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Exploring relations of power in Quakers' alternative forms of organizing

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Abstract
In this chapter I consider relations of power in Quakers' alternative (i.e. non-hierarchical, non-managerialist and non-capitalist) forms of organizing. The overriding principle in Quaker organizing is that nobody is 'in charge', which includes processes of roles being rotated every three years, and formal procedures for collective decision making. By taking a relational perspective to power to appreciate social and material interactions, I explore how three different views on power can help to develop understanding of how things get done within Quaker organizing. My analysis is based on personal involvement with two local groups, undertaking interviews with twenty Quakers in the North of England, and most recently completing half-day workshops exploring leadership and influence with eight local groups across Britain. I offer insights about how to consider relations of power within this alternative form of organizing, in particular drawing upon and developing ideas of presence and absence.
Key words: power, alternative organization, presence, relational, leadership, absence

Purposes
This chapter will explore power dynamics in an organization with no formal hierarchy. The key purposes for doing so is that within management and organizational studies the idea of 'organization' can be taken-for-granted to be capitalist (i.e. organizations exist for the accumulation of capital for its owners), managerialist (i.e. managers are understood to be skilled experts who have the right to act as agents for owners and shareholders by giving instructions to employees), and hierarchical (i.e. organizations involve centralised authority which is created and maintained through a 'chain of command' with remuneration increasing the further towards the 'top' your role is located). The many organizations or forms of organizing, which cannot be identified by any of these three dimensions but are significant to how things get done in societies, are often overlooked in mainstream management and organizational theory (e.g. Buchanan & Huczynski, 2017). These organizations tend to be pursing democratic and participative ways of working such as: co-operative, social enterprise and non-for-profit organisations, and religious, spiritual, utopian-inspired communities, as well as social movements.

When forms of organizing which cannot be described by the dimensions capitalist, managerialist and hierarchical are studied they tend to be understood as 'alternative organizations'. Alternative organizations have been defined as involving "forms of organizing which respect personal autonomy, but within a framework of co-operation" with a core purpose for taking responsibility for enabling futures of individual and collective flourishing (Parker et al., 2014, p. 32). Consequently, the *means* of organizing in ways that are not capitalist, managerialist or hierarchical is attempted to be connected to the *ends* of individual and collective flourishing. Additionally, alternative organizations are often seen to be 'prefigurative' implying that they can inform and bring new more equitable and just ways of organizing social relations into being

(Parker et al., 2014). Within this broad definition there is recognition that the principles of autonomy and solidarity, *i.e.* allowing individuals' freedom and acting collectively, are in tension or even contradictory, and so are key dilemmas associated with 'alternative organization'.

My interest is to explore about how we can extend and enhance the possibilities for developing alternative organizations as a *means*, that is more congruent than 'traditional organizations', to achieve *ends* of social and environmental justice. In particular, I want to explore dynamics of power relations in order to consider how organizing can be understood to emerge when there is no formal hierarchy. I am assuming that because in this alternative organization typical configurations of owners, managers and superiors, with associated formalised authorities are abandoned, we need to reconsider how we can appreciate relations of power. Doing so is particularly important because a principle of being alternative is to be responsible for human flourishing, and so challenge negative dynamics of power which can produce domination and sustain inequalities. Also, as has been explored, understanding power dynamics in alternative organisational settings becomes even more important because of the 'diffusion' and 'masking' of power which less formal hierarchical arrangements can produce (Freeman, 2013).

Quakers (or Religious Society of Friends) are an international community of about 340,000 people who tend to be understood as nonconformist Christians (Dandelion, 2008). Quaker organizing can be understood as 'alternative' because it involves respecting *personal autonomy* as there is no creed or statement of belief, with the idea of 'god in everybody' being central to Quaker theology. Nobody is formally in charge via hierarchical roles. There is a *framework of co-operation* which relates to: the 'business method', developed over the past 350 years, which is the key decision-making process for collectively discerning the way forward, where "everyone must feel it right to let the decision go ahead" (Bradney & Cownie, 2000, p. 71); any specific role holders being decided upon via a process of group nomination; and, roles are intended to be rotated at least every three years. Finally, there is *attentiveness to the sorts of futures produced* with activities and initiatives guided by four testimonies of equality, simplicity, truth and peace. These testimonies are appreciated as much as about ways of being and living as describing aspirational futures for societies. Quaker contexts have previously been suggested to "create the opportunity for communally held power" (Kline, 2003, p. 165).

