearly meeting] had a workshop about people who were long-standing  
66 attenders (.) and since I was in excess of fifteen years attender (.5) uh (.) it seemed to  
67 apply to me ((soft laughter)) (1.6) uh: (.) my reason for eventually applying (to)  
68 meeting is (.9) I couldn't see any distinction (.) and therefore ↑why not? ((laughter))  
69 (1) Although (.) when I actually thought about it more deeply what I realized is (.)  
70 that I was waiting to write the letter (.) asking for membership when I had fully  
71 worked out the mysteries of life (laughter) (.) and had a sense of my own **personal**  
72 theology. (1) At some point when I realized that was holding me back (.) it really

73 seemed stupid (.) and so I applied. ((laughter))  
74 (5.2)  
75 **Franklin:** My experience in coming here (.) was to (.) be specific with my previous  
76 affiliation .hh (.) that I was not going to transfer my membership (.5) but that I was  
77 simply (.) uh: (.8) leaving it (1) and that I had no (.) um (2) technical place (.) to  
78 move myself (.5) except into the presence (.5) of (.) uh (.) a meeting (.8) where (.) I  
79 found myself welcomed (1) and (1.3) I think the (.) experience (.) that's very  
80 important to me is (.) that I probably entered membership and spoke with my  
81 clearness committee (.) with more (.8) **faith** conviction than I now have. ((laughter))  
82 (1.3) Uh (.) and that is not because the meeting in somehow or another (1.3) um (.5)  
83 divested me of it (1) but that it left me very **open** (.) to um (1.5) uh (2.7) lay aside  
84 (2.5) traditional **faith** things that were not working for me (1) and in some ways I (.)  
85 now feel more like a babe (.) coming into the **faith** (1) uh (1) than (1.6) previously  
86 when I thought I came rather full-blown (1) and uh (.) so I appreciate the fact that  
87 (2.2) being totally **committed** (.) to the meeting (.5) means that I can be **committed**  
88 (.) to (.) starting afresh (.7) and (1) totally being **open**.  
89 (6)  
90 **Gina:** Um (1) I- I uh (1) I have a- a little different (.8) angle on it (.) um (.8) I uh (.) I  
91 also spent a- a great deal of time (.) I guess from (2) goodness (.) ei-eighty-one to (.)  
92 ninety-seven or (1) ninety-eight as an attender (.8) um (1.5) uh here and then I (.) I  
93 chose to become a member (.) I mean I felt the (.) that I was a **seeker** (.) and uh (.) I  
94 didn't want to be a finder at that point. I just (.) so I thought attending (.) being an  
95 attender was being a (2) Quaker. (1.5) Um (1) and I became a member (.) as I was  
96 leaving to- to move (.) out of state and wanting to have (.) a sense of uh **relationship**  
97 (.5) but (.5) today when I think about (.) membership (.) it's not for that sort of  
98 pragmatic or you know (.) uh (1.5) wanting to have an anchor up here (.5) um (.) and  
99 (.) and a (.) a formal **relationship**. (.7) Um (1) today (.) um (.) I feel that becoming a  
100 member of Glen Meeting the difference between being an attender and a (.8) and a  
101 member (.) uh (.) has to do with (.) uh (.7) for some people (.5) with a sense of  
102 comm- of of **involvement** and **participation** in a (.) in a degree of (.7) of (.) of a (.)  
103 history (.) and sort of international (1) uh (.) **relationships** (1) uh (.) as as Quakers  
104 (.7) becoming a (.8) identified not just as a member of this **community** of people at  
105 Glen Meeting but as a quaker and **participating** in the (.7) discussions and dialogues  
106 and challenges (.) uh (.) that come with being a Quaker in the world today and in  
107 this country today (1) um (.) and in some ways th-th-the ways in which it challenges  
108 (.) us to uh (.) to think (.) to **participate** with people we might not otherwise be (1)  
109 uh (1) **involved** with (.) uh (.) but to trust the process that comes with being a  
110 Quaker. (2) The process of discernment (1) and the style of communication (.5) so  
111 for me (.) **participation** in [name of yearly meeting] (.) I- I think is an important (.)  
112 uh (.5) thing that fertilizes us and (.) and that uh [wider Quaker organization] and  
113 [wider Quaker organization] and (.) the vast array of Quakers in the world (.) I think  
114 it's uh (.) I think that is something that (.) um (.) is enhanced that sense of  
115 **participation** in a larger (1) uh (.) discussion (.8) and **community** (.) worldwide.  
116 (3)  
117 **Hannah:** That's more similar to what I feel. (1) I think (.7) **commitment** to a local



118 **community** (.5) like a meeting (1.5) can be made and is made in many ways. (1)  
 119 Um (.7) for some people it's made with their feet (1) people who have been  
 120 **committed** and very active in the life of the meeting (.) for a long time (.) without  
 121 applying for membership (.8) um (1) and for them (.) their **commitment** is clear (.)  
 122 and witnessed to. (1) Um (.) for others (.5) to (1) somehow say to the local meeting  
 123 (.) I want you to know (.) y- (.) applying for membership is a way of saying (.) I  
 124 want you to know that I do (.) **commit** myself to you. I feel part of you (.5) for what  
 125 you've done for me or whatever (.8) but (.7) I think that (.7) um (1.5) many friends  
 126 in [location] were surprised when the personnel policy of [wider Quaker  
 127 organization] came up (.7) that in being a member of a local meeting (.7) you really  
 128 (.) uh- being a member of Glen Meeting this particular meeting (.5) you were joined  
 129 then you had some you were making some **commitment** (.8) to the associations that  
 130 go with that to [name of yearly meeting] to [wider friends organization] and to  
 131 [wider friends organization] (.7) and that is (.) a real (1) difficulty for some (.8) and  
 132 some in some meetings have resigned their membership because of it (.) because  
 133 they don't want to be connected with other Quakers like that. (1) So I think that  
 134 membership has kind of two (2) two pieces to it. (.) One is the local level (1) and  
 135 one (.) and (.) and sort of harm- harmony with that **community**. (.) But the other (.)  
 136 is how membership in Glen Meeting (.8) connects you with (.) as [name] says (.)  
 137 people you (1) might have to go some (.) to discover (.5) the (.5) **unity** between you  
 138 (.) in a larger **spirit**. (2) And I think (.) somehow (.) when I joined (.5) it's just a  
 139 **leading**. (6) Suddenly I mean I'd been attending for many years (.) and suddenly  
 140 God says ok time. (1) And you do it (.) just because of no reason. (.) You're not  
 141 showing anything (.) you're just saying ok (6) I'll do it and you just don't know  
 142 what you're getting into. ((laughter)) Same way with marriage. (.5) You say yup (.)  
 143 I'll do it (.) but we really (1) what **commitment** will require (.5) is a matter of  
 144 **continuing revelation**. ((laughter))  
 145 (4.3)  
 146 **Ivan:** As I look (.) at those two words (.) attender and member (2) I see  
 147 immediately come up (.5) well Ivan you're a (.) dyed-in-the-wool attender  
 148 aren't you? ((laughter)) (1) And um (.) so I- i- yes (.) I am. (.5) Um (.) so I'm  
 149 looking back. I'm looking back. Well (.) my **relationship** with Glen Meeting as an  
 150 attender has been a solid year (1) and my **relationship** with Quakers (1) prior to that  
 151 has been another solid year so that's two years with Quakers (.5) as an attender. (.)  
 152 And then (.) before that I was an attender with the [name] church (1) but never a  
 153 member. (.) I'm a dyed-in-the-wool attender. I'm going back and I'm trying to say  
 154 (.) when was my first sense of (.) what an attender I was (.5) and I'm all the way  
 155 back to (.) the day I was born. (.5) Um (.5) I'm just attending this planet. (.5) I'm not  
 156 a member. ((laughter)) (1) And that's (.) that's actually kind of clear. ((laughs)) (4)  
 157 The (.) the temporary nature of of my being here (.) um (.) and and the and the larger  
 158 the larger thing that I am a member of is is well beyond anything that I could- (2) I  
 159 find (1) I find myself being able to (.) to ask this question too.  
 160 (2) I can easily find on my lips (.) I'm- as a Quaker (.) I would do thus and thus (.) or  
 161 I ca- I can easily find myself saying that (.) and I can easily hear myself saying as a  
 162 theist (.) I think this and this (.) or (.) I can I can even hear myself saying as a  
 163 Christian (.) I think this and this (.) or as as an atheist (.) uh this is how I see it. (.5)

164 And I would feel fine with any of those statements that I make (.8) but I'm noticing  
 165 as as I'm listening to others talk (.) I'm noticing (.) those statements that I could  
 166 make. (.8) If I said as an atheist I think such and such I can hear the other person  
 167 saying ↑you are an atheist is that so? (.5) And if I said (.) as a Jew (.) I think such  
 168 and such (.) I would hear the other person saying ↑you- is that right, you're a Jew.  
 169 (.6) Uh (.) if I- if- or as a Catholic (.) I feel- ↑is that right you're a Catholic (.) when  
 170 was the last time? (1) But I I don't hear another Quaker saying ↑is that right (.)  
 171 you're a Quaker? (.8) I- I hear the complete **openness** of- of being able to say I'm a  
 172 Quaker and not having it questioned. (1) Attender or member (.5) it just (.) doesn't  
 173 matter here (.5) it seems. (.) The **open** is what happens here (1) and that's what I  
 174 attend (1) with- with all my heart. (1.2) You have all of my heart attending that.  
 175 (3.4)  
 176 **Jessica:** I w- (.) I think that (.) um when I became a member (.6) there was a slight  
 177 shift for me (.) and that was (.) in making a (.) a deeper (.) um (1.5) effort (.) uh (.)  
 178 **commitment** to understanding the practices of Friends (.) and (1) perhaps shedding  
 179 (.5) um (1) you know (.) some of the baggage of my um (.8) previous religious and  
 180 **spiritual** (.) experiences. (1) And (.) um (.) I'm wondering if I haven't noticed that  
 181 with others as well (.) and (.) I (.) think that maybe (1.5) that (1.5) it's not so  
 182 important to make that distinction between (.) long-term attendance or (1) um (2.4)  
 183 uh (2.2) **commitment** to membership (.5) as it is to (.) um (1) making for me the  
 184 distinction between (2.3) truly (1) letting go of some (.) old (1.5) baggage (.) of (.)  
 185 earlier (.7) religious training or (.) religious (.) um (.8) forms that no longer (.) work  
 186 (.) but that here at Glen Meeting (1) there is an **openness** (.) that (.) we (.) as a  
 187 **community** (.6) attempt to (1) provide for people to (.5) find (2) that which suits-  
 188 which fits the best (.) and (.) um (4.7) gives (ours) (.) gives a **spiritual** (1)  
 189 groundedness to our lives.  
 190 (7.4)  
 191 **C:** It seems clear we've struck a rich vein of ((soft laughter)) (.5) of thought (.) and  
 192 (.) I think it's beautiful (.) and (.) I think (.) I hear a word that it (.) ought to continue

In the following analysis, I will discuss the meanings associated with the key terms I have identified by focusing on specific excerpts in which they were used. The quote read by the clerk at the beginning of this “worship sharing” is from Brinton’s (1964) *Friends for 300 Years*. As mentioned above, “worship sharing” typically begins in this way, although in this case there was one message shared between the quote and the query, which is somewhat unusual. We see already in the quote and query in lines 2-11 and lines 19-21, examples of the key terms “community” and “participation,” as being a member of the meeting is defined in terms of being a participant in a community. A

particular type of religious experience or belief is described as unnecessary for membership. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, religious experience is understood to develop in the course of participation, through learning and practice, and it is this participation that is essential to membership. Further examples of these key symbols are found in the following excerpt:

*Excerpt 1:*

99 ..... Um (1) today (.) um (.) I feel that becoming a  
100 member of Glen Meeting the difference between being an attender and a (.8) and a  
101 member (.) uh (.) has to do with (.) uh (.7) for some people (.5) with a sense of  
102 comm- of of **involvement** and **participation** in a (.) in a degree of (.7) of (.) of a (.)  
103 history (.) and sort of international (1) uh (.) **relationships** (1) uh (.) as as Quakers  
104 (.7) becoming a (.8) identified not just as a member of this **community** of people at  
105 Glen Meeting but as a quaker and **participating** in the (.7) discussions and dialogues  
106 and challenges (.) uh (.) that come with being a Quaker in the world today and in  
107 this country today . . .

Here again we see the idea of “community,” but this time it takes in a broader community that includes an international community and a historical community of Quakers. This idea of a worldwide community was found in a couple of the messages; later it is noted that “involvement” in this wider “community” is not always easy as one must sometimes work hard to find “unity” in the “spirit” with Friends with different practices. “Unity” as a cultural concept has been discussed before in terms of the analysis of decision making processes in Chapter 5 and is understood by Friends to exist in tension with “unanimity,” in that “unity” does not necessarily mean everyone agreeing in a “sense of the meeting.” This definition is here applied to the search for “unity” with a wider Quaker community. Again the idea of “participation,” which is linked to the notion of “involvement,” comes up in this excerpt, emphasizing an active role in the community. Being active is also stressed in the following excerpt:

*Excerpt 2:*

117 **Hannah:** That's more similar to what I feel. (1) I think (.7) **commitment** to a local  
118 **community** (.5) like a meeting (1.5) can be made and is made in many ways. (1)  
119 Um (.7) for some people it's made with their feet (1) people who have been  
120 **committed** and very active in the life of the meeting (.) for a long time (.) without  
121 applying for membership (.8) um (1) and for them (.) their **commitment** is clear (.)  
122 and witnessed to. (1) Um (.) for others (.5) to (1) somehow say to the local meeting  
123 (.) I want you to know (.) y- (.) applying for membership is a way of saying (.) I  
124 want you to know that I do (.) **commit** myself to you.

As mentioned, the key term of “commitment,” which appears in this example, was the most common of the symbols identified in this analysis. It occurs here with reference to a “commitment” to a “community.” This “commitment” is not understood as depending solely on “membership,” but also on going to meeting and being “very active in the life of the meeting for a long time.” This description seems to highlight again the concepts of “participation” and “involvement.” The definition of the symbol of “commitment” is offered in the selected excerpts below; “commitment” to the meeting is here defined as a “commitment” similar to marriage or to “casting one’s lot.”

*Excerpt 3:*

47 ..... for me (.) it's (.) a **commitment**  
48 probably similar to the **commitment** I made in marriage (1) that (.8) this was really  
49 where I was going to cast my lot (1) and uh (1.8) the best thing I could say (.) uh in  
50 my (.) marriage (.) vows was that I would try hard (.) and uh (1) probably is what I  
51 ought to have said about my membership but ((soft laughter)) (.) you know at  
52 twenty-two we're very (.) very brave about what we're sailing into. (.) Um (.) I'm (.)  
53 a very different member than I was all those years ago (.6) but the fact of casting  
54 one's lot (.) um (1.3) and making that **commitment** (1.3) does make a difference  
55 through the thick and thin (1) of things . . .

*Excerpt 4:*

141 ..... you're just saying ok (6) I'll do it and you just don't know  
142 what you're getting into. ((laughter)) Same way with marriage. (.5) You say yup (.)  
143 I'll do it (.) but we really (1) what **commitment** will require (.5) is a matter of  
144 **continuing revelation**. ((laughter))

The Quaker belief in “continuing revelation” also describes an element of this “commitment” as not predefined, but as extending into an unknown future in which one trusts and has “faith.” The cultural term of “leading” identified in this “worship sharing” also becomes relevant in terms of this trust in the future. As mentioned before, the word “leading” is used among Friends to indicate an action that one feels called to take, often an action to address some injustice in the world. In this example, a Friend describes deciding to become a “member” as a “leading” that one feels summoned to follow, without knowledge of what it will require in the future.

The ideas that the “commitment” of “membership” is not predefined and that there is the Light within each person combine in the Quaker belief in “openness,” which was discussed in the introduction. In this “worship sharing,” Friends note that in joining the meeting, part of the “commitment” that is made is a “commitment” to being “open” to others.

*Excerpt 5:*

86 ..... and uh (.) so I appreciate the fact that  
87 (2.2) being totally **committed** (.) to the meeting (.5) means that I can be **committed**  
88 (.) to (.) starting afresh (.7) and (1) totally being **open**.