Powers

The meanings and significance of power have been variously debated in social and organizational research (e.g. Clegg & Hardy, 2006), and it is not my intention in this chapter to comprehensively review them. However, I will provide a brief overview of three key views to position the relational perspective on power that I will be applying and developing. Power, as generally about "a capacity to get things done", can be understood as being presented and debated in relation to three overlapping dimensions or views (King & Lawley, 2019, p. 500).

Firstly, *power-as-possession* that is observable as being owned by individuals or groups which is exercised over others, where one party 'wins' by realising their aims by successfully overcoming resistance (e.g. French & Raven, 1959). Power in this view is divided between being 'positional' (based on authority by being able to give directions, administer sanctions and give rewards), and 'personal' (based on being able to give recognition and praise, being a desirable role model, having specialist or expert knowledge and access to valuable information). Importantly, the 'possession of power' by a person is based on a perception by others of that person being identified as possessing it. This may differ between the different types of positional and personal power. For example, when a person is officially assigned a role within an organization it is likely that the person is generally understood to be 'in possession' of that position. Whereas personal power, for example relating to 'being expert', can be shaped by aspects such as the background, upbringing and education of the people perceiving or not that a person possesses certain expertise. Additionally, how people then behave based on their perception of a person possessing bases of power will also likely be variable. For example, somebody in a position of power in a military organization with a culture of a 'chain-of-command' may diligently follow what they have been told; whereas a person working

in a technology start-up with an ethos of being innovative and maverick could be more likely ignore a direction from somebody possessing power. However, in this view, if the person or group who is understood to be in the possession of power is not able to successfully 'use it' by realising their aims and overcoming resistance then it would become questionable whether they did indeed possess it.

Secondly, the view of *power-through-structure* is about the ability to determine what can and cannot be spoken about (Lukes, 2005). Lukes suggested that there are three dimensions within this view of power. Firstly, 'visible power' that is exercised to secure a decision in situations where there is observable conflict or disagreement, whereby power as in the first view is understood as the possession of a person or group. Secondly, 'covert power' that is exercised to keep issues off the decision-making agenda, or behind-the-scenes agenda setting, by people or groups maintaining privilege and power through controlling what can and cannot be spoken about and so making conflicts unobservable by avoiding them. Thirdly, 'institutional power' which involves how reality becomes defined and so what is normal, as if norms and meanings become internalized by members of an organization then it is suggested that they will then act in accordance with those norms, even if these work against their interests. This third dimension related to ideas of people being socialised to unquestionably and unknowingly accept forms of oppression which can be understood as 'false consciousness'. Lukes's (2005) dimensions emanate from a Marxist thesis where the powerful and privileged are understood to be the managers and owners of capital. With varieties of capitalism dominating economic arrangements in many societies, these ideas still seem helpful and relevant for considering often taken-for-granted structures and processes in which individuals, groups and organizations are embedded.

Thirdly, is the view of *power-as-productive* where power is understood as potentially producing new ways of thinking and acting (Foucault, 1980). This view of power is suggested to be based upon several connected aspects. Firstly, power/knowledge in which power is understood to be inseparable from knowledge, meaning that power is expressed in how we make sense of and define the world through different concepts and theories because they are underpinned by different assumptions. For example, competing assumptions about how detached or embedded people and organizations are from 'nature', which inform contrasting approaches to environmental sustainability in organizations (Allen, Cunliffe, & Easterby-Smith, 2019). Secondly, both 'sides' in a situation or conflict have the potential to have power (and so resist) and have potential to choose what they might do with it. For example, an employee who resists the direction of a manager by taking an excessive time to start or complete the tasks that they have been directed to complete. Thirdly, is 'disciplinary power and normalisation' which relates to how we observe people and judge them against a set of invisible 'norms' and unquestioned facts about what we expect of others and value about ourselves. Consequently, this aspect of Foucault's ideas about power, relates to exploring how it can be understood within 'neutral' everyday practices, such as a man carrying heavy bags for a women which helps to reproduce ideas of male physical superiority, and women needing to be cared for and looked after. It is understood as disciplinary as a person internalises the ways of being or doing by disciplining themselves to conform, such as staying late at work if this is understood to be related to job and career success.