*Excerpt 6:*

180 ..... And (.) um (.) I’m wondering if I haven’t noticed that  
181 with others as well (.) and (.) I (.) think that maybe (1.5) that (1.5) it’s not so  
182 important to make that distinction between (.) long-term attendance or (1) um (2.4)  
183 uh (2.2) **commitment** to membership (.5) as it is to (.) um (1) making for me the  
184 distinction between (2.3) truly (1) letting go of some (.) old (1.5) baggage (.) of (.)  
185 earlier (.7) religious training or (.) religious (.) um (.8) forms that no longer (.) work  
186 (.) but that here at Glen Meeting (1) there is an **openness** (.) that (.) we (.) as a  
187 **community** (.6) attempt to (1) provide for people to (.5) find (2) that which suits-  
188 which fits the best (.) and (.) um (4.7) gives (ours) (.) gives a **spiritual** (1)  
189 groundedness to our lives.

Being “open” to others and to “spiritual” experience entails in part a continued “seeking,” which connects to early Quakers describing themselves as “seekers.” One Friend makes this direct connection, when she defines being a Quaker as being a “seeker.”

*Excerpt 7:*

93 . . . . . I mean I felt the (.) that I was a **seeker** (.) and uh (.) I  
94 didn’t want to be a finder at that point. I just (.) so I thought attending (.) being an  
95 attender was being a (2) Quaker.

In this way, remaining an attender represents a continued “seeking,” which is the embodiment of the Quaker search for “continuing revelation.” Another Friend in his sharing defines the community as a “community of seekers” that help each other in their search.

Finally, the key term of “personal” that occurs in the “worship sharing,” along with the predominance of phrases such as “for me,” “I think,” and “I feel” demonstrate the emphasis on individual experience that is understood to underlie a decision to become a member. As one Friend observes in her sharing:

*Excerpt 8:*

43 **Donna:** I guess I come from a- another (2) side on this (.) um (2.1) and I think I think  
44 the decision (.5) between (2.4) remaining an attender and becoming a member is very  
45 **personal** (.) and probably what it means is most (1.5) important to the person (.) who  
46 decides to come (.) become a member.

The co-occurrence of ideas regarding “participation” in and “commitment” to a “community,” with the assertion that what “membership” means is “personal” again represents the balancing of individual and social forces that has been noted throughout the analyses in these chapters. Cultural meanings surrounding “membership” in Glen Meeting involve both elements of this dialectic.

## 7.7 Cultural Premises of “Membership” in Glen Meeting and the Enacting of Quaker Identity

Based on the above articulation of key cultural terms that occur in the “worship sharing” that took place at the beginning of the recorded meeting for business, it is possible to identify certain cultural propositions about “membership” in Glen Meeting. As described in Chapter 1, these propositions employ the participants’ own terms in order to describe cultural meaning from an insider’s perspective. Several propositions are included in the following table.

Table 20: Cultural Propositions of “Membership”

Membership in Glen Meeting is membership in a “community” that depends more on “participation” and “involvement” than on formally joining.
Membership in Glen Meeting is a “commitment” to a “relationship” with a local and global “community” and a search for “unity” with others in this “community.”
The decision to become a “member” in Glen Meeting is a “personal” one and means different things to different people and can be understood as a “leading.”
Membership in Glen Meeting means belonging to a “community” of “seekers.”
Membership in Glen Meeting is a “commitment” to being “open” to others and to different “spiritual” experiences and to having “faith” in “continuing revelation.”

These cultural propositions can be seen as privileging certain ways of acting and relating to others. The analyst can abstract from these propositions certain premises or values of acting and relating that are active when Friends consider membership in Glen Meeting.

These premises are articulated here.

Table 21: Cultural Premises of Acting and Relating and “Membership”

It is valued for members to participate and be involved in the meeting community.
It is valued for members to feel connected to and to feel an obligation to interact with both the local and global community of Quakers.
It is valued for a person to make his or her own decision about why he or she desires to become a member without feeling pressure to become a member.
It is valued for members to continue to search for a fulfilling religious experience.
It is valued for members to be accepting of the different practices of other members and of non-members and to be open to non-members making their own decisions about whether or not to become members.

The characteristic of membership in Glen Meeting that seems distinctive and worthy of notice here is the extent to which membership is conceived of as an active process of doing. Not only is it dependent on participating and being involved, but there is a constant searching that makes up membership. The act of becoming a member may be a culminating moment, but it is the practice of “attending” that is central and that continues to be the focus even after a person has become a member. As one Friend cited here observed, to be a Quaker is to be a *seeker*.

It is also interesting to consider this emphasis on practice in terms of the sharing of Ivan in which he observes that he could imagine other atheists, Catholics, or Jewish people questioning whether he was or was not a member of their group, but he could not imagine other Quakers questioning that he was a Quaker. This observation calls to mind the work of Wieder and Pratt (1990) on the ways of behaving that one must engage in to be considered an Indian by other Indians. Part of this action involves knowing and applying the appropriate criteria to recognize others who are Indian. Wieder and Pratt (1990) write,



Being a real Indian is not a material thing that can be possessed and displayed. It consists of those patterns of appropriate conduct that are articulated in such a way that they are visible and recognizable to other Indians as specifically Indian ways of conducting oneself. In the performance of these visible patterns, being a real Indian is realized. We have spoken of being and becoming a real Indian to stress the never-ending processual character of realizing one's Indianness and of demonstrating that one is a real Indian. Not only are there strangers to be met who will silently question any Indian's Indianness, and, thus, the demonstration must begin once again from the beginning, but also the demonstration must continue for those, such as members of one's own family, who have stood as one's witnesses for all of one's life. (p. 63)

Just as Wieder and Pratt (1990) identify certain criteria for being a real Indian, such as how one interacts with strangers and family and how one recognizes other real Indians, it would seem that we can, based on the above premises, identify two criteria of being Quaker, namely that as a Quaker one should continue to "seek" (this seeking would seem to be both to be a better person and to have more fulfilling spiritual experiences) and that one should be open to and accepting of others and not question their "Quakerness." In CuDA (Carbaugh, 2007), these two ideas could be formalized as two norms for proper action, including:

1. In the context of the meeting community of Glen Meeting, if one wants to belong to the community (as either a "member" or an "attender"), one ought to continue to pursue self-improvement and more meaningful religious experience.
2. In the context of the meeting community of Glen Meeting, if one wants to belong to the community (as either a "member" or an "attender"), one ought not to question the belonging of others.

I am formulating these as ideals that guide behavior or the interpretation of it, rather than rules that are always followed. It was noted that in their comments during the "worship sharing" recorded here, Friends recognized that it is sometimes difficult to find "unity" with others in the Quaker community, but the recognition that this is a struggle that is not always possible is a recognition that the pursuit of this ideal is something considered

worthy and important in the community. These two norms seem to work together to shape the actions and communicative practices of both “members” and “attenders” in the meeting, creating an environment that emphasizes constant seeking combined with an openness toward outsiders. Whereas in other religious communities, such as those described by Greenhouse (1986) or Shoaps (2002), a person might not be fully accepted until he or she had undergone a public conversion experience, among Friends this public display is not necessary or expected. Rather the view of membership as personal means that Friends in Glen Meeting will accept that a person has become a “member” of the community if he or she shows a willingness to engage with the community. Thus, they are very welcoming to non-members who show an interest in participating in the community for an extended period of time. This emphasis on constant seeking along with an openness to the practices of others would also seem to have important implications for the observation made earlier that Friends have often been at the forefront of many social movements. The combination of these two norms would appear to facilitate a process of adaptation that is in line with a belief in “continuing revelation” and may explain the ability of Friends to adapt to changing times.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

Given that membership in the wider Quaker community is only possible through membership in an individual meeting, a direct link can be made between membership in a meeting and the concept of Quaker identity. The Quaker case seems unique in that the emphasis on “doing” rather than any outside characteristic is so central to what it means to be a Quaker. While Wieder and Pratt (1990) emphasize action in their account of what

it means to be an Indian, there is still an idea of ethnicity that plays a role in this type of identity construction. The presence of an outward distinguishing characteristic is seemingly missing from the Quaker example, in terms of unprogrammed, liberal Quakers at Glen Meeting, placing the full focus on what one does.<sup>73</sup> The fact that there is a term for being an “attender” highlights this value that Friends place on the action of being present and participating. What is particularly noteworthy about this notion of action from the perspective of a scholar of communication is the role of the communicative events that make up this “doing” of “being” a Quaker. “Doing” being a Quaker is constituted through participation in meetings for worship, meetings for business, and adult education hours, along with other meeting activities, which have been found in this and previous chapters to be composed of the communicative actions of “silence,” “vocal ministry,” “corporate discernment,” telling a “spiritual journey” and “worship sharing.” What it means to be a Quaker can, thus, be described as engaging in certain communication practices.

This chapter and the preceding three have described central speech events that constitute community at Glen Meeting. Cultural propositions and premises informing these events have been formulated in order to explicate the meaningfulness of them to meeting participants. Key ideas about “silence” as a cultural symbol, an indirect Quaker style, stories about “convincement,” and what it means to be a Quaker have all been explored in depth. I will now move in the next chapter to another mode of analysis in

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<sup>73</sup> It is necessary to note that there were periods in history when Friends were much less open to outsiders and people were “read out” of the meeting for marrying outside of meeting. However, this discussion centers on Quaker identity as it is enacted at this particular time in Glen Meeting, recognizing that in other meetings and at other times, Quaker identity is and was done differently. There have also been many discussions within the Religious Society of Friends regarding the group’s actual openness to different races and ethnicities in comparison with their professed openness. For more discussion of this issue see McDaniel and Julye (2009), cited previously.

order to compare Quaker communicative practices to the practices of another faith community. This comparative stance will highlight the distinctiveness of these practices, but also bring to light some interesting similarities that might not at first be evident.

## CHAPTER 8

### COMPARISON WITH COMMUNICATION DURING CATHOLIC MASS

#### 8.1 Introduction

The inspiration for this chapter came from overhearing a conversation at a Quaker event in another city before I had begun official fieldwork. One Friend was asking another about her religious experiences, and this second Friend noted that she was both a Quaker and a Catholic. The first Friend responded, to my surprise, with a comment implying that this made sense because these two traditions have a lot in common. Since overhearing that conversation, I have heard reference to Friends who are called “Quatholics,” in that they practice both Quakerism and Catholicism. This combination may seem surprising to some who associate Quakerism with other forms of Protestantism and may experience the openness of Quaker worship as in direct contrast with the structure that organizes Catholic Mass. I believe there are also many Quakers who would consider the communication practices of Friends and Catholics quite different. Overhearing this conversation made me curious to explore this comparison in more depth.

I became further intrigued by the idea of a comparison of the practices of these two faiths following an interview with a member of Glen Meeting in which this Friend described the “gathered” meeting as both “baptism” and “communion.” She observed, however, that while a priest “makes” “communion” happen, participants cannot make a “gathered” meeting take place. Earlier in the interview, knowing I had been raised Roman Catholic, this Friend had told me that she had an experience she thought I would

be interested in. She then recounted the following story about what had happened to her during a recent visit to a local Benedictine monastery:<sup>74</sup>

While the Eucharist is being prepared, there's this silence, and for the second time, words came up, in that silence. You know in the way that I would be led to speak, but I didn't feel it was- so I asked to see one of the nuns. I said, could I, meet with somebody about this. So, Sister [name], so we sat, and I said to her- I said this experience had happened to me. Actually I prefaced it by saying . . . first I want to say that I think, Quakers and Roman Catholics are very close because you believe that in the Eucharist, there's a real presence. And that's what Quakers believe too. That what you seek is not remembrance. George Fox- we don't have to remember anything, because it's right here. It's possible, right here, right now. And that's exactly what the Catholic Eucharist is about, that kind of sense of, we are joined right now, right here, and that's what happens in meeting. So I feel quite comfortable here, and I love the silence. . . . so I said, in my experience, you know, when this kind of thing is happening, so words will rise up and you're feeling in that space of real presence, together, and words rise up, and they rose up, and I didn't speak them here. But I said, I have had the experience also of feeling that somebody had a message, that wasn't spoken, and, needed to be . . . I said I wanted to see you because I wonder if I need to speak the message that was coming to me in that silence this morning. So the first thing she said, she said well, she leans over, the first thing I have to say is, you didn't have an experience this morning, you were in another state. You were in heaven with Jesus. I knew exactly what she meant.

This Friend went on to say that the nun was right because what she had felt was not an experience “with [her] body.” She observed that she would not have said she was “in heaven with Jesus,” but this description captured what had happened. She asserted that she and the nun “understood each other perfectly.”

This chapter will explore cultural premises of communication active during the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer in the Catholic Mass with an aim of comparing these to cultural premises active when the “gathered” or “covered” meeting is talked about and participated in. Research questions include: *What are some of the cultural meanings associated with the communicative practice in the Roman Catholic tradition of saying*

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<sup>74</sup> It is interesting to note that this Friend is talking about a Benedictine community, and the work by Hoffman (2007) cited earlier was on organizing in several Benedictine communities.

*prayers during Mass?* and *What are the similarities and differences between the cultural meanings associated with the Quaker communicative practice of the “gathered” meeting and the Catholic communicative practice of saying prayers during Mass?* The goal here is to examine how practices that outwardly appear so different can in fact share underlying assumptions, which allow participants in these practices, when talking about them, to understand each other “perfectly.”<sup>75</sup>

## **8.2 Methodology for Data Collection**

The central event of the Roman Catholic Mass is the Eucharist, also called Holy Communion, which is the blessing and eating and drinking of bread and wine, reenacting and commemorating the last meal that Jesus of Nazareth, or Jesus Christ, had with his disciples before being put to death by crucifixion. It is believed that Jesus, considered the son of God in the Catholic Church, was a man of Jewish origin who traveled and taught about God (sharing the “word” of God) during the first half of the first century in the Roman Empire. He is said to have been put to death at the age of thirty-three at the command of Pontius Pilate, the governor of the Roman Judea Province at that time. According to the Catholic faith, Jesus rose from the dead three days after having been killed, appeared to his followers, and then ascended into heaven. The three most important and most holy beings in the Catholic Church are thus God, Jesus Christ, and

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<sup>75</sup> I would like to note that my conclusions in terms of Catholic cultural premises here are preliminary. I did not do fieldwork in a Catholic community, outside of my experience as an actively practicing Catholic over a period of approximately twenty years. There is a large body of research addressing interpretations of Catholic communication practices in the Mass and in specific communities. I draw on only some of this literature here, with the aim more of highlighting the distinctiveness of the communicative practices of a Quaker speech community than with that of actually explicating practices in a Catholic community. I recognize that as a result, the analysis is not as thorough as it could be, but I hope that this comparison serves, nevertheless, to point toward dimensions of similarity and difference that could be explored more fully in future work.

the Holy Spirit, who is believed to have been sent by Jesus to his followers after he was killed in order to inspire them to spread his message.

The Eucharist includes both the preparation and blessing of the bread and wine, representing Jesus' body and blood, as well as the consumption of these by participants in Mass. It occurs toward the end of the Catholic Mass. The priest blesses the bread and wine through saying the Eucharistic Prayer. The prayer is read aloud by the priest, standing at the front of the church on the altar, facing the rest of the participants, with the bread and wine on the table in front of him. Parts of the prayer also involve responses from the other participants as a group, as well as singing. In the United States, participants alternate at set times between sitting, standing, and kneeling during the blessing of the Eucharist. The priest bows several times while saying the prayer, and he holds up first the bread and then the wine when referring to them.