Relational perspective

These three views of power; power-as-possession, power-through-structure, and power-as-productive provide us with a brief overview of some of the key ways power has been conceptualised. In the exploration in this chapter I am going to undertake an initial analysis which draws across these three viewpoints to explore the potential value of each for making sense of an alternative organizational context. I will interpret and apply the perspectives within a relational approach to understanding social and organizational action. Such a perspective assumes that power is produced through relationships between human and non-human entities "as a network of social boundaries that constrain and enable action for all actors" (Hayward, 1998, p. 2). As Latour suggests "power is not something you can hoard and possess, it is something that has to be made" (1986, p. 274). A relational perspective on power has been developed in connection with actor-network approaches which understand human actors to be embedded within relational networks of human and nonhuman actors (Law, 1992; Latour, 1986).

Since the development of ideas about actor-networks the popularity of it as a conceptual lens for raising questions about taken-for-granted aspects of social reality has grown across a wide range of fields including management and organization studies (e.g. Jensen & Sandström, 2019; Laasch, 2019). A key element of this continuing interest in actor-networks is about attempts to extend visibility on social realities by challenging constructions of 'subjects' as active, knowing and influencing and 'objects' as passive, knowable and formable (Law, 2004). Doing so to decentre human intentionality as *the* key ingredient for action means that questions emerge about how we can explore action as a relational effect of human and nonhuman interactions (Latour, 2005). Consequently, an actor-network perspective can help to explore the relations of power through which peoples' words do and do not translate into actions (e.g. Allen et al., 2018).

Some have suggested that actor-network approaches neglect power (Whittle & Spicer, 2008), with others suggesting that it is "only by examining how actors act, react, and interact in the immediate context can we see how power relationships are structured" (Bergstrom & Diedrich, 2011, p. 900). Indeed it has been argued that actor-network approaches are "all about power" (Law, 1992, p. 387), because they are about exploring "the heterogeneous ordering that goes into forming and maintaining a stabilised network" (Allen et al., 2018, p. 30). The idea of an actor-network is about conceptualising how actors do not act alone, but are parts of dynamic webs of material (bodies and objects) and semiotic (communication and language) influences. Power is understood as a relational effect, a hybrid of human and nonhuman actors (Latour, 2005), because "actors are afforded by their very ability to act by what is around them" (Mol, 2010, p. 258). Consequently, power can be considered as expressed by how human and nonhuman relations of organizing become stabilised, as these arrangements have excluded and overcome other realities and possible ways of being and doing.

Presences and absences

Recently in studies about leadership influence, connections have been made between actor-network approaches and notions of presence as a potentially productive way to explore relations of power (Fairhurst & Cooren, 2009). In this work 'presence' is seen to be a key concept which is understood "as an effect, something that can never be taken for granted, but that has to be produced" (Fairhurst & Cooren, 2009, p. 470). These ideas are positioned with actor-network approaches where presence relates to the different textures of how human and non-human entities are perceived to be present and absent by those constituting the network.

Power, as the capacity to get things done, relates to how these presences and absences are enrolled in to and stabilised as standing for an actor-network. For example, in relation to understanding leadership power dynamics Fairhurst and Cooren (2009) explore the situation of Arnold Schwarzenegger's response to wild fires in the state of California (US) when he was governor. They suggest how Schwarzenegger was able to be seen to be a successful leader in the crisis situation by associations with his tough-talking language to his lines as a previous screen persona in famous Hollywood films such as *The Terminator.* Hence his presence in the wild fire crisis became (likely strategically by those supporting his media relations) inscribed with notions of an absent film character. Also, likely supported and enabled by the predominance of discourses of leadership which imagine and celebrate superhuman heroes and saviours. Fairhurst and Cooren go on to suggest that "one key aspect of leadership presence and absence lies in a leader's (performed and recognized) capacity to dislocate the local .. it is through the (conscious or unconscious) mobilization of a plethora of actants in situ that this person we call a leader manages to represent and incarnate as many (conscious or unconscious) reasons to follow him or her" (2009, p. 484). More recently these ideas have been expressed via the concept of 'presentification' which is described as exploring "ways of speaking and acting by which actors can make present things and beings that influence the unfolding of the situation in which they find themselves" (Benoit-Barné et al., 2020, p. 119).

What I will go on to explore in this chapter are the possibilities of further developing these notions of presence and absence in relation to understanding relations of power in the context of Quaker organizing. My research with Quaker communities in the UK spans a range of activities from reflecting on personal

involvement with two local groups (Allen, 2017), undertaking interviews with twenty Quakers in the North of England (Allen, 2019), and most recently completing half-day workshops exploring leadership and influence with eight local groups across Britain, at which between five and twelve people attended each workshop. In this chapter I will draw on insights across these streams of activities over the past six years. Consequently, I am not presenting a systematic qualitative analysis of gathered data, but seeking to offer selected glimpses across these activities in this exploration. This accumulated data has not previously been analysed in relation to notions of power. I hope to offer some tentative suggestions about how to (re)conceptualise power dynamics within an alternative organizational setting. In doing so developing the idea of presence to extend visibility on how things get done. The existing work on leadership presence has tended to focus on role based leaders as a proxy for leadership in traditional organizations. My relational perspective is appreciating notions of leadership as about "process[es] of power based reality construction" between people that produce the way forward and so not centred around formalised roles (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 5).

Context

'Liberal' or 'un-programmed' Quaker Meetings are grounded in the practice of silent worship and unplanned ministry (Dandelion, 2008). During the typically weekly Meeting for Worship, Quakers gather in an unadorned room and "sit in silence together for an hour or so, standing up to speak only if they are led to do so, and then only to share some insight which they sense will be of value to others", the meeting ends by shaking of hands (Ambler, 2013, p. 8). The key formal setting in which we can appreciate how Quakers' organize is through the 'business method' which is a way of coming together to discern the way forward for the Quaker community. The matters considered using this method can vary widely from administrative arrangements, such as how to organize processes for other groups to book and pay for using rooms in the Meeting House (the place Quakers go to meet), to the Meeting's position relating to supporting social movements such as Extinction Rebellion (Allen, 2017).

In brief, a 'Business Meeting' or 'Meeting for Church Affairs' in which the 'business method' is performed involves a Clerk, and typically a deputy or co-Clerk, who chair and administer the meeting which would usually last for several hours. The Clerk(s) typically will prepare the agenda and have the responsibility in the 'business meeting' for writing a minute. A minute is written following the discussion of each item and has to be acceptable to those in attendance, by reflecting the 'will of the meeting', before the next item can be discussed. In some cases at the meeting each person attending is only allowed to speak once to each agenda item and it is expected that there are periods (brief and extended) of silence following peoples' contributions, was well as whilst the Clerk is writing a minute. As Durham suggests Quaker business method "enables decisions to be taken without majority voting, using spiritual discernment to come to conclusions which are never pressed by individuals" (2010, p. 11).

> *"When we unite with a minute offered by our clerk, we express, not a sudden agreement of everyone present with the prevailing view, but rather a confidence in our tried and tested way of seeking to recognise God's will."*
> Quaker Faith and Practice (Fifth edition, 3.06 – https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/3-06/)

In a 'business meeting' the most significant authority, as indicated from the above excerpt from Quaker Faith and Practice which is described as 'The book of Christian discipline .. of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain', is understood to be 'god', 'the spirit' or 'the divine' which is related to Quakers belief that there is 'god in everybody'. This means that conceptually for Quakers the most significant presence in explanations about the processes of their discernment and decision making is an immaterial (and so physically absent) and variously understood notion of the divine. Quakers tend not to worship a defined deity or remote spirit, instead understanding, although there is necessary ambiguity, the divine to be present within human affairs and so relating to (aspects of) people and living beings (Durham, 2010). Consequently, the divine can be suggested to become apparent through the utterances of those participating in the 'business method' by the other people who are in attendance. It is this ascription of

certain words spoken at a particular moment as expressing divinity that is perhaps the most complex dynamic of Quaker organizing to conceptualise. Quakers' judgements about the speaking of 'god's will' can be understood by considering how a mixture of presences and absences are appreciated as having coalesced and stabilised (and so reflecting effects of power) at given moments as will be considered in the following analysis.

Analysis

By taking a relational perspective on power, I am going to draw across the three views outlined to explore dynamics within Quaker organizing. In particular, to consider how notions of presences and absences can help to extend visibility on the webs of relations of power which can be understood to constrain and enable how things get done in this alternative organizational context. The below table is a summary of the analysis which considers the aspects of each view on power in relation to potential presences and absences. This section will discuss the analysis in respect of each of the three views, as set out in the below summary table.