The Eucharistic Prayer can be found in the *Roman Missal*, which is the liturgical book containing the texts of the Roman Catholic Mass (called *Missale Romanum* in Latin). According to the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the assembly of bishops from the United States and U.S. Virgin Islands “who jointly exercise certain pastoral functions on behalf of the Christian faithful in the United States,” (<http://www.usccb.org/whoweare.shtml#history>) in the early days of the church, there were no books containing liturgical prayers or other instructions. However, according to the USCCB, “because the faith of the Church was (and still is) articulated in liturgical prayer, there was a need for consistency and authenticity in the words used in the celebration of the Liturgy” (<http://www.nccbuscc.org/romanmissal/resources-background.shtml>). Jungmann (1951) in his account of the history of the books of the



Roman Mass observes that the books of the old Roman liturgy were initially “divided according to the persons or groups performing the prescribed actions” so that there was a book for the priest or bishop, books for the various readers, a book of texts for the group of singers, a book for the lead singer who sang “the old traditional responsorial chants between the lessons,” and, finally, “the book of directions to help regulate the functions, in view of the great array of liturgical factors, especially for the rites that occur only on certain days of the year” (p. 60). Different collections of prayers used in different places were called *libelli* or “booklets.” Eventually larger, more organized collections of prayers called “sacramentaries” were compiled; Jungmann (1951) observes that three different versions of the Roman Sacramentary “have come down to us, giving us three different plans for the priest’s part of the liturgy, and thus furnishing us with another proof that as the period of Christian antiquity came to a close, there was little thought of a form for the Mass prayers that would be once and for all fixed and firm” (p. 61). The first of these sacramentaries are attributed to Pope Leo I (440-461) and Pope Gelasius I (492-496). The first “missals” come from around the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and they contained prayers as well as “biblical readings, the chants, and the rubrics for the celebration of Mass” (<http://www.nccbuscc.org/romanmissal/resources-background.shtml>). The first book called the *Missale Romanum* was published in 1474, and the first *Missale Romanum* that was required for use in all churches was distributed by Pope Pius V following the Council of Trent in 1570 <sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The Council of Trent was a series of meetings held by the Church of Rome during the Counter-Reformation period in response to the Protestant movement in Europe. The meetings were held between 1545-1563 (Baquedano-Lopez, 2008). During these meetings “abuses” of the Mass or practices considered questionable, such as the saying of multiple Masses in a series for a deceased person or having private Masses said with a particular intention, were collected and considered in the formulation of the standardized Mass (Jungmann, 1951, p. 129-134)

(<http://www.nccbuscc.org/romanmissal/resources-background.shtml>). Since then, new editions have been developed in 1604, 1634, 1884, 1920, 1962, 1970, 1975, and 2002. There have also been many minor revisions, including some published most recently in 2008. The English translation of the most recent major revisions from 2002 will begin to be used in the United States on November 27, 2011. My analysis is based, therefore, on the earlier edition, which was promulgated in the 1970s following the major reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) (2002), which is the text that describes the form of the order of Mass in the *Roman Missal* and was added in the 1970s following the Second Vatican Council, describes the Eucharistic Prayer as follows:

Now the center and summit of the entire celebration begins: namely the Eucharistic Prayer, that is, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification. The priest invites the people to lift up their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he unites the congregation with himself in the prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the meaning of the Prayer is that the entire congregation of the faithful should join itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice. The Eucharistic Prayer demands that all listen to it with reverence and in silence. (p. 40)

The priest may choose among various versions of the Eucharistic Prayer, including four “regular” Eucharistic Prayers, as well as other versions for special occasions. There are also several different parts of the Eucharistic Prayer. According to the GIRM, these parts include Thanksgiving, Acclamation, Epiclesis, Institution narrative and consecration, Anamnesis, Offering, Intercessions, and Final doxology. The two parts selected here for analysis are the Epiclesis and the Institution narrative and consecration. The GIRM states that, in the Epiclesis, “by means of particular invocations, the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become

Christ's Body and Blood, and that the spotless Victim to be received in Communion be for the salvation of those who will partake of it" (2002, p. 40). In the Institution narrative and consecration, "by means of words and actions of Christ, the Sacrifice is carried out which Christ himself instituted at the Last Supper, when he offered his Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine, gave them to his Apostles to eat and drink, and left them the command to perpetuate this same mystery" (GIRM, 2002, p. 41). The text of these parts of the prayer was found online under the Catholic Resources link of the website of the Loyola Institute for Spirituality, and they are excerpts from the English translation of the *Roman Missal* published in 1973 (<http://www.loyolainstitute.org/cats.php>). I selected to focus on these two parts because they seem to constitute the central portion of the speech event of the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer in that they represent a calling on God to bless the bread and wine and the reenactment of Jesus' words at his last supper.

My background in the area of Catholic worship includes approximately twelve years of regular or weekly Mass attendance, and approximately eight years of irregular or monthly Mass attendance. My family on my mother's side is Catholic, and many attend Mass regularly. During my elementary and junior high school years, I attended weekly Catholic religious education, also called CCD or Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. When I was in sixth grade, I was confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church.

### **8.3 Relevant Literature on Religious Language and the Roman Catholic Mass**

The introductory chapter contained a summary of some key themes of research on religious language, as articulated by Keane (1997). I would like here to build on this

initial summary with a more specific focus on language in religious communication as it informs a comparison between Quaker practice and the Roman Catholic Mass. As Kouega (2008) writes in his research on language use in the Catholic Church in Cameroon, the Catholic Mass “has a canonical structure” that is “scrupulously followed by priests and their parishioners” (p. 142). As the discussion above of the care taken in revising, translating, and distributing the *Roman Missal* would seem to indicate, there does appear to be a great deal of uniformity in how the Catholic Mass is celebrated around the world.<sup>77</sup> In citing the work of Trudell (2004) also in Cameroon, Kouega (2008) connects language choice in Catholic Mass in the small, rural location where Trudell works to the availability of liturgical texts in a particular language; in other words, the ability to choose which language to use in Mass by multilingual participants depends at least in part on translation of these texts. While Kouega (2008) notes that the lack of a translation plays less of a role in affecting language choice in the large, cosmopolitan city where he conducts his research, what is important to note here is that the conducting of Catholic Mass is felt to require, at least in part, a translation of the accepted texts. It is not appropriate to improvise or produce impromptu translation for the purposes of saying Mass in a specific language that might lack an official translation. Thus, we see that the saying of Catholic Mass is not a spontaneous event, but a highly scripted one.

The absence of spontaneity in Catholic Mass contrasts sharply with the practices of some Protestant religious groups, such as those studied by Bland (1990), Shoaps

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<sup>77</sup> I have participated in Mass in both French in France and Spanish in Mexico, and to the extent that I understand these languages, there did seem to be consistency with the English version of Mass.

(2002), and Sequeira (1994).<sup>78</sup> In his work with the Bible Temple community, which traces its origins to the Pentecostal movement although it does not identify as Pentecostal, Bland (1990) found that the “characteristic most pervasive and indicative of a person’s sincerity was spontaneity” (p. 8). In this community, spontaneity is understood to stand in opposition to “form and ritual,” which are viewed as “stifling” (Bland, 1990, p. 8). Bland (1990) explains, “spontaneity governed the body posture used whether kneeling, standing, lifting hands, pacing, or sitting. It governed the prayer form used: chanting, singing, speaking in tongues, or speaking in English” (p. 8). Bland (1990) also notes that, while an outsider might initially think that due to the “informality” of the group, members must be “receptive and open to all forms of prayer and worship,” in fact, “upon closer observation, there are forms and elements that are definitely excluded” (p. 9). Two of these forms and elements that are not included, according to Bland (1990), are “liturgy and silence”; he observes that “formally read prayers would be inappropriate” (p. 9). Bland (1990) also explains that due to the anti-liturgical nature of the community, new material, such as song lyrics, must be produced on a fairly regular basis. Shoaps (2002) also notes this tension between spontaneity and scripted texts in her work with two Assembly of God congregations, whose origins also stem from the Pentecostal movement. Shoaps (2002) explains that spontaneity in these congregations appears to be tied to “notions of authenticity” regarding religious experience (p. 41). However, the tension between scripted texts and spontaneity is addressed by participants through drawing on certain features of communication to indicate that what they are saying is deeply felt and applicable to their specific situation, even if they did not author it.

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<sup>78</sup> Greenhouse (1986) also cites spontaneity as a characteristic of the prayer of the Southern Baptists with whom she worked.

Drawing on some of the ideas discussed earlier in Keane's (1997) work regarding distinctions in participation roles, Shoaps (2002) writes that the ideal of prayer in this context is that "the animator, principal, and author" of the prayer are all the same (p. 53). However, when scripted texts are drawn on, certain stylized features of speech, "collude to create a climate of heartfelt meaning, where the enmeshed themes of earnestness, spontaneity, emotional openness, and timeliness all contribute to removing any doubt about who is the principal—if not the author—of the prayer or songs of praise" (Shoaps, 2002, p. 61). This process represents what Keane (1997) describes as entextualization and contextualization. Drawing on the work of Bauman and Briggs (1990) and Silverstein and Urban (1996), Keane (1997) explains that one of the ways in which "speech can manifest the presence of divine" is through entextualization, or "the process of rendering discourse extractable, . . . [so that] it can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (p. 62). This process "emphasizes the internal cohesion and autonomy of a stretch of discourse, permitting it to form a text (whether oral or written) that is perceived to remain constant across contexts" (Keane, 1997, p. 63). Through entextualization and recontextualization then, readings of scripture or prayer can come to represent in a new context the presence of the divine. In her work with "neo-Pentecostals" in an Episcopalian church, Sequeira (1994) also observes the enactment of certain types of behavior that are considered recognizable and acceptable indications that the Holy Spirit is present when participants speak in tongues. Sequeira (1994) explains that "frenzied behavior or violent outbursts are not acceptable performances and are not considered to be from the Holy Spirit" (p. 131). She discusses the way instances of speaking in tongues are legitimated through interpretation by another community member. If an individual

interprets his or her own message, this interpretation must “adhere to certain criteria” in order to be considered a message from the Holy Spirit (Sequeira, 1994, p. 131). Sequeira (1994) argues that the range of behaviors through which an individual presents a message is limited due to his or her socio-cultural context. Thus, “ritual performance” “emerges in the spontaneous forms of worship that accompany the gifts of the Spirit” (Sequeira, 1994, p. 133). In a manner similar to the spontaneous use of text in the community with which Shoaps (2002) worked, the spontaneity of “charismatic renewal” observed by Sequeira (1994), seems to be consistently connected to certain identifiable and interpretable means of communication.

The issues of spontaneity and stylized features of talk have both been discussed in relation to Quaker communicative practices in meeting for worship and meeting for business, in particular with reference to a Quaker “way of speaking.” I have also drawn on the idea of a participation framework when analyzing the distinctions between the speaker, composer, and source of messages in “gathered” meetings. These ideas are again relevant here in this comparison with the highly formulaic prayers said during the Catholic Mass and the participant framework that can be viewed as structuring the acts of this speech event. Also, the concepts of entextualization and contextualization can serve as a basis for understanding certain characteristics of prayer during Catholic Mass, in comparison with Quaker meeting, as will be discussed below.

Given the devaluing of spontaneity in Catholic Mass, it becomes evident that this characteristic is not connected with sincerity or authentic religious experience, as it is in the cases described above by Bland (1990), Shoaps (2002), and Sequeira (1994). The words of the Mass must, therefore, take on significance in a different manner. In her

analysis of religious reading activities in Spanish-based Catholic religious instruction (*doctrina*) for Mexican immigrant children, Baquedano-López (2008) explores the way in which exercises of collaborative reading enact a ritualization process that constructs texts as sacred.<sup>79</sup> Citing Bourdieu (1990, p. 69), Baquedano-López (2008) discusses processes of religious socialization that draw on the body and language “as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off at a distance in space and time by the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which *recalls* the associated thoughts and feelings” (p. 582). In this way, collective rituals “provide ways to remember, *re-cognize*, and act according to already internalized patterns of conduct” (Baquedano-López, 2008, p. 582). We can again cite Sequeira’s (1994) assertion in her work on “charismatic renewal” that “ritual performance” is “an enactment of the sacred” that serves as “a cultural form linking individuals to the community constituting their particular religious experience” (p. 127). Through language socialization, such as *doctrina*, participants learn cultural competencies, and social institutions may be reproduced, transformed, or resisted. In her analysis, Baquedano-López examines the participation framework of prayers learned by children taking part in *doctrina* instruction. The particular prayer she observes being read, the Act of Contrition (AOC), is not a text “of divine revelation,” in other words it is not considered the “Word of God,” but it is a “sacralized text” that was “sanctioned by the Council of Trent” (discussed earlier with reference to the *Roman Missal*) and is “read, studied, memorized, and recited as part of the preparation to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation,” which is “a religious rite where priests mediate the absolution of sins” (Baquedano-López, 2008, p. 587). Baquedano-López (2008)

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<sup>79</sup> *Doctrina* are the Spanish-language version of the Catholic education classes I attended as a child and teenager.



understands the small-group reading activities engaged in by the teachers and students in the *doctrina* classes as a process of ritualization, explaining “a focus on ritualization as a process invites a departure from seeing ritual as the end goal or as (an automatic) routine and to consider it as an activity involving sustained concentration and cognitive engagement” (p. 588). Baquedano-López (2008) focuses on the way in which ritualization in this context controls the body, encouraging focused attention, and engages the children in considering with the teacher how the text is relevant to their own situation. This reflects Keane’s (1997) concept of entextualization, in calling attention to how, through their joint reading and commenting on the prayer, teachers and students are also constructing texts, creating “a unique version of how that text matters to them in the present moment and as a blueprint for future action” (Baquedano-López, 2008, p. 597). Reading in this context serves a “sacralizing function” of the text (Baquedano-López, 2008, p. 586). Baquedano-López’s (2008) analysis is of interest here in that it represents the learning of a Catholic prayer, and her discussion of how this text comes to have sacred meaning for these children has implications for the meaningfulness of the saying of prayers during Catholic Mass.

The research cited above has also called attention to the body positions that are understood to be appropriate during various forms of worship. In my discussion of Quaker meeting for worship, I emphasized that bodily coordination in part constitutes communal “silence.” It is also important to consider posture with relation to prayers said during the Catholic Mass. In an analysis of the revisions of the GIRM, Ommen (2006) examines the implications of changes in instructions for how participants should hold themselves during Catholic Mass. Ommen (2006) emphasizes the “meaningfulness of

faithful bodies” and how “the revised GIRM brings to the surface a tension in Catholic practice, and perhaps other institutional practices, between an individuated liberalism and a more corporate mode of life” (p. 371). In his argument, Ommen (2006) stresses a conflict in the Catholic Church’s attention to bodies, in that while “the Church desires corporate uniformity,” it does not want this to render arbitrary “the individual choice to comport” (p. 377). Ommen (2006) draws on theories of gaze and disciplining vision, citing both Foucault (1995) and Lacan (1981), to emphasize the problems that the church faces in that “Catholicism needs both uniformity and individual choice” and the church “seeks to construct a corporate ‘people of God’ by way of individual choice while resisting the atomization of liberalism” (p. 378). Posture functions, according to Ommen (2006), both at “the individual and corporate level—posture is both an individual relation to prayer, and a corporate mode of comportment” (p. 379). In this way, the positioning of the body relates to both individual and communal practice, and how one acts in the view of others has implications for the formation and enactment of community. Ommen (2006) cites Heinen (2003) as claiming that the revisions of the GIRM “aim for a more uniform practice of the Mass in hopes of demarcating a functional Church hierarchy, developing a stronger sense of Church unity, and divining a more reverent disposition to the central act of Holy Communion” (p. 379). These goals are all important to take into account in the comparison here, in that my focus in this chapter is on the prayers said during Holy Communion and a central theme of this analysis throughout has been the tension between individual and communal forces. The representation of the positioning of bodies as meaningful in the text that guides Catholic Mass is significant as we consider the similarities and differences in Quaker and Catholic communication practices. As

Ommen (2006) asserts “whether one stands or kneels may seem trivial, but posture has significance in that it makes the body visible in particular ways. And how one sees bodies and makes the body available to seeing has a powerful function in constituting communities” (p. 389). Thus, just as certain bodily enactments of spontaneity that accompany distinctive uses of religious language in the communities in which Bland (1990), Shoaps (2002), and Sequeira (1994) work indicate a particular understanding of and relationship with the divine, so too do the bodily postures and recontextualization of certain texts in the Catholic Mass create notions of religious community that can be compared with the practices in Quaker worship, highlighting the unique nature of these processes.

#### **8.4 Methodology for Data Analysis**

This analysis will first draw on the concept of participants in Hymes’ speaking model as well as Levinson’s (1988) description of a participation framework that was used in the analysis of Quaker meeting for worship in Chapter 4. I will look at messages about communication, sociality, and personhood that are brought to light by focusing on relationships between participants. This analysis will then lead into an analysis of the key cultural symbols active in the two parts of the Eucharistic Prayer and how these can be organized into cultural propositions, as was undertaken with reference to communication about the “gathered” meeting in Chapter 4. These cultural propositions will then be used to formulate cultural premises that guide communication during the speech event of saying Eucharistic Prayer. Finally, I will compare the participation framework and cultural premises revealed here with the analysis of the participation

framework and cultural premises explicated in Chapter 4 in order to compare communicative practices that are active among participants in Quaker worship with communicative practices that occur during Catholic worship.

## 8.5 Analysis

The following are the two parts of the Eucharistic Prayer that I will be analyzing here. They have been copied from the online site as mentioned above, and I have added line numbers.

### Element 1: Epiclesis

1 Father, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all  
2 holiness comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, by the working of  
3 the Holy Spirit. From age to age you gather a people to yourself, so that from east to  
4 west a perfect offering may be made to the glory of your name.  
5 And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the  
6 power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our  
7 Lord Jesus Christ, at whose command we celebrate this Eucharist.

### Element 2: Institution narrative and consecration

1 On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks and praise. He broke  
2 the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
3 Take this, all of you, and eat it:  
4 this is my body which will be given up for you.  
5 When supper was ended, he took the cup. Again he gave you thanks and praise, gave  
6 the cup to his disciples, and said:  
7 Take this, all of you, and drink from it:  
8 this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be  
9 shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

One of the first characteristics that an observer notes in reading or listening to these prayers is their highly formulaic nature. The fact that the priest has a limited number of options in terms of what he says indicates the controlled character of the situation. As mentioned previously, these same prayers are said every Sunday during Catholic Mass

throughout the world. It should be noted that there was even more consistency when all Masses were said in Latin, and translation into various languages has led to some differentiation, although these differences are still very limited, as mentioned above.<sup>80</sup> We see in the prayers the repetition of certain terms and phrases, which creates a kind of paralleling. For example, the repetition of “all” in referring to “all creation,” “all life,” and “all holiness” in the first line of the first prayer and the repetition of “from” in “from age to age” and “from east to west” in the third and fourth lines. In the second prayer, there is a repetition of form in the way in which the priest describes the actions of Jesus as he gives thanks to God and then instructs his disciples to eat and drink. Also, the words of Jesus are highly structured as he tells his disciples to “take this,” in reference to first the bread and then the wine, and then proceeds to describe these as his body and blood. This structuring can be understood, as discussed by Keane (1997), Shoaps (2002), and Baquedano-López (2008), to mark these texts as religious performances, recontextualizing them and asserting the presence of the divine.

The perceived function of some of the highly structured statements is also significant. In the second prayer, the priest switches from a description of Jesus’ actions on the night of the last supper to stating his actual words. Jesus’ utterances, said by the priest, contain three imperatives: to take this bread, to take this wine, and to do this in his memory. Jesus does not suggest certain courses of action to his disciples or advise them on what they should do. Instead he directly tells them what to do, and, in the first two cases, he also tells them what their actions mean. Jesus’ directives are foreshadowed in the Eucharistic Prayer, in which the priest, speaking for all participants, tells God that it is at Jesus’

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<sup>80</sup> For an overview of some of the key topics in the debate surrounding the decision to translate the Catholic Mass in the United States, see Wiethoff (1981).

“command” that this Eucharist is “celebrated.” It is significant that while Jesus “commands,” in the first prayer, the priest, representing all participants, “asks” God to make the “gifts” “holy.” In her work employing conceptual primes and universal human concepts to analyze the sayings and parables of Jesus, Wierzbicka (2001) problematizes the concept of “obey” in teachings attributed to Jesus. In discussing Jesus’ emphasis on “the will” of God, Wierzbicka (2001) distinguishes between “blind obedience” and wanting to do something because one knows that this doing is what God wants. Citing the translation of John 4:34 as “My food is to obey him who sent me,” she writes, “the word ‘obey’ implies subordination to authority, but this implication is absent from the Greek original, which says ‘to do the will’, not ‘to obey’” (Wierzbicka, 2001, p. 10). Drawing on other parables and stories, Wierzbicka (2001) asserts that “the attitude to God’s will that is urged by Jesus is different: it has to do with *wanting* to do God’s will rather than thinking that one *has to do it*” (p. 216). However, in the context of the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer during the Catholic Mass as translated into English, there does seem to be this implication that Jesus has “commanded” his disciples to do something, and this notion contrasts with the “asking” to make these “gifts” “holy” that the priest engages in. Wierzbicka’s (2001) challenging of the concept of “obey” implies that, whether or not Jesus intended it, there is likely a connotation of force and “obedience” in the way in which English speakers, at least, hear the words of the Mass.

The complex interaction of participant roles in terms of who states or asks what to or from whom and for whom is outlined below in the table.

Table 22: Participation Framework Active in Utterance Events in Catholic Mass

<b>Speech Act</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Composer (form)</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Addressee</b>	<b>Participant</b>
<b>Epiclesis</b>	Priest	Writers of the <i>Roman Missal</i> (writers of the Bible)	People attending Mass and worldwide Catholic community (the “Church”)	God, Holy Spirit	People attending Mass, worldwide Catholic community, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit
<b>Institution narrative (description by Priest)</b>	Priest	Writers of the <i>Roman Missal</i> (writers of the Bible)	Priest	God, People attending Mass	People attending Mass, worldwide Catholic community, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit
<b>Institution narrative (Jesus’ words)</b>	Priest	Writers of the <i>Roman Missal</i> , (writers of the Bible)	Jesus	People attending Mass	People attending Mass, worldwide Catholic community, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit

In this table, we see that during the two prayers, it is the priest who takes on the role of speaker. This enactment is different from other parts of the Eucharistic Prayer and other parts of the Mass as a whole when other participants speak or sing as a group. However, the majority of the speaking during the Catholic Mass is done by the priest. The composers, or participants who give form to the message, are the writers of the *Roman Missal*, who include those who have revised the texts over the centuries. The writers of the Bible could also be understood as composers in that a large part of the text in the *Roman Missal* is based on the Bible. The notion of the source here is complicated in that Jesus is clearly the source of the instruction in part of the Institution narrative. However, the Epiclesis seems to be coming from the people attending Mass, who are joining their

voices with all the people that God has gathered “from age to age” and “from east to west” in praise of God and in remembering what his son did for them. It is these people who desire that this message be shared. The description of Jesus’ acts in the Institution narrative appears to be coming from the priest, who refers to God as “you” when he says to whom Jesus gave “thanks.” The priest seems here to be acting as a guide and teacher, instructing the people attending Mass in what Jesus did. In terms of for whom the message is intended, it would seem that the Euclysis is addressed to God, praising him and asking him to bless the “gifts.” The Holy Spirit is also addressed since it is through its “power” that the “gifts” will be made “holy.” The description of Jesus’ acts in the Institution narrative, as just mentioned, is addressed to both God as “you,” and perhaps indirectly to those attending Mass, as they listen to the description of Jesus’ action given by the priest. When the priest shifts into saying the commands of Jesus in the second part of the Institution narrative, the intended recipients are the people attending Mass; they are now the addressed “you,” being instructed by Jesus in how to act as “disciples.” This breakdown of the participant roles of the speech event of saying parts of the Eucharistic Prayer emphasizes the structured nature of communication during this event.

The above table of the participation framework during the Eucharistic Prayer also draws attention to the highly structured relationships between people in this event, in which a certain person, the priest, speaks for others, those attending Mass, to God and the Holy Spirit, and also speaks for God and Jesus to those attending Mass. There are definite power differentials in terms of what different participants can accomplish. For example, among the participants present during the speech event of the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer, only the priest can ask God to bless the “bread” and “cup” of wine



through the “power” of the Holy Spirit. The hierarchical organization of the Catholic Church is represented in this enactment. However, in the Catholic Mass, we also observe solidarity and closeness between Catholics, emphasized in these parts of the Eucharistic Prayer in the idea that God has “gathered” together, “a people.” This notion of uniformity and the corporate nature of Catholics, understood as representing “a faithful body,” was described by Ommen (2006) in his analysis of the meaningfulness of body positions during Mass. Thus, although clear role distinctions exist during Mass, we also see that cooperation and coordination among a large group are required for the offering of the “gifts,” the fulfillment of the “command,” and the maintenance of the “covenant.”

The participant roles also outline proper behavior and a certain style of personhood. Given the highly structured nature of the event, it is obvious what a person should and should not do during the Eucharistic Prayer in terms of standing, sitting, kneeling, and listening to the priest who conveys Jesus’ “command.” These distinctions have already been discussed in terms of Ommen’s (2006) analysis of posture.

Participants also typically have the responses to prayers memorized and recite these as a group at the appropriate times during the blessing of the Eucharist.<sup>81</sup> They also engage in song led by the choir at certain points during the Eucharistic Prayer. The priest, in his role as intermediary, describes the past to participants and instructs them in what they should do. There are also certain preferred qualities of people attending Mass in that only those who have been baptized and received the sacrament of First Holy Communion can

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<sup>81</sup> The importance of knowing what to say when and having this memorized is emphasized by the statement on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that when the new version of the *Roman Missal* begins to be used in November of 2011, there will be cards with appropriate responses available for participants to read. However, the site also states that these will only be available for a limited amount of time. It is written, “Cards and other participation aids containing the responses of the people will be available for use during the transition, but it is hoped that within a year’s time the people will become freed from the use of such cards” (<http://www.usccb.org/romanmissal/faqs2.shtml#1>).

eat the bread and drink the wine after they have been blessed. Attending the type of course described in the work of Baquedano-López (2008), in which students learn to participate in Catholic prayer, is considered necessary for full participation in the community. Also, participating in the sacrament of Reconciliation prior to receiving Communion, as described by Baquedano-López (2008), is seen as important. Although anyone could theoretically attend Mass regularly without eating the bread or drinking the wine, he or she would not be considered a member of the community until receiving the above listed sacraments, as well as the sacrament of Confirmation. Legitimate participants in the event, therefore, with ratified roles and the ability to receive the message spoken by the priest, are confirmed Catholics. There is less emphasis placed on and less legitimacy granted the individual's personal beliefs about God, and more emphasis placed on the organization's interpretation of scriptures and historically developed practices of enacting the Eucharist—although, as noted by Ommen (2006), the goal is for uniformity of practice to represent individual choice. In this way, the focus in Catholic Mass seems to be on the community and the defining and understanding of that community and acceptable practices of the people in it by those who are at the top of the hierarchy. The overall style of personhood is one of intimacy between members of the community, but the style is positional within the hierarchy of church structure.<sup>82</sup>

I would here like deepen this analysis by drawing attention to the key terms or symbols found in the parts of the Eucharistic Prayer. Similar to the analyses in previous chapters, these symbols were chosen based on frequency of occurrence within the data, potency in terms of their relationship to ideas that are central to Catholicism, and

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<sup>82</sup> Hoffman's (2007) research on the organizational processes of Benedictine communities cited earlier discusses the beliefs of Benedictine nuns about the hierarchical nature of the Roman Catholic Church, which contrasts with the structuring of their communities.

substitutability for the key term of “Eucharist.” I identified the following cultural symbols based on frequency of occurrence: “Father,” “holy/holiness,” “praise,” “son,” “body,” “blood,” “bread,” “disciples,” “thanks,” and “cup.” The analysis yielded the following cultural symbols based on potency: “Jesus Christ,” “Lord,” “Holy Spirit,” “Spirit,” “glory,” “power,” “sins,” “forgiven,” “betrayed,” and “a people.” Cultural symbols that were chosen based on substitutability include: “perfect offering,” “gifts,” “celebrate,” “new and everlasting covenant,” and “memory.”

I would first like to examine these cultural symbols in relation to messages about communication, focusing on degree of structuring, or the flexibility of the communication; tone, or the emotional pitch, formality, and seriousness of the communication; and efficaciousness, or the importance of the communication. I associated certain cultural symbols with these ideas about communication, as can be seen in the table below. For example, in terms of the degree of structuring of the communication, we have already noted that the parts of the Eucharistic Prayer are highly formulaic. If we look at the way in which the priest addresses God, we see that he calls him “Father” and refers to Jesus as “Lord.” Cultural propositions that could be formulated from the perspective of Catholics taking part in this event are: *God is our “Father.”* and *Jesus is our “Lord.”* These formal address terms are a part of a structured way of speaking that implies deep respect for the addressee. Calling on God in this way sets the stage for a formal request or petition. There are also certain assumptions of intimacy, however, in the presumed relationship between a father and child, as will be discussed below in an analysis of social relationships in terms of Wierzbicka’s (2001) work. The tone of the communication of the event is implicated in

terms such as “celebrate,” “praise,” “betrayed,” and “glory.” While this event is understood as a “celebration,” it is also a “praising” of the “glory” of God and foreshadows the “betrayal” of Jesus Christ by one of his followers. These characteristics imply a tone of respect and seriousness as well as excitement and awe. A cultural proposition that links these ideas could be formulated as: *Participants in the Catholic Mass “celebrate” the Eucharist in “memory” of “Jesus Christ,” giving “praise” to the “glory” of God.* Finally, the efficaciousness of the communicative event, or the consequentiality of it in this context, is evidenced by reference to the changing of the “bread” and the “cup” of wine into Jesus Christ’s “body” and “blood.” In this context, the priest is saying prayers that represent a historical event and bring about a transformation in objects, making them “holy.” This event is understood to bring about the “forgiveness” of “sins” and to constitute a “new and everlasting covenant.” The idea that the saying of these prayers brings about a change in form calls to mind Keane’s (1997) discussion of the ability of ritual language to accomplish certain actions. Keane (1997) cites Silverstein (1981), who “argued that ritual speech is persuasive in part because of the mutually reinforcing ways in which its form, at multiple linguistic levels, serves as a metapragmatic figure for the accomplishment of the successive stages of the action being undertaken” (p. 54). The switch that occurs in the participation framework of the Institution narrative when the priest directly cites Jesus’ words could represent the shift in the state or form of the “bread” and “cup,” and even, perhaps, of the priest himself. Whereas at the beginning of the prayer the priest is describing what Jesus did during the last supper with his disciples, when he states Jesus’ words during this supper, he could be understood in those statements to *be with* Jesus, speaking with Jesus’

words—the “bread” *is* now Jesus’ body and the “cup” of wine *is* now Jesus’ blood. The following propositions capture these connections between the cultural symbols: *Before he was “betrayed,” “Jesus Christ” gave “thanks” and “praise” to God and transformed “bread” and a “cup” of wine into his “body” and “blood,” while eating with his “disciples.”*; *The “betrayal” and death of “Jesus Christ” results in the “forgiveness” of “sin.”*; *During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest changes “bread” and a “cup” of wine into the “body” and “blood” of “Jesus Christ.”*; and *During the Eucharist, participants in the Mass make a “perfect offering” to God through “gifts” that create a “new and everlasting covenant.”* The following table outlines the cultural symbols associated with certain characteristics of communication during the speech event of the Eucharistic Prayer.