	Presences	**Absences**
Power-as-possession - *Positional*	- Personal wealth of some Quakers (but not publicly displayed)	- No roles associated with formal authority to give directions or administer sanctions
- *Personal*	- Expressing the value of others' contributions - Speaking confidently and articulately in groups - Showing comprehensive understanding of 'right ordering' - Appropriate and accurate quoting of Quaker texts	- Remembered 'role model' Quakers of the past as a lens through which other Quakers are interpreted - A person's history of holding different roles within the society
Power-through-structure - *Visible power (conflict and disagreement)*	- 'Sense of the meeting' as captured in a written minute which represents the will of the Meeting	
- *Covert power (keeping issues off of the table, behind the scenes agenda setting)*		- Clerks role of deciding what is on the agenda for making decisions about at Meetings for Business
- *Institutional power (taken-for-granted structures and processes)*	- Business method as involving the development of minutes by Clerks with others surrounding them seated in a semi-circle who may contribute once to each agenda item - Design of Meeting Houses as simple and without decoration of any religious icons or deities - Noticeboards in Meeting Houses displaying activities associated with Quaker testimonies / values	- Silence (not speaking) as fundamental to discerning the will of god
Power-as-productive		

- *How things are defined and assume to be*	- Quaker Faith and Practice as expressing the Quaker Way and associated processes (placed on table at centre of Quaker Meetings) - The texts of 'significant' Quakers from history (e.g. George Fox, John Woolman) in Meeting House libraries	
- *Resistance*	- Those that have time and availability to take on roles and attend Business Meetings (e.g. being retired from work)	- Those that do not have time or availability to take on roles and attend Business Meetings due work and caring responsibilities (e.g. of children, an elderly partner or relative)
- *Disciplinary power and normalisation (norms and unquestioned expectations)*	- Quakers who are understood to be and live Quakerism - Meeting and business method as *the* ways through which the will of god is discerned	- Appreciations of ideas of leadership and power as irrelevant to Quaker organizing - General absence of non-white and disabled bodies

Power-as-possession

I will start by considering presences in relation to the first view of *power-as-possession*. Here, whether a person's utterances might become enrolled in defining and influencing ways forward for the group will relate to the assessment of those present as to how the utterances are interpreted as valuable and significant, and so to represent or reflect the 'will of god'. In particular in Business Meetings, the Clerks' interpretations will be highly significant as they physically translate the contributions of the group into a written minute. In a previous study I considered some themes by which a Quaker may be understood as offering contributions to the group that have 'weight' (so more likely to be accepted to represent the collective will of the group) i.e. of greater influence beyond others' words (Allen, 2019). We can explore some of these themes by taking a relational approach to understanding French and Raven's (1959) 'bases of power'.

As discussed, certain Quaker roles do carry responsibilities and so are associated with formalised responsibilities, such as Clerk. Although due to it being a largely voluntary organization based around Local Meetings (which is the aspect that I have studied) there is relatively limited formalised positional basis via contractual arrangements and role descriptions to give directions, administer sanctions and give rewards. This contrasts with a 'traditional organization' associated with managerial control and hierarchical design, and purposes such as increasing shareholder wealth. However, in relation to the personal dimensions which are described by the 'power base' model, we can appreciate various ways that certain peoples' bodies and words can become associated with the presence or absence of divine authority. Being a desirable role model by 'being Quaker' is potentially significant to how peoples' words maybe interpreted at given moments (Dandelion, 2014). The attachment of 'being Quaker' to a person may be related to an involvement with that person over many years and appreciating their living and working as expressing the four Quaker testimonies, as previously mentioned. For example, we can appreciate from the following quote from Brian that 'being Quaker' can involve interpreting somebody, from observations of them and others' reactions to them, as connecting with particular images or ideals of Quakerism. In this case the ascription of this meaning to somebody is about judgements of the ways in which they pursue community needs above their own.

> "Someone whose walk, whose way of life, is informed by that sense of what we would call 'the inner guide' or 'the teacher within', someone who is looking for thine will rather than my will on a regular basis. Their life speaks of the greater good and so not just about their own wellbeing."

Brian, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England

In the next quote Emily offers a glimpse of a 'backcloth' of remembered and prominent Quakers from history, largely based on encountering their writings, and in so doing infers a sense of how these ideas about absent Friends can materialise in peoples' interpretations of others when seeing and hearing them speaking.

> *"My all time favourite Quaker is John Woolman .. he has this wonderful understanding of himself as being part of creation, and alongside creation, therefore he would not harm another part of creation. His writing was from around the 1750s. He campaigned against slavery, and where he saw injustice he took up the cause, and he simplified his life. So for example, he no longer used the things that were damaging to other people, so if dyeing the clothing was harming the people doing the dyeing he decided to stop wearing dyed clothing."*
> *Emily, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

In this example from Emily she expresses that if she makes associations with a Quaker who is present, with one from the past, in this case John Woolman who she appreciates to have had desirable qualities, then she may well be more likely to understand them as influential and able to express 'God's will'.

From my interview conversations, an 'image' of an absent Quaker who died in recent years to whom the person had developed close emotional attachment, because they were understood as a 'good' or a role model Quaker, could 'become present' in finding a way forward in the current moment. In such cases, interviewees would describe a reflective moment involving considering 'what would <xx> do in this situation?'. For example, a Quaker's physical appearance and way of being which may be connected with imaginings about how a 'good' Quaker is, may likely be related to their considered dress and lack of conspicuous jewellery. Such interpretations could potentially be stereotypical and clichéd, such as their attire involving sandals, repaired clothes and not flamboyant colours. Although potentials for such stereotypes can be connected back to histories of Quakers before the mid-1860s who saw a need to always wearing plain, often grey, clothes, and so be clearly distinguishable by their dress (e.g. Rumball, 2018). Some specific suggested 'images' of how a Quaker *should* look did not emerge from any of the phases of research. From my personal involvement with Quaker groups over the past nine-years glimpses of any conspicuous consumption (e.g. expensive jewellery or watch, luxury car) would tend to make a person appear ill-fitting in a Quaker context. Particularly, as celebrated historical Quaker figures, such as John Woolman who was mentioned above by Emily, are associated with living with simplicity and frugality based on the accounts in the books which are present in the libraries of many Meeting Houses. Expressions of wealth by some Quakers are typically absent on their bodies whilst they are present in Quaker Meeting Houses or at associated gatherings. From my observations financial wealth would likely be less visible such as involving owning a substantial house, or from the travel and holidays that they can regularly afford.

Financial wealth and frugality can be understood to have a complex history for Quakers in Britain. In past centuries Quakers were excluded from many professions, but via establishing successful businesses, such as the Cadbury's, they became very wealthy (Windsor, 1980). Consequently, whilst being overtly wealthy would likely repel images of 'being Quaker', having wealth is something that has been intertwined with the development of Quakerism in Britain. Indeed as Quaker Meetings are largely sustained by voluntary contributions from the local Quakers, although how people donate would generally only be known to those who have taken on treasurer roles: hypothetically those who contribute the most may be afforded more influence in particular with regard to decision making. For example, potentially relating to significant expenses of how the Meeting House building may be maintained or renovated. Their influence could be understood as related to other Quakers assuming a potential threat that those contributing substantially more become dissatisfied and decide to reduce or withdraw their financial support. For example, anecdotally reported to me during research that in Quaker history in Britain on occasions when very wealthy Quakers became dissatisfied with their Meeting they chose to fund the building of a new Meeting House in another nearby area.

Admittedly, this is a more speculative dimension of considering relations of power amongst Quakers, but where Friends have access to financial wealth, as understood by their generous donations to their Local Meeting, they could be understood to possess some *financial reward power* through their ongoing association with the Meeting and the future potential for significant bequests when they die. However, in Quaker organizing this would be more easily associated with personal power (instead of positional as suggested by French and Raven (1959)) as this financial reward power is something that a person could bring into the organization, rather than having the formal authority (e.g. via a hierarchical role) to allocate financial rewards to other people within this alternative organization. Additionally, the physical presence of the 'estate' of Quaker Meeting Houses across Britain, which were often enabled by the wealthy Quakers of the past, can be understood to reproduce the organizational need for substantial donations from Quakers today. This is connected to a need for Quakers to have 'disposable' financial wealth to contribute to the Meeting, as well as making the maintaining of buildings a key preoccupation in Quaker organizing. Although, there are some Local Meetings who do not own and manage a Meeting House building and so are detached from these potential dynamics.