Table 23: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Communication  
During Eucharistic Prayer

<b><i>Degree of structuring</i></b>	Father, Lord
<b><i>Tone</i></b>	Celebrate, glory praise, betrayed, memory
<b><i>Efficaciousness</i></b>	Bread + Cup → Body + Blood Sins → Forgiven Perfect offering → New and everlasting covenant

The cultural symbols identified above also point to certain relationships between people in the speech event of saying the Eucharistic Prayer. These can be tied to dimensions of solidarity and power, competition and cooperation, and closeness versus distancing. The key cultural symbols here would seem to be those of “Father” and “son,” as well as “Lord” and “disciples.” The understanding of the relationship between God and Jesus and between God and the participants in the Mass as a relationship between a

“Father” and a “son” implies a certain solidarity and closeness. However, there is also a certain power differential in that the “Father” has the power to instruct and lead the “son.” There is also a power differential here in that the “Father” in this case is considered to be “holy” and worthy of “glory.” The notions of “Lord” and “disciples” also imply a certain distancing, given that the “Lord” has power over his “disciples.” The cultural proposition formulated above can be expanded upon to emphasize the distance that seems to be implied: *God, who is “holy,” is our “Father.”* Another related proposition could be formulated as: *Participants in the Catholic Mass are “disciples” of the “Lord” Jesus, who “praise” and give “glory” to him.* There is, however, a closeness in the relationship between God and his “disciples” because the event in which these “disciples” engage represents a “new and everlasting covenant.” Thus, between God and his “disciples” there is an agreement and certain obligations that can never be broken. Focusing on this concept of “power,” we see that it is associated with the being of the “Holy Spirit,” who is an intermediary between God and his “disciples.” It is through the “power” of the “Holy Spirit” that the “covenant” is formed. Another proposition could, therefore, be: *During the Eucharist, the “gifts” offered by participants are made “holy” through the “power” of the “Holy Spirit.”* which complements the proposition above that *During the Eucharist, participants in the Mass make a “perfect offering” to God through “gifts” that create a “new and everlasting covenant.”*

Although there is some debate regarding the connotations of the original Aramaic word *Abba*, believed to have been used by Jesus in addressing God, Wierzbicka (2001), in discussing the intentions of Jesus in his use of “Father” at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer, observes that *Abba* alone without a modifier seems *not* to have been a common

way of addressing God at Jesus' time (even though God was understood as a father figure from the perspective of Judaism) and most likely implied a certain intimacy. She writes:

Compared to "Father," the word *Abba* as a term of address seemed to have an intimate and familiar ring and possibly even suggested an element of feeling. Although it is misleading to compare *Abba* with either "Daddy" (which is childish) or with "dear Father" (which sounds formal rather than familiar and intimate), *Abba* as a term of address may still have had an attitudinal (roughly speaking, affectionate or warm) component in its meaning, along the lines of "when I think about you I feel something good." The precise interpretation of such a component would have depended on the context in which the word was embedded, but in any case it would have been more compatible with an attitude of affection, love, trust or respect than of fear. (Wierzbicka, 2001, p. 230)

It is important to note that the translation of "Father" in an American context probably lacks some of this sense of intimacy, given the existence of the term "Daddy," with which it can be compared. Wierzbicka (2001) writes, "If one language offers the speaker a choice between 'Father' and 'Daddy' and another language has only one word that can be used as a vocative (*Abba*), the only word of this second language (*Abba*) will no doubt have a stronger association with children than the 'adult' word of the first ('Father')" (Wierzbicka, 2001, p. 231). By using this term, Jesus also seems to be implying that God is "someone" rather than "something," and this "someone" is in a relationship relative to people of being able to hear and listen to their prayers. The notion of God being able to hear prayers again implies a certain intimacy. Although Wierzbicka's (2001) focus in drawing on universal human concepts is on what God's "fatherhood" likely meant to Jesus in the context of first-century Palestine, she observes that the use of metaphors is dangerous in a cross-cultural context. In particular, the metaphor of *fatherhood* as interpreted in a present-day context is still likely problematic (or at least in need of some explanation) for modern Catholics.

As far as the meaningfulness of the use of the term “Lord” to describe Jesus in the Eucharistic Prayer, Wierzbicka (2001) observes that in his language use, Jesus may actually have been “abandoning” the metaphor of God as a “king” with “power” since he only refers to the “kingdom” *of* God, but not to God *as* “king” and since he refers to God as “father,” with its probable connotations of intimacy, much more frequently than this reference was used in the Old Testament. Wierzbicka (2001) proposes that “the kingdom of God should be interpreted, essentially, in terms of people living with God” (p. 241).

She writes:

Thus, although entering the kingdom of God can be seen from three different points of view, they all point to the same reality: wanting to live with God, wanting to do good things for other people, and wanting to do God’s will all come to the same thing, the symbolic designation of which in Jesus’ teaching is the kingdom of God. The fact (noted by Theissen and Merz 1998:274) that Jesus did not call God ‘king’ but ‘father’ and that for him the ‘kingdom of God’ was not the kingdom of a ‘king’ but the kingdom of a ‘father,’ is significant in this respect: for Jesus, God’s will did not stand for power (which people have to recognize and bow to) but rather for love (which people can accept and share in). (Wierzbicka, 2001, p. 217)

However, even if Jesus was moving away from referring to God as “king,” the use of “Lord” in an English context could still be argued to have certain hierarchical implications when heard by Catholics participating in Mass today.

In terms of a dimension of competition versus cooperation, the emphasis in this event is on the cooperation among participants who are gathering together to “celebrate,” give “praise” and “thanks,” and make a “perfect offering” of “gifts.” This “celebration” and making of an “offering” requires coordination among those present as they support each other and affirm their collective beliefs. The priest’s frequent use of “we” and “our” in the Eucharistic Prayer emphasizes this togetherness, as does the saying of prayers simultaneously as a group during other portions of the Eucharistic Prayer and the



standing, sitting, or kneeling in unison, as discussed previously by Ommen (2006). Also, the initial apostrophe of “Father” can be understood as a communal address due to the communal petitions following it. Wierzbicka (2001) draws this connection in terms of the use of “Father” at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer. She explains:

According to Gundry (1982:105), the fact that the apostrophe “Father (*Abba*)” is followed by some overtly communal petitions (e.g., “give us each day our daily bread”) “makes ‘Father’ a communal address (even when unaccompanied by ‘Our,’ as in Luke).” I think that in the context of the whole prayer, the initial apostrophe can indeed be so interpreted and, in fact, has to be so interpreted when the prayer is uttered jointly by a group of people. But the partial explication proposed here does not force such a reading: as interpreted here, the prayer also makes sense for an individual speaker, although it always implies and requires thoughts about other people as related to God in the same way as the speaker himself or herself, and therefore as related to the speaker like brothers and sisters. (Wierzbicka, 2001, p. 236)

Given that the use of “Father” at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer is also followed by group petitions for making the bread and wine “holy,” this interpretation would also seem to apply here, stressing the communal nature of the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer. The Eucharistic Prayer also places emphasis on the belief that it is “all creation” gathered “from age to age” and “from east to west” that gives “praise” to God. Catholics “celebrating” are referred to as “a people.” A proposition representing this idea could be: *All “disciples” gather together to “celebrate” the Eucharist, giving “praise” and “thanks” to God who deserves this.* However, it is interesting to note that although there is an emphasis on “all creation,” the distinction of “a people” would seem to create a notion of a difference between those who “celebrate” and give “glory” to the “Lord” and those who do not. This distinction will be addressed in the connections drawn between cultural symbols and messages about personhood below. The table here represents the way in which I have organized cultural symbols in terms of dimensions of sociality.

Table 24: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Sociality  
During Eucharistic Prayer

<i>Solidarity/Power</i>	Father, son, disciples, holy, glory, Lord, Holy Spirit, power
<i>Competitive/Cooperative</i>	Celebrate, praise, thanks, perfect offering, gifts
<i>Closeness/Distancing</i>	Father, son, praise, glory, new and everlasting covenant, a people

Underlying assumptions about personhood can be tied to preferred qualities, appropriate conduct, and overall styles of personhood, as mentioned in the analysis in Chapter 4. The symbols that I have attached to these dimensions can be found in the table below. The first notion of preferred qualities was introduced above in terms of the idea of “a people” that God has gathered to himself. While it is implied initially that it is “all creation” that gives “praise” to God, this distinction of “a people” and to ways of “rightly” acting would seem to distinguish certain preferred characteristics, namely those of “disciples.” There thus seems to be a valuing here of participating in the Eucharist as “disciples” of the “Lord,” and, as mentioned in the analysis of participant roles, being a legitimate member of this community is being a confirmed Catholic. The phrase “people of God” is also cited by Ommen (2006) in his discussion of how the GIRM refers to members of the Catholic Church as a “corporate entity” (p. 373) and by Hoffman (2007) who uses this phrase to refer to the voices that Benedictine sisters feel are excluded from decision making in the Church. Those actions that are considered appropriate have already been referenced in the discussion of messages about communication, as these actions involve communicative acts such as giving “praise” and “thanks” and making an “offering” to God of “gifts” through a “celebration” of the “memory” of Jesus Christ. An overall style of personhood could, consequently, be described as one that is both personal

and positional in that the model is the close familial relationship between a “Father” and his “son,” as discussed in terms of the use of the word *Abba* by Jesus, but the “son” is obedient to the “Father” and heeds his commands for appropriate action and participation in the “new covenant.” Thus, a hierarchical positioning exists between the “Father” and “son” reflected in the positioning of various members of the church and the relationship between the priest and participants in the Mass. Several intermediaries are present in this speech event, including both the priest and the “Holy Spirit” who act on behalf of people attending Mass. In this way, the person, as understood in the speech event of the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer, is one who obeys God as a “disciple” and appropriately enacts a specific positional role in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. In other words, *In participating in the blessing of the “bread” and the “cup” of wine during the Eucharistic Prayer, participants in the Mass are calling on the “power” of the “Holy Spirit” to act for them and are obeying the “Lord’s” command.*

Table 25: Cultural Symbols and Messages about Personhood  
During Eucharistic Prayer

<b><i>Preferred/Dispreferred qualities</i></b>	Disciples, a people
<b><i>Appropriate/Inappropriate conduct</i></b>	Praise, thanks, perfect offering, gifts, celebrate, memory
<b><i>Styles of personhood: Impersonal and positional versus Personal and intimate</i></b>	Father, son

Based on the above analysis of the participant roles in the speech event of the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer and of the cultural symbols active in the communication of this event, I will now formulate several cultural premises about communication, sociality, and personhood. These cultural premises are represented in the table below.

Table 26: Cultural Premises Active During Eucharistic Prayer

<p><b><i>Messages about Communication in communication during Eucharistic Prayer</i></b></p>	<p>During Eucharistic Prayer, communication is highly formulaic, as well as serious and emotional. During Eucharistic Prayer, communication is important and substantial; Change occurs and objects are transformed.</p>
<p><b><i>Messages about Sociality in communication during Eucharistic Prayer</i></b></p>	<p>During Eucharistic Prayer, close and intimate, but hierarchically organized relations between members of the community are valued. During Eucharistic Prayer, solidarity and cooperation between members of the community are valued.</p>
<p><b><i>Messages about Personhood in communication during Eucharistic Prayer</i></b></p>	<p>During Eucharistic Prayer, proper conduct includes celebrating, giving praise and thanks, offering gifts, and being obedient to God’s commands. During Eucharistic Prayer, preferred qualities include being a member of the community. During Eucharistic Prayer, a style of personhood that is personal and hierarchical is valued.</p>

## 8.6 Comparison Between Quaker and Catholic Speech Events

In the introduction to this section, I noted that the motivation for this chapter was comparisons made by Quakers between Quaker and Catholic practices. I would like to explore the bases for these comparisons by comparing my analyses of the participation framework and cultural premises active during a “gathered” or “covered” Quaker meeting for worship in Chapter 4 with the participation framework and cultural premises that have been identified as active in the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer during Catholic Mass in this chapter. Table 10, which represents the participation framework structuring

communication during the “covered” or “gathered” meeting for worship, can be found in Chapter 4. I will now consider this in relation to the participation framework active during the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer, outlined in Table 22 above.

One of the first differences that can be noted in comparing these participation frameworks is the difference in number of speakers. I have observed that at other points during the Eucharistic Prayer, besides those examined in detail here, all those participating in Mass say prayers and responses together. However, here we can see that while there are two speakers in the “covered” meeting, five speakers in the first “gathered” meeting, and eight speakers in the second “gathered” meeting, there is only one speaker during the saying of the parts of the Eucharistic Prayer analyzed above. In terms of the composer of the messages shared, during the Catholic Mass, the priest’s words are drawn largely from the *Roman Missal*, compiled over time by the leaders of the Catholic Church and based on readings from the Bible. Although during Quaker meeting messages may be drawn from quotations of famous authors or other religious texts, they are generally given form by the speakers. There is thus a wider variety of form and a less formulaic nature to messages shared during Quaker meeting. The source of messages during Quaker meeting is understood to be the “spirit.” As mentioned before, Quakers are instructed to carefully consider messages they may be receiving in order to determine if the message is really from the spirit and if it is meant for the whole group or only for an individual. This consideration of messages is not engaged in during the Catholic Mass, as the composers of the text in the *Roman Missal* have presumably already determined that these messages come from God and are meant to be shared. During the Eucharistic Prayer, there also appears to be some variation in terms of whether the people attending

Mass, the priest, or Jesus are understood to be the participants who are the source of the message that the priest is sharing. In the Eucharist, it would seem that it is actually the people attending Mass and perhaps even the church as a whole that is understood to be the source of the message in the *Roman Missal* that is being said by the priest. In this case, God and the Holy Spirit are the intended recipients or addressees of the message. During the Institution narrative and consecration, there appears to be a shift in source as the priest first addresses God in praise and the people attending Mass with instruction, and then assumes the role of Jesus and speaks words that are considered to come from Jesus and are addressed to those attending. In the instances cited in Table 10 during the “covered” and “gathered” meetings, the spirit is directly addressed when welcomed and when given directives. Messages are also addressed to other people present and participating in the meeting. In this way, there is some similarity in terms of who is understood to be the source and the addressed recipient of messages in the meeting for worship and the Catholic Mass. However, there are significant differences in the structuring of participation in the events in terms of the speakers and composers of messages. It is also significant to note that while the speech acts examined in detail here during the “covered” and “gathered” meetings are surrounded by silence, the prayers selected for analysis from the Eucharistic Prayer represent only a small portion of the speech acts that compose the Catholic Mass.

I will move now to a comparison between cultural premises formulated based on written communication about and elicited descriptions of the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship with premises formulated above about communication, sociality, and personhood during the Eucharistic Prayer. It is notable when considering the cultural

symbols identified in both analyses that the only symbol that I identified in both cases is “spirit.” This common symbol is understandable given that we are looking at two religious practices, although it is important to recognize that the symbol does not mean precisely the same thing in both contexts, but is instead associated with various different cultural meanings, as indicated by the form “Holy Spirit” in the Eucharistic Prayer. There is also the symbol of “powerful” in the elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings for worship, and the term “power” in the Eucharistic Prayer. Again the meanings associated with each term are somewhat different, with “powerful” describing more of the overall experience of a “gathered” or “covered” meeting, and “power” being attributed to the “Lord” and the “Holy Spirit” during Eucharistic Prayer. However, the meanings associated with the use of this term in both cases would seem to connect to ideas regarding the consequentiality of these speech events, which will be discussed in more detail below. Another overlap that I would like to mention is that the word “gather” is used in line three of the Epiclesis. Although I have not identified this as a key symbol, I think it points to a common origin of the term in early Christian practice when referring to God’s process of gaining worshippers. This origin was mentioned earlier with reference to the notion of a “gathered” meeting, as the term was probably first used by Fox to represent established meetings at a time when early Quakers were still heavily involved in spreading their message (Bauman, 1983).

The cultural premises identified in communication about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting can be found in Table 4 and Table 9 in Chapter 4. If we examine these tables in comparison with Table 26 on the Eucharistic Prayer, we note that a key difference between the formulated premises involves the highly formulaic character of

communication during the Eucharistic Prayer versus the relatively informal nature of communication during Quaker meeting for worship. However, in both cases, communication has a serious and emotional tone, and, in both instances, something very consequential is considered to be taking place in communication. In particular, we note the idea of a change, which relates to the symbol of “alchemy” in the Quaker meeting and of “body” and “blood” in the Eucharist. The change appears to focus on the present situation in the Quaker meeting and on actual objects in the Catholic Mass. In examining premises of sociality, we notice that close relationships are emphasized in both cases, but, while Quaker relations stress a sense of equality, Catholic interaction is based more on a notion of hierarchy. In both cases, the practice is one that requires cooperation and coordination between participants. However, among Catholics there is more of a sense that closeness and cooperation stem in part from membership in the community, while among Quakers, an openness towards all is central. Messages about personhood in terms of proper conduct are very different in these speech events. Friends engage in accepted practices of “silence” and spontaneous speaking, while Catholic participants offer “gifts.” A significant overlap occurs here, however, when we note that while Friends engage in listening in the silence, Catholics also engage in listening to the priest. The practice of listening to the spirit is thus central to both events, although there is an intermediary doing the speaking during the Eucharistic Prayer, while each person is hearing messages for him or herself during Quaker meeting. Finally, the issue of community membership becomes central again when we consider preferred qualities of personhood. A greater number of cultural symbols seem to connect to ideas about preferred qualities in the analysis of the “gathered” meeting than in the analysis of the Eucharistic Prayer. The



qualities associated with Quaker practice include being spontaneous, open, simple, peaceful, and faithful. A key characteristic of participants that seems to determine their legitimacy as participants in Catholic prayer is being members of the community. While ideas of membership are much more open in Quaker communication, in Catholic communication, membership is more clearly defined. The similarities and differences that I have described here are summarized in the following table.