Referent power, relating to the 'having desirable abilities and personality traits that can and should be copied', is typically associated with Western ideas of charisma relating to captivating and inspiring an audience (French & Raven, 1959). A Quaker being interpreted and afforded to have personal *referent power* can be understood as more about a moment-to-moment way of being and acting that is appreciated by others to embody ideas of Quakerism. In a Quaker context there can be aversion to ideas of 'power' and 'leadership', with connected resistance to listening to people who might be seen to be charismatic, which is indicated in the following quotes from interviewees:

> "I don't think we talk about power very much. Power is there it is exercised, it is lurking in the background, but I don't think we talk about it very much."
> *John, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

> "I know Quakers don't like talking about power, but there is power among Friends. Some peoples' ministry is heard more carefully, people listen in a different way. So Friends do have power at different times, they will have more power. I don't think that is necessarily wrong, but I know that most Quakers hate to talk about power and leadership."
> *Cathy, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

Consequently, the potential for a person to be appreciated as possessing *referent power* tends to be associated with 'quieter' ways of working and how people conduct themselves as part of the Quaker community. Some ideas about these ways of being Quaker that can be seen to be desirable are indicated in the following quotations.

> "If you discern something in business meeting then there would be one or two people who I can imagine could stand up and say after a while, 'Friends I hope that we would consider this, and that we would do so and so..'. Usually that would be because they think they have a certain sought of awareness the sort of quality ..., but it is not because so and so says this so we ought to think it is the right thing"
> *Lisa, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

> "There were Friends who spoke whose words who had weight to them, who could hold the meeting, who could pull us back if we were not centring in a Business Meeting. They might be the person who got to their feet and you always think 'oh good' they are going to say something worth hearing. You might think that they were very serious, but actually looking back all the Weighty Friends I can think of, they had lovely senses of humour, really lovely people."
> *Emily, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

Consequently, referent power can be understood to be related to how well a person pays attention to the situation and others' utterances in ways that are seen to be able to 'bring threads together' in processes of decision making and discussions, and helping to 'hold the meeting' by helping others to centre on the matter being considered by the group. This means that in a Quaker context ideas of referent power are not easily related to an 'out-there, in-front' expression of charisma, but understood to be about demonstrably showing a care to supporting collective discernment. Within the view of power-as-possession, referent power can be seen as intertwined with *psychological reward power* a dimension that refers to how people are afforded influence from their expressions of recognition and praise for others. This is because the desirable qualities of 'being Quaker' include demonstrating attentiveness and listening to others' views, and in so doing valuing others' contributions. However, desirable qualities of people and how they might be displayed will be variously interpreted, which means that what we could understand as more typical ideas about demonstrably recognising the value of others' contributions, relating to *referent power*, coexist alongside these described desired ways of being. For example, from the below quotes we can see there are suggestions of patterns of attachment of influence, or weight, to some individuals relating to their paid work. In particular, jobs such as headmistress and doctor are mentioned which are connected by the interviewees to notions of 'class' and ways of being understood to be confident and articulate. This could imply that images of 'being Quaker' in Britain may have become ingrained with ways of speaking and acting which could seem odd, and potentially alienating, to somebody who might understand themselves to be from a 'working class' background.

> "It [being weighty] could be to do with class as well. I can think of somebody who I would definitely characterise as a Weighty Friend ... she was a Headmistress at a school so there is that sort of air of authority and gravitas around anyway."
> *Lisa, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

> "Looking back over the years I think most of the people at that time [identified as a 'weighty Friend'] were professional people ... I don't like the term middle class because we all have to work."
> *Tina, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

> "The people I am thinking of tend to be doctors and headmistresses ... or they are on the front-line of campaigns to change things."
> *Sue, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

In relation to *referent power* there can be understood to be a complex mixture of what is spoken by a Quaker being ascribed authority in relation to dimensions such presenting themselves to appear articulate and authoritative (which might be more typically associated as desirable with roles and jobs in wider society), as well as ways of being-Quaker mentioned above in respect of being attentive to valuing every-bodies participation. As such Quakers' images of absent Friends (alive or dead) or memories of people they might have respected in job settings can become present within Quaker interactions and decisions as to whose words at the moments they are spoken can become enrolled as making present the will of the community and so 'god's will'.