Table 27: Comparison of “Gathered” Meeting and Eucharistic Prayer (Continues on the next page)

	<b>Differences</b>	<b>Similarities</b>
<b>Participation Framework</b>	<p><i>Speakers:</i> 1 during Eucharistic Prayer (in terms of the elements analyzed here) <i>versus</i> many in Meeting</p> <p><i>Composers:</i> writers of <i>Roman Missal</i> during Eucharistic Prayer <i>versus</i> speakers in Meeting</p> <p><i>Source:</i> pre-established during Eucharistic Prayer, <i>but</i> requires consideration during Meeting</p>	<p><i>Source:</i> the priest, Jesus, or the people during Eucharistic Prayer <i>and</i> the “spirit” during Meeting (some overlap of a divine being in both)</p> <p><i>Addressees:</i> God, Holy Spirit, and those participating in Eucharistic Prayer <i>and</i> the “spirit” and those participating in Meeting</p>
<b>Premises of Communication</b>	<p><i>Structure:</i> Eucharistic Prayer is highly structured, <i>while</i> messages during the Meeting are often more open-ended</p>	<p><i>Tone:</i> Serious and emotional in both</p> <p><i>**Efficaciousness:</i> Something consequential is taking place through communication (change of situation or objects)</p>
<b>Premises of Sociality</b>	<p><i>Relations:</i> Hierarchical during Eucharistic Prayer <i>versus</i> equal in Meeting; participation in Eucharistic Prayer is more limited by community membership, <i>while</i> participation in Meeting is more open</p>	<p><i>Relations:</i> Close relationships valued; cooperation and coordination required in both</p>

<p><b>Premises of Personhood</b></p>	<p><i>Proper conduct:</i> “offering gifts” during Eucharistic Prayer <i>versus</i> “silence” and “sharing” during Meeting</p> <p><i>Preferred qualities:</i> an emphasis on community membership during Eucharistic Prayer <i>versus</i> spontaneous and open in Meeting</p>	<p><i>Proper conduct:</i> listening to the spirit (although there is an intermediary during Eucharistic Prayer)</p>
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### 8.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, as is commonly recognized, there are distinctive differences in cultural premises underlying communicative practices during the “gathered” meeting and the saying of the Eucharistic Prayer. These differences include ideas about degree of structuring of communication, relationships between people based in hierarchy versus based in equality, and proper conduct during worship. While Friends’ communication in a “covered” or “gathered” meeting is understood to be spontaneous and authored by the speaker, communication during the Eucharistic Prayer is highly scripted. Also, while during the Eucharistic Prayer there are certain clearly defined roles and distinctions between who is able to accomplish which actions, communication in the “covered” or “gathered” meeting is based in a sense of equality among participants. The communicative actions considered appropriate in each setting are different; in one “silence” and “sharing” through spoken ministry are understood as acceptable, whereas in the other, participants engage in an offering of “gifts.” However, there are also key similarities between these two events, specifically in messages about communication in terms of tone and efficaciousness, in messages about sociality regarding close and cooperative relationships, and in messages about personhood in terms of the proper

conduct of listening. In both contexts, a significant change is understood to take place through the working together of participants, who are listening to the spirit. The similarity that seems to play a key role in the story I recounted earlier, told to me by a longtime meeting member, is based in the premise regarding the efficaciousness of communication. It is likely that this similarity was the basis for the comparison made by this interviewee between the “gathered” meeting and Holy Communion. During the speech events of the “gathered” meeting and the Eucharistic Prayer there is a spirit active, and, through communication, whether in silence or spoken by a participant, that spirit brings about a consequential change that is life-altering. The actual presence of the spirit in both contexts is believed to be real, and what is said and done is not a representation of that spirit, but its actual presence. As the nun observes, “you didn’t have an experience this morning, you were in another state.” The “gathered” meeting and the celebration of the Eucharist are “other states” for Quakers and Catholics; they are ways in which the promises of “continuing revelation” or a “new and everlasting covenant” are fulfilled. Thus, we find key similarities as well as central differences between the speech events that are closely connected to communal and cultural notions of how communication with the divine takes place.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

#### 9.1 Research Problem

I began this work with a discussion of the tensions between individual and communal forces or understandings of connection versus separation that inform all community life. How this dialectic gets enacted has a profound impact on the lives of the people living in a particular society. My research has explored a seemingly unique way of addressing these tensions through the communicative practices of a Quaker meeting community in specific meeting speech events. According to Philipsen (1992) one of the ways in which the terms, rules, and meanings of speech codes are inextricably woven into speaking is through the organization of metacommunicative vocabularies into three forms, including ritual, myth, and social drama. Meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour at Glen Meeting can be understood as rituals in that they include a structured sequence of symbolic acts, which has been described above, and their performance pays homage to a process of listening to the “spirit.” In this way, these events enact the communal function of communication by drawing individual Friends together in practices that honor and respect the ability of the individual to listen for messages and act based upon them, while at the same time serving to coordinate group action.

The understanding of ritual in the Quaker context also seems linked to Dewey’s (1934) notion of a consummatory experience. The experiences of Friends in meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour take the shape of an aesthetic

experience in that they represent a coming into harmony and balance of participants with each other and their surroundings. It is in confronting the difficulties of coordinating and working together with others in these events and reflecting back on them that meaning and truth take shape. These events are for Friends what Dewey describes as religious experiences that can in part be understood to gain their significance from everyday interactions with the environment and that draw the waiting group together with a shared sense of accomplishment and shared purpose. In this way, the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hours among Friends are both rituals and “full” consummatory experiences.

## **9.2 Research Questions**

I initially posed several research questions regarding communication about and during central meeting speech events. The first of these was: *When are the phrases, “gathered” or “covered” meeting, “corporate discernment,” or “spiritual journeys” used by Quakers? In what contexts, with what meanings?* The initial portions of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 addressed these questions. In Chapter 4, I gave an overview of Quaker writings on “gathered” meetings for worship, identified use of the term in articles in *Friends Journal*, and presented short excerpts from interviews in which participants gave elicited descriptions of this event. The terms “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship were found to be applied to certain meeting experiences that were distinctive in terms of dimensions of time and depth and in which a certain energy was felt to be moving and a sense of communion or unity was experienced. At the beginning of Chapter 5, I examined Quaker writings about the decision-making process during

meeting for business, as well as a specific presentation at Glen Meeting on “corporate discernment.” It was revealed that “corporate discernment” or “finding a sense of the meeting” is associated in communication with a process through which Friends as a corporate body seek to listen to the voice of the “spirit,” and the clerk or other participants attempt to formulate what is heard into a “sense of the meeting,” which is then approved or discussed further by the group and finally recorded in a “minute.” Although use of the phrase “spiritual journey” seems to apply to a larger variety of events, which vary in degree of formality, than the other two phrases discussed here, I focused on the use of this term to describe the telling of a particular type of life story during the adult education hour, in which the teller focuses on certain themes in his or her life, telling personal stories about these themes and, in particular, recounting how he or she came to be involved with Quakers. The responses to the questions of when and with what meanings these phrases are used provided a more general understanding of the shape of these events and the role they play in community life.

I next asked more specifically about the cultural meanings associated with these terms, considering: *Are there deep cultural meanings about communication, sociality, and personhood in communication about these “gathered” meetings, about “corporate discernment,” or about telling “spiritual journeys”?* This question was answered through the identification of key cultural terms and the formulation of cultural propositions and cultural premises that are active when these phrases are used. Cultural premises that inform written communication about “gathered” or “covered” meetings include: *In gathered meetings, communication is flexible and nonformulaic, but serious and emotional, and communication is important and substantial. In gathered meetings, close*

*and intimate relations between people and solidarity and cooperation are valued. In gathered meetings, proper conduct includes silence, prayer, quaking, and sharing through spoken ministry, as well as not limiting the time of meeting for worship. Preferred qualities of people in gathered meetings include being spontaneous, open, simple, and peaceful.* The following cultural dimensions identified in communication about “corporate discernment” at Glen Meeting represent some of the underlying distinctions that are felt to be at play when decision making is taking place: *hearing God versus hearing one’s own personal ideas; group abilities and practices versus individual abilities and practices; communion and unity versus disagreement; what happens through silence versus what happens through speaking; speaking in a way that does not create closure versus speaking in a way that does create closure; sense of the meeting versus unanimity; submitting and being “lowly” versus dominating; and deciding through unity versus voting.* These dimensions describe a way of making decisions that is believed to be highly unique and highly effective among Friends. Finally, although I did not specifically formulate cultural premises active in communication *about* telling “spiritual journeys,” I did formulate cultural premises representing understandings of “tellability” or a logic of causality that shape personal stories told during the adult education hour, which inform how the overall event of telling a “spiritual journey” is understood to function within the community. I noted a connection between this practice at Glen Meeting and historical Quaker journal writing. The recounting of personal experiences in journals has been passed down through generations of Friends and is understood to be a central way of learning about Quakerism and about the way other Friends have lived their faith. There are assumptions underlying this journal writing

about valued ways of acting or communicating, such as recording one's actions for one's peers and for future generations, about relating to others, in particular through giving them examples and trusting them to interpret and apply these examples in their own lives, and about personhood, namely that the individual should be open about his or her experiences, as well as open to the personal experiences of others. In this way, cultural meanings in communication about these communicative practices were examined and formulated.

Finally, I also looked at specific examples of these key speech events, posing the research question: *What are the forms of communication identified by Quakers as a "gathered" or "covered" meeting, as "corporate discernment," or as the telling of a "spiritual journey"? What are their cultural meanings?* In the second parts of Chapters 4 and 5 and the central part of Chapter 6, I gave descriptive accounts of meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the telling of "spiritual journeys" during the adult education hour. Tables 5 and 15 represent the act sequences of meeting for worship and meeting for business. A comparison of the act sequence of meetings for worship in general at Glen Meeting with the act sequences of meetings for worship that were identified during their occurrence as "covered" or "gathered" revealed certain distinctive characteristics of these events. These concerned the quality and length of the silence that was enacted during these meetings, the form and content of messages shared, and the length of the meetings for worship. Not all of the meetings identified with these terms shared the same characteristics, but the quality of being "covered" or "gathered" seemed to depend on a co-occurrence of at least some of these characteristics. Cultural premises identified as foundational in terms of the act sequence of meeting for business, and, in



particular, the role of silence during this speech event, include: *During meeting for business, it is important to draw on and remain in a state of worship. During meeting for business, the making of decisions in accordance with Quaker process as represented in Faith and Practice is deeply valued, more so than the actual coming to a decision. During meeting for business, it is valued for all decisions to be made through a sense of the meeting, even if one disagrees with that sense, and for the minute that is recorded to represent that sense, including the disagreement that may have been a part of it. Silence is valued during meeting for business as allowing space for the spirit to move at the beginning and end of the meeting, at times when the clerk formulates a sense of the meeting into a minute, as a way of pacing the meeting, and at times when the sense of the meeting is unclear.* A specific instance of the reaching of a decision was analyzed in terms of how “disagreement” is done in “corporate discernment” and how this practice could be understood as part of a “way of speaking” among modern-day Friends. This understanding of how to “disagree” constitutes a cultural meaning active in Quaker communication. Lastly, the analysis of personal stories of conviction as told during “spiritual journeys” outlined cultural premises active during this speech event. These include: *Life is made up of periods of stability and times of change, and, during periods of change, a person has the ability to make choices about what to do next. It is valued to have strong opinions that might differ from those around us. It is valued to raise children in a spiritual community. Personal connections with others are important to spiritual experience.* We see a good deal of overlap in the cultural premises guiding these speech events, as these represent the shared values around which community life is organized. Through communicative rituals homage is paid to these deeply held cultural beliefs and

they are created and recreated in daily activity, while at the same time structuring this activity. Although this summary of findings has not included everything to which my analyses have pointed, it suggests the ways in which the central research questions posed at the beginning of this project, regarding the form and meaning of core speech events, as well as communication about them, have been addressed. In the next section, I will explore how these premises are connected and together constitute a speech code.

### **9.3 Connections: A Quaker Communication Code**

As discussed previously, Philipsen (1987) asserts that a primary function of communication is the communal function, or the “creation, affirmation, and negotiation of shared identity” (p. 279). Carbaugh (2005) discusses the way in which shared identity is communicated, namely “in terms of its *structure* in codes, its *process* in conversation, and its *context* in community” (p. 126). This study has examined various processes of the enactment of shared identity in conversation, in the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour, as these take place in the community of Glen Meeting. In other words, like Carbaugh (2005), I have “focused on moments in conversation when a processual enactment of the communal function is getting done, highlighting social interactional processes in which ‘membering’ is accomplished” (p. 126). The shared identity of those with whom I worked was “active through particular kinds of communication practices that are deemed prominent, accessible, and important” (Carbaugh, 2005, p. 126). I would here like to summarize my findings in terms of elements of a code of communication that can be understood to structure the communicative processes I have examined. Parts of this code can be explicated through

the answering of five questions that highlight taken-for-granted assumptions informing cultural communication. Thus, I will briefly discuss Quaker communication in terms of responses to questions that explore the five interpretive dimensions of identity, action, feeling, relating, and living in place. These questions include: 1. *Who are we?* 2. *What are we doing and what should we be doing?* 3. *How are we being related?* 4. *How do we feel about this practice?* and 5. *How does this practice relate us to place?*

The first question posed when considering a cultural code in this context is “*Who are we?*” The notion of identity has been addressed in great detail throughout this work, in particular in the sections on the telling of “spiritual journeys” and in the analysis of the recorded “worship sharing” on being a “member” versus an “attender.” In the analysis in Chapter 4 of the “gathered” or “covered” meeting for worship, premises were formulated regarding preferred qualities of personhood in communication, including being spontaneous, open, simple, and peaceful. A personal and intimate style of personhood was stressed. This style of personhood was later contrasted with a personal and yet hierarchical style emphasized in Catholic Mass. The quality of being open also became consequential in the context of making decisions in the meeting for business, in particular being open to others’ ideas and speaking in a way that does not create closure by declaring only one course of action to be correct. Also, an idea of being “lowly” versus dominating was introduced in this type of decision-making process. Quaker identity among unprogrammed, liberal Friends (who are often “convinced” rather than “birthright” community members) is a particularly revealing example of the social constructionist idea of identity as connected to ways of acting, in that identity among this group depends to a large extent on a concrete and particular enactment (participation in

the meeting community), rather than a universal, abstract, or general characteristic or idea. This fact stems in part from the bottom-up structuring of Friends meetings and is evident in the existence of a term for participants in the meeting who are “attenders” rather than “members.” Consequently, the second question proposed for consideration of a Quaker cultural code of communication is very closely related to the first. In answering, “*Who are we?*” we are also answering to a large extent “*What are we doing and what should we be doing?*” In this context we find assumptions such as, if one did not feel satisfied with one’s religious experience as a child, it is valued to find a new spiritual community, and even after having become a Friend, it is expected that one will continue to be a “seeker” and search for fulfilling religious experience. It is assumed that life is made up of periods of stability and times of change, and that during these periods of change, a person has the ability to make choices about what to do next. Participants should make their own decisions to become members, and not seek to actively convert others, but to provide guidance and support when it is sought. We saw in Chapter 4 that in a “gathered” or “covered” meeting proper conduct is understood to include silence, prayer, quaking, and sharing through spoken ministry. These actions are also valued in other meeting events, such as the meeting for business and adult education hour. During meeting for business, it is important to draw on and remain in a state of worship and make decisions in accordance with Quaker process, which involves searching for the “sense of the meeting” under the guidance of the clerk who directs discussion, paces the meeting, calls for “silence” when the “sense of the meeting” is unclear, and formulates an emerging “sense of the meeting” into a “minute” for participants to consider. A particularly distinctive element of a Quaker communication code involves the valuing of

the practice of “silence” as a basis for all action. Although scripture is important, revelation is continuing, and it is in the “silence” that the “spirit” communicates. Waiting and listening together in “silence” is thus possibly the most distinctively Quaker form of communicative action.

The fact that the category of “attender” exists also calls our attention to the important role that connections with other Friends plays in being a Quaker. In considering these important connections, we address the question of “*How are we being related?*” In general, we can state that it is valued for meeting participants to be actively involved in the meeting community, and to feel connected to and interact with both the local and global community of Quakers. Although it is valued to have strong opinions that may differ from the wider community, Friends should be accepting of the different practices of other members and of non-members. They should also recognize the Light in others and understand everyone as equal, although some may demonstrate particular gifts. Togetherness is highly valued in meeting for worship and is an important part of listening in “silence” and in “gathered” meetings. Close and intimate relations between people are valued. In communication about and during meeting for business, the “corporate” aspect of discernment is stressed and contrasted with “individual” discernment that takes place at other times. In particular, there is a distinction drawn between a sense of unity that includes everyone, but is not necessarily unanimity. This unity is the basis for group action.

In response to the question, “*How do we feel about this practice?*” the Quaker communicative code understands listening together in worship as experiential. As many Friends told me, it is difficult to describe the “gathered” or “covered” meeting because it

is something that you just “feel” in your “body.” There is a stillness, calm, and depth to the experience of waiting in “silence” as a group that is understood to bring peace and strength. Descriptions of this feeling include being on the same wavelength as others, feeling a sense of the spirit’s presence and an energy or flowing, feeling that hearts are open, feeling a sense of worshipfulness, and feeling a sense of unity. It is quiet, strong, powerful, tender, wonderful, and creative. Communion with each other and the “spirit” in meeting for worship is, thus, for Friends not something about which other feelings are felt, but is in fact itself a profound feeling that goes beyond understanding and serves as the basis for decision making and all other practice.

The final question to be considered is “*How does this practice relate us to place?*” Elements of a communicative code regarding a relationship with place have been less directly addressed in this work. However, emphasis on the simplicity of the meetinghouse stemming from early Friends’ attempts to break with the ostentation of what they called “steeplehouses” stresses the notion that just as the “spirit” can speak to anyone, the “spirit” can also communicate anywhere. The important part of worship is the community coming together and creating the “silence,” no matter where they may be. Thus, place is for Friends the space of the waiting community listening in silence, which has the potential to be in many different physical locations.

The cultural premises articulated in previous chapters can thus be drawn together around interpretive hubs of meaning involving being, acting, relating, feeling, and living in place. These assumptions make up part of a communicative code that is active when Friends of Glen Meeting talk about and participate in meeting for worship, meeting for business, and the adult education hour. The communicative premises of this subculture

create and constitute a notion of a shared identity through the communal function of communication. Through this structure as enacted in these processes of everyday communication, group identity takes shape and forms the basis for group action that has demonstrated the potential to alter wider society.

## **9.4 Contributions**

There are various ways in which the analyses in the preceding chapters contribute to research in several different areas of the study of communication. I will propose some here before suggesting areas where this research could be expanded.

### **9.4.1 The Ethnography of Communication, Cultural Communication, Speech Codes Theory, and CuDA: A unique speech community**

In formulating the ethnography of communication, Hymes sought to encourage a better understanding of how communication functions within and differs between cultures. This work provides another example of a speech community whose practices are culturally distinct. Going beyond this, Hymes also, in claiming for speaking the legitimacy and respect often denied it by those who felt that it was merely an imperfect realization of abstract language, advocated the critical consideration of something felt unworthy of study. This move served to legitimize the study of many types of communicative behaviors previously considered unremarkable or even wrong, a judgment that was often extended to the practitioners of these practices. The study of Quaker practices is worthy and important, not only because it sheds light on a communicative form, that of silence, often devalued or misunderstood, but also because of what it teaches us about the functioning of a community whose communicative

practices, including those during meeting for worship and meeting for business, enable the pursuit of ideals that are widely considered impossible. This analysis has shed light on practices that have proven themselves to have the ability to influence and change larger social problems through their “fruits,” and, therefore, be worthy of understanding and perhaps even emulation.

The above discussion of the balancing of individual and communal forces in the Quaker community of Glen Meeting and the articulation of a Quaker code have already presented contributions of this work to the theories of Cultural Communication and Speech Codes Theory. I would like to briefly note one further contribution to this branch of the ethnography of communication in the way in which I have drawn on the methodology of CuDA in my analyses. The divisions in the previous chapters between analyses of communication about communicative forms and analyses of enactments of these communicative forms have revealed the versatility of this theory and methodology. While CuDA might seem to lend itself more strongly to the study of communication about communicative practices, a combination of it with analyses drawing on concepts from the ethnography of communication, such as act sequence and participants, and the concept of terms for talk, facilitated my use of the analytical concepts of cultural symbols, propositions, and premises in analyzing actual occurrences of speech events. In this way, a sort of two-pronged approach was developed that first drew directly on CuDA to analyze communication about meeting speech events, and then these events themselves were analyzed using a combination of CuDA and elements of Hymes’ SPEAKING mnemonic as well as other research concepts and methodologies.



#### **9.4.2 Coordinated Management of Meaning: A productive system**

The detailed analysis of the process of making a specific decision and of doing “disagreement” in Quaker meeting for business in Chapter 5 builds on the work of Chetro-Szivos (2006) in the application of CMM to an analysis of the stories and logical forces active in communication in a speech community. This work complements other work that takes the theory outside of the context of mediation or therapy and applies it to the understanding of a productively functioning system. This analysis reveals how CMM can facilitate an understanding of the forces at work in the co-creation of a constantly evolving community. Thus, not only can CMM be used to “make life better” (Cronen, 2009) for the participants in problematic situations, but also in providing models of the constraints and affordances at play in exemplary communicative processes.

#### **9.4.3 The Nature, Role, and Function of “Silence”: A unique cultural concept and the code within which it is interpretable**

Probably the most noteworthy contribution of this work is the articulation here of a cultural logic within which a cultural concept of “silence” takes shape that is a unique understanding of this communicative form. The way in which Friends understand “silence” as a communicative practice that is characterized by a *listening together* for inspiration and guidance makes up a part of a Quaker cultural code, which shapes communicative processes in all meeting events, especially meeting for worship and meeting for business. While there has been much research on silence from many analytical perspectives and in many different communities, how it is understood as a cultural symbol representing meaningful communicative action for modern Quakers sitting each First Day in their meetinghouses has not been explored before through the

lens of the ethnography of communication. This work has sought to explain how the seemingly individualistic act of sitting in “silence” constitutes a communicative ritual that plays a role in the balancing of individual and communal forces in a community. Comparisons with other religious practices and the cultural premises informing these have sought to highlight the distinctiveness of the cultural symbol of “silence” among Friends.

#### **9.4.4 Decision Making: A new form and the problematic notion of “disagreement”**

Literature on decision-making processes contrasts various types of practices, arguing for the effectiveness of some over others and stressing the way in which community is formed through these practices. Research here provides an example of a different form of decision making that is in many ways similar to consensus-style processes, but is informed by specific community understandings of the roles of participants, the “spirit,” and the communicative form of “silence.” The history of the Religious Society of Friends gives support for the effectiveness of this process. Also, through a focus on the making of a specific decision, this research provides evidence for the need to reconsider the role of disagreement in decision making and how the term “disagreement” may not adequately describe what occurs when a community seeks to decide on a course of action, as was suggested by Sanders, Pomerantz, and Stromer-Galley (2010).

#### **9.4.5 Oral narrative: Story-telling as “prayer”**

This research contributes to understandings of oral narrative, both in terms of story-telling as a coordinated and coordinating group event and personal stories as informed by a cultural logic of causality. The telling of “spiritual journeys” at Glen Meeting is a speech event that serves to provide children, newcomers and “seasoned” Friends with examples of how others in the community have “lived” the Quaker testimonies. These stories are, therefore, models of and for acting, as described by researchers in the tradition of CMM. The event of telling a “spiritual journey” brings the community together in an experience that reaffirms connections between members and attenders, as well as communal values. Through these tellings, the tellers, like the preachers and believers with whom Harding (1992) worked, participate in the adaptation of a form of personal recounting that is modeled after a commonly interpretable form, although for Friends this is not a Biblical story so much as a story of one’s “journey” through life or the “path” one has followed, as modeled by Fox in his journal. Telling a “spiritual journey” connects the teller and the hearer to the community, reinforcing moral standards, just as Western Apache reinforce certain ways of acting by telling stories about the landscape (Basso, 1996). Also, the co-creation of stories through the feedback, laughter, and questions of audience members makes these events of telling group prayers, as described by Ochs and Capps (2001). For Friends, for whom individual experience is valued above canonical text and who do not understand solutions as predetermined, the telling of personal accounts, both in the communal event of the telling and the logic of the stories that are told, would seem to be the ideal format for prayer. This research thus

builds on the notion that oral narrative is a communal practice with a moral logic that reveals deeply held cultural beliefs.

#### **9.4.6 Identity: “Doing” Quakerness and norms of “seeking” and being “open”**

The analysis focusing on an event of “worship sharing” about the meaning of “membership” brought to light various characteristics of how Quaker identity is understood in Glen Meeting. In this instance of “worship sharing,” membership was defined as a “commitment” to a “community” that necessitates “participation” and “involvement.” Being a Quaker was found to involve a constant seeking and an openness towards others. This analysis contributes to social constructionist notions of identity and provides support for an understanding of identity as something that requires constant “doing,” as opposed to any inherent characteristic. The Quaker case is unique because, whether or not they are, the boundaries of the community are understood to be very fluid. Also, the formulation of norms of belonging in the community articulates the dynamic tension at work in the community between seeking and openness that works to balance individual and communal forces and may enable adaptation to new times and coordinated responses to social issues.

#### **9.4.7 Religious language: A Quaker “way of speaking”**

The above discussion of the cultural symbol of “silence” has already suggested a contribution to work on religious language in highlighting a unique communicative form employed for communication with the divine in this speech community. As Keane (1997) observes, when communication with an otherworldly being is engaged in, the

language adopted is distinctively marked. A discussion of the participant roles active in speech events in the meeting community has also provided a contrast with those understood to distinguish participation in other communities, such as in the communities analyzed by Bland (1990), Shoaps (2002), and Sequeira (1994). The articulation of a possible Quaker style also informs research in this area through what it suggests about the communicative practices of various other religious subcultures within the United States. Stemming from their history of “plain speech,” Friends may be an extreme example of a religious community that highly values a particular way of speaking, but this case has implications for issues surrounding communication between religious subcultures and suggests a need for further study of the processes of language socialization that accompany religious conversion.

## **9.5 Future Research**

While beyond the scope of this dissertation, I would like to describe several areas in which future research could be pursued. First of all, this research would benefit greatly from an examination of the role of committees, such as Ministry and Worship and Care and Counsel, in the communicative practices that take place in meeting for worship, meeting for business, the adult education hour, and other meeting activities. My experience, which I heard echoed in the accounts of other Friends, was that the activities of the committees are largely invisible to new attenders. It is only in becoming more acquainted with the meeting that one begins to realize the important role they play. I heard many Friends express that they did not fully begin to understand how the meeting functioned until they were nominated to be on a committee. This experience appeared to

influence not only their understanding of the structure of the meeting, but also their experience of worship itself and of decision-making practices. One Friend recounted that once she was on Ministry and Worship and responsible for “holding” the meeting, she began to have a different experience of worship, in that she felt she could feel the “spirit” moving over the meeting for worship, as she was holding it, and then descending down upon it, as the meeting settled. She associated this experience with seeing different colors depending on the quality of worship that day. She said that even after she was no longer responsible for “holding” the meeting and was no longer on Ministry and Worship, she could still sense this presence. As has been discussed previously, I was not a member of a committee and did not have access to committee meetings or to the other experiences that a committee member would have. Future research, however, could examine the roles of the committees through more in-depth interviewing of committee members with a focus on their experiences. I could also probably gain access to the minutes of the meetings of various committees for analysis. The process of how Ministry and Worship makes decisions about which messages are from the “spirit” and who needs to be approached because he or she frequently shares messages that do not have this quality would deepen my understanding of communicative practices in meeting for worship and meeting for business. Also, tracing the process of someone being “elderled out” of the meeting community would carry implications for my analysis of Quaker identity and how this connects to membership in the meeting.

In terms of my analysis of other religious communicative practices in Chapter 8, I have not focused as extensively on comparisons with non-Christian religions. The analysis here has instead been limited to traditions with which I am more familiar.

However, since Friends often compare and contrast their own practices with Eastern traditions, such as Buddhism, and other practices that draw heavily on silence, it would seem necessary to at some point extend this research to include a comparison with these other traditions. Although many Friends likened their experiences in meeting for worship to other meditative practices, they were also careful to distinguish these experiences and to emphasize differences between Quaker “silence” and other ideas about silence. More focused interviewing on other types of practices engaged in by community members and how these are understood to differ from practices in meeting for worship could provide the basis for further articulation of cultural premises underlying these other processes. This analysis would of course be complemented by consulting the extensive body of research on other religious practices. It could also include a comparison between different ideas and practices of posture and gaze in different religions and how these inform communication and reveal cultural premises.

Another particularly fruitful area for future research on the communicative practices of Friends would seem to be in the area of communication in Quaker educational institutions. While many Friends schools now have a majority of non-Quaker students, it is still interesting to consider to what extent Quaker processes are enacted and passed on in these schools. My own experiences would seem to indicate that many practices still play a central role in how students learn and are taught. In light of the many non-Quakers that participate in these schools, it could also be important to consider to what extent Quaker decision-making processes still play a role in how decisions are made. Some of the work that has been cited here has already begun to

consider how Quaker processes can be taught to and engaged in by other non-Quaker groups, not only schools, but also other organizations and businesses (Snyder et al, 2001).

Also, a productive area for future research would be in further development of the Quaker “way of speaking,” elements of which were specifically discussed in Chapter 5 on decision making. While much focus has been placed on historical Quaker “plain speech,” less has been done on current uses of “Quakerese” and how this style extends beyond the use of distinctive vocabulary to other areas of grammar. A detailed linguistic analysis could reveal more grammatical distinctions, as well as possibly more explicit connections with the structure of “plain language.” It would also be very interesting to consider how this language is learned by “convinced” Friends who join the community later in life, as well as to what extent Friends engage in code-switching when speaking with non-Friends.

Going along with a development of elements of a Quaker “style” of communication, productive research could also be pursued in a more explicit formulation of elements of a Quaker code, specifically in the area of communication about place. Although there is an overall emphasis on the group of listeners as the site of the community, Friends meetinghouses also seem worthy of study.<sup>83</sup> These buildings are very distinctive in their plainness, and further work could focus on how these places connect with communal values and practices, as well as how they are embedded in the surrounding community of other religious structures. Also, as was mentioned in the analysis of Quaker “spiritual journeys,” a relationship with animals and nature is a theme that is frequently discussed among Friends, and it is perhaps important to consider how

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<sup>83</sup> See Weeks (2001) for descriptions and histories of many meetinghouses in New England.



places in nature play a role in Friends' worship experiences and how these might compare to other spiritual practices that place emphasis on a connection with nature.

Finally, the tension between a sense of "openness" toward others versus the recognition that unprogrammed, liberal Friends are not a particularly diverse group would seem worth exploring further. As mentioned, Friends themselves, in particular Friends who are also members of minority groups, have written about this issue and find it concerning. I am unaware, however, of any research from a communication perspective. It is perhaps possible that, along with historical practices, aspects of the Quaker "way of speaking" or of the Quaker communication code create barriers to the integration of different groups. If this is the case, Friends would be very interested in learning about these issues and considering ways of reconciling them, and this research could have immediate practical effect.

## **9.6 Initial Feedback**

As Carbaugh (1988) writes, the goal of an ethnography is for participants to recognize what the ethnographer has written as a possible and legitimate understanding of practices, although it may not be exactly how the participants themselves would have described an event. It was my hope in writing this dissertation that Friends would recognize my descriptions and at the same time perhaps find something of value that could add to their experiences and contribute to the meeting community. In other words, I hoped that they might be able to "unite with" my interpretations. As of this writing, I have shared my work with approximately twenty-five meeting members or attenders who expressed an interest in seeing it. I was very excited to receive feedback from several

participants that they found what I had written to in some ways represent their experiences. One wrote, “I think you have done a wonderful job of getting the correct usage and the feeling involved in the use of Quaker language.” He added, “Your ears have been busy.” Another observed that the elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings in Chapter 4 were interesting to him since meeting participants “seldom share this with each other.” One Friend wrote, “Having taken part in Friends meetings for sixty years, it's fascinating to see this careful analysis of the constituents of meetings for worship.” This same Friend also mentioned that he was struck that the terms “God” and “Christ” did not come up in my analysis of elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings. He observed that although he was “very comfortable” with the use of the term “spirit” “as the general aura of what Friends seek in meeting,” he wondered if others would question the absence of these terms. This omission does seem important to note since Friends began as Christians, and many still consider themselves to be so. In one of the interviews that I conducted, a Friend did explain that for some Friends there is an understanding that it is Jesus who “gathers” or “covers” the meeting, in other words she said, there is a “gatherer”; but, she explained, for other Friends the “gathered” meeting “wouldn't have that sense” but there would still be a sense of “communion.” It did seem that when asked about the “gathered” or “covered” meeting, “Christ” was not a term that came up frequently for the Friends with whom I spoke, and “spirit” was much more common than “God.” However, this observation would be a worthy one to pursue in future research; it would be interesting to explore when “God” is used versus “spirit,” in what contexts “Christ” is likely to occur, and what other terms are associated with these terms, as well as differences between communities of Friends. I

have tried to integrate many of the comments I received about my draft into my written account here.

In addition to sharing my writing, I also presented my research during an adult education hour. Prior to this occasion, a member of the adult education hour committee requested to record my presentation, observing that a Friend who had read parts of my draft had “remarked that we record spiritual journeys, and your talk seems to be about the spiritual journey of our meeting itself.” During this presentation, which I would estimate was attended by approximately forty Friends, I gave an overview of the different analyses I had conducted, along with a more specific discussion of the analysis of elicited descriptions of “gathered” or “covered” meetings in Chapter 4 and the analysis of the making of a specific decision in Chapter 5. I was gratified that what I shared seemed to resonate with Friends’ experiences. A newer member noted that it helped him to organize and think through the various ideas that he had come into contact with in becoming a Friend. Another more “seasoned” Friend observed that it was exciting to hear me talk about their practices using their own words. She described what I had written as a “gift” to the meeting, which she felt energized the community. Another Friend observed that in my analysis of key cultural symbols, I may also want to consider the term “meeting,” as this term has deep meaning for Friends in various usages. I believe that this observation is a keen one, and the meaning of the idea of “meeting” would be important to consider in future work, as it represents an event, a community, and a unifying action.

I appreciate very much Friends’ willingness to be open to and seriously consider my ideas, in taking the time both to read my writing and listen to my presentation.

Hearing their feedback appeared to confirm in a very concrete way the value of the theory and methodology adopted here in that what I had learned through this way of working not only resonated with participants' understandings, but also gave them something to reflect back on and build upon. It seems that my descriptions and interpretations placed Friends' communicative practices in the realm of discursive scrutability in a way that validated these practices for them and was also productive. The act of presenting my work to Friends has also made me profoundly aware that everything I have learned has been as a result of the community's cooperation and willingness to teach me to listen with them; this type of work would obviously not be possible without that cooperation.

## **9.7 Final Thoughts**

“Silence,” wrote the well-known Quaker, William Comfort (1941) “is the great Quaker word, whose implications we are particularly to notice. Friends' meetings habitually are held on the basis of a living, expectant silence. It is the only word which might appropriately be inscribed in a meeting-house as in a library or in a monastery” (p. 31). This work has attempted to provide a descriptive and interpretive account of this communicative practice of “silence” as it is enacted among Friends in their worship and in their decision making. Silence has long been a focal practice of study among ethnographers of communication (Basso, 1970; Philips, 1976, 1983; Bauman, 1983; Tannen and Saville-Troike, 1985; Wieder and Pratt, 1990; Braithwaite, 1990; Jaworski, 1993; Carbaugh, 2005; Carbaugh, Berry, and Nurmikari-Berry, 2006), and these ethnographies have emphasized the variety of qualities and forms that this concept

captures. Here, the focus has been on a communal practice of silent waiting and listening for the spirit to speak. The idea of listening together forms the basis of Quaker worship and decision making, in contrast with other forms of religious communication that place more emphasis on the verbal (Sequeira, 1994; Shoaps, 2002) and also distinct from other forms of listening that may emphasize more of an individual experience. Hopefully this research has provided some insight into Quaker processes and how it is that among Friends social action is understood to arise from and be based in “silence.” This analysis has demonstrated that, within the community, a balancing of communal and individual forces is achieved through group listening in the meeting for worship, meeting for business, and adult education hour, speech events that enact the communal function of communication. Like the consummatory moments described by Dewey (1934), these events represent a coming into harmony of community members with their surroundings and form the basis for future action that reflects back on and creates meaning through an aesthetic experience. In these moments, both the individual and the community are reaffirmed and the foundation for community action is laid. In this context it makes sense, therefore, that before we go out to engage, to dialogue, and to change, we should first wait . . . and listen together.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### *Before the interview:*

Interviewees will be adult members of the Religious Society of Friends with whom the researcher has either talked with before or after meeting for worship, has worked with at *Friends Journal*, or has exchanged e-mails with as a result of the interviewee sending a response to the researcher's letter about her research published in *Friends Journal*.

Interviewees will be informed ahead of time that the researcher intends to audio record the interview, if that is acceptable to the interviewee.

#### *At the interview:*

The interviewee will be welcomed and thanked for agreeing to participate in the interview. He or she will be given the informed consent form, and the purpose and procedures of the study will be explained. The interviewee will be given the opportunity to ask further questions about the research. He or she will then be asked to read and sign the consent form.

The interview will be informally structured. Questions will focus on the interviewee's recounting of his or her spiritual journey and of his or her experiences in a "gathered" meeting. If the interviewee has participated in a group meeting that the researcher recorded, then he or she will be asked about the events at this meeting. The researcher will let the interviewee's responses guide the interview.

#### *Questions could include, but will not be limited to:*

##### I. Spiritual Journey

1. How did you first learn about Quakerism?
2. What first made you interested in Quakerism?
3. What else was going on in your life when you first became interested in Quakerism?
4. When did you first start attending Quaker meeting for worship?
5. What were your initial impressions of Quaker meeting for worship?
6. When did you decide to become a member of a Monthly Meeting?
7. What else was going on in your life when you decided to become a member?
8. Were there particular individuals who influenced your decision to become a member?
9. What changed once you became a member?
10. Have you had experiences since becoming a member that have strengthened or weakened your connections to the community?
11. How much contact have you had with other branches of Quakerism?
12. Are there branches of Quakerism with which you more strongly identify or with which you have difficulty identifying?
13. Have you ever spoken in meeting for worship? What was the experience of speaking like?

## II. Gathered Meeting for Worship

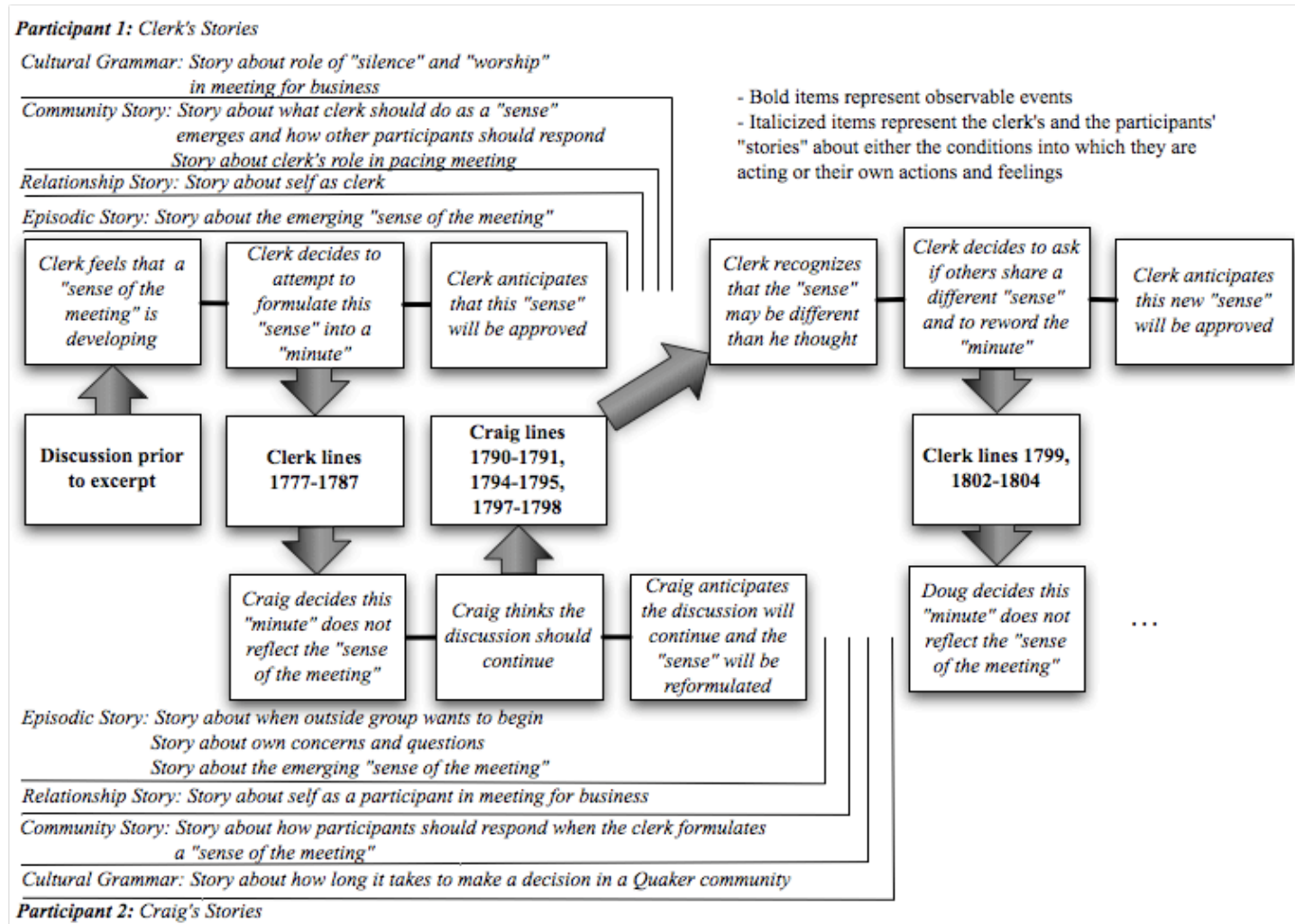
1. When in meeting for worship do you have the most meaningful experiences?
2. What else is going on when you have these experiences?
3. Have you ever experienced a “gathered” meeting for worship?
4. Have you ever experienced a “gathered” meeting for worship for the conduct of business?
5. How did you first become aware that this was a “gathered” meeting?
6. During the “gathered” meeting, how would you describe what you were feeling?
7. What happened immediately before/during/after the “gathered” meeting?
8. What changed as a result of having the experience of the “gathered” meeting?

## III. Recorded Group Meeting

1. Did this group meeting seem similar to other group meetings that you have participated in? In what ways was it similar or different from other meetings?
2. Was there any portion of this meeting that you would describe as “gathered”?
3. Have you ever participated in a meeting that you would describe as “gathered”?
4. How did you first know this meeting was “gathered”?
5. What is the process followed during the meeting for worship for conduct of business in order to make decisions? What is distinctive or unique about this process?
6. Does experiencing a “gathered” meeting influence the process of making decisions?
7. Did you believe that the minute formulated by the clerk captured the sense of the meeting?
8. Were you surprised by anything during this meeting?
9. What was your understanding of [insert name]'s statement at this point in the meeting?
10. What was the reason that you said [insert statement] at this point in the meeting?

## APPENDIX B

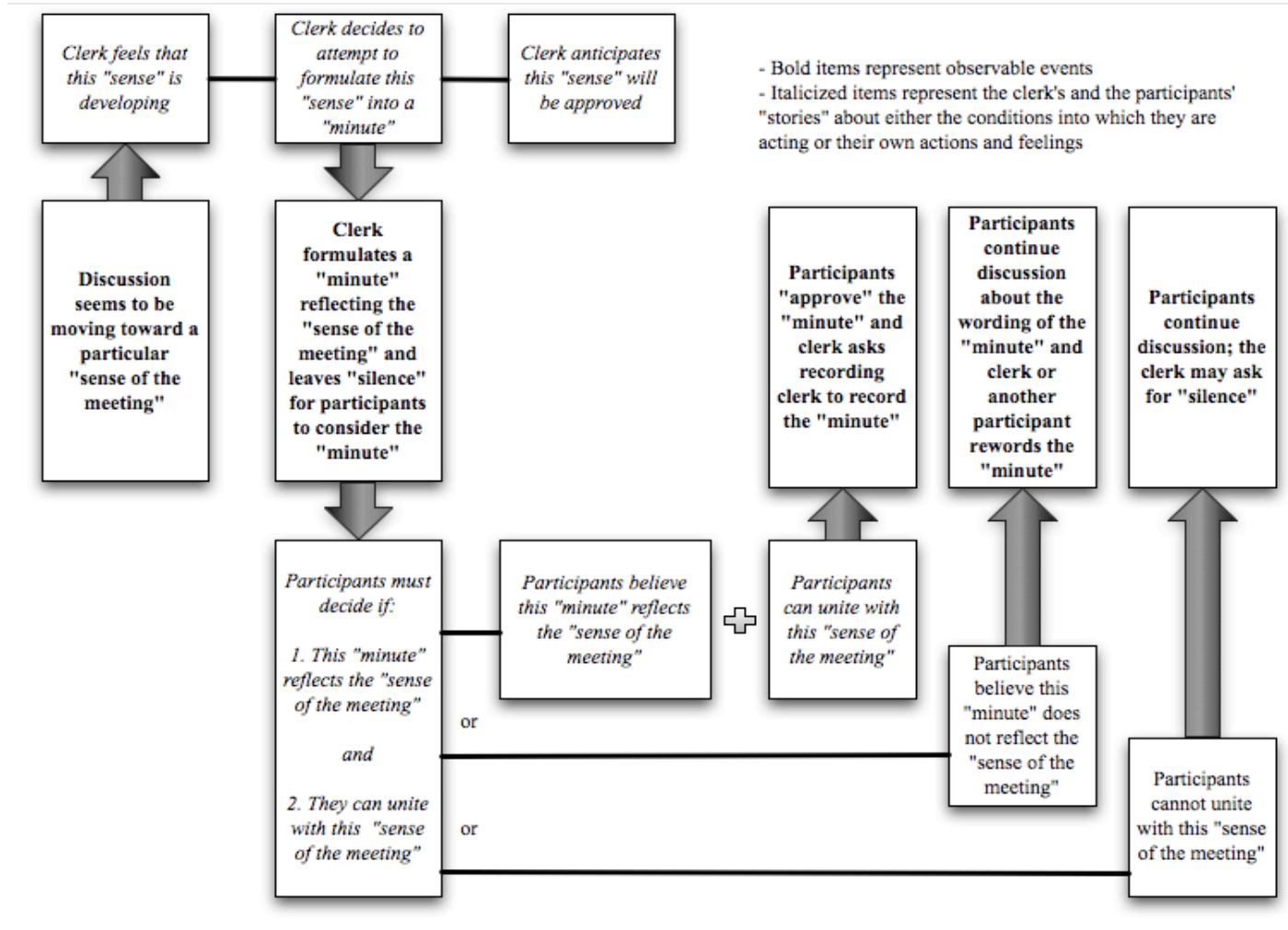
### CMM ANALYTICAL MODEL OF CRAIG'S UTTERANCE





## APPENDIX C

### MODEL OF LEGITIMATE UTTERANCES WHEN “SENSE OF THE MEETING” IS FORMULATED BY CLERK



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