Another aspect related to considering the power-as-possession view is about a person being understood to have specialist or expert knowledge and access to valuable information, *expert power*. This can be connected with other aspects related to my study of Quakers whose contributions were frequently perceived as having weight when a person is understood to display a comprehensive understanding of process and procedure 'right ordering', which is associated with the uniqueness of many Quaker organizing processes.

> "What I associate with that is somebody with a depth of experience of process and procedure, which has been used quite rudely but actually there is real benefit in having people around who do understand process and procedure and why things are done the way they are and actually understand a bit of the heritage of things."

Cathy, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England

> "Knowledge of Quaker process does come into to it [being understood as a weighty / influential friend], especially given that some of it [Quaker process] is not clearly articulated and it is a matter of what you absorb about the way Quakers do things which might take a while to latch onto"
> *John, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

Or, how people are able to mobilise key Quaker writings in their speaking, or being known for their writing.

> "Friends who have read a lot and therefore can quote things more readily and seem to really know the original Friends. Who would actually be able to know that this famous thought came from George Fox whereas this other one came from Isaac Pennington, for example. And fewer and fewer of us can do that now."
> *Tracey, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

> "People who write, people like Ben Pink Dandelion, could be seen as influential because of his written work, Harvey Gillman in the past, so for some individuals I think it could be through their works."
> *George, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

Or, having held formal roles and so in touch with and connected with other Quakers in other locations and involved in roles particularly relating to regional and national aspects of the organization. However, such a history or awareness of these roles is not displayed on that person's body, via some kind of organizational chart or curriculum vitae. It may be apparent to some due to their ongoing involvement with that person, but invisible to others who may have recently joined and so have limited potential to attach meaning to peoples' involvement with other parts of the Society.

> "They would know if we have an idea where we would send it to, understand the function of the national committee and so on, and who have generally served on a lot of committees."
> *Amy, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

> "People who are brought up in established Quaker families might go along to Young Friends and network with a lot of other young Friends, so they know one another across the country … they would know quite of lot of Quakers of their generation across the country that can give them a certain weight, or a way in, at a national level."
> *Lisa, from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

Power-through-structure

If we turn to considering the aspects of the power through structure view we can connect to and develop some more insights about relations of power within Quaker organizing (Lukes, 2005). The aspects of 'visible power' in this view are closely connected to ideas of people being understood and made as 'possessing' power and influence from the first view. The notion of 'sense of the meeting' associated with the 'business method', mentioned earlier, which is described as involving sitting in unity where "we turn it over, allowing it to be decided" (Morley, 1993, p. 5). As Morley suggests, "sense of the meeting hears all of the concerns, then moves beyond the verbal expressions to hear the spirit of the concern in order to discern what is 'right' for the group" (p. 6). Consequently, a preoccupation in the development of Quaker process, over the past 350 years, involves seeking forms of equality through ways of enabling the people present at the Business Meeting to express their views as part of community decision making. This means that the 'structure' given to the organizational arrangements of decision making attempts to hear conflicting views and disagreements of opinion. Also the processes of translating peoples' contributions into a minute which represents the community's view has to be agreed before the next item on the agenda can begin along with the material arrangements of a Business Meeting, typically involving people seated in a semi-circle to be in

similar proximity to the Clerks at the 'centre' of the meeting. So whilst ideas of 'visible power' can be explored in this context as considered above, the 'structure' is intended to subvert this, but it does mean that relations of power could be made less visible. For example, the dimension in this view relating to 'covert power' whereby the role definitions of Clerks which stabilise a responsibility to deciding what is on and not on the agenda at Business Meetings, could help to keep issues off the table. Although the presence of 'any other business' on a meeting agenda, as is typical from my experience, could enable issues in which conflict has been anticipated and potentially avoided, to be brought forward. However, as the likely final agenda item, peoples' energy and enthusiasm to prolong a meeting that typically lasts several hours, where some people might leave at different stages due to other commitments, might reduce the potential for any issues absent from the Clerk's agenda to be discussed.

If we consider the dimension of this view associated with making and reproducing institutional power within Quaker organizing, we can make connections to some of the analysis so far. For example, the institutionalisation of the 'business method', although the use of this can involve local adaption (e.g. that people can speak more than once to each agenda item), has become enrolled as a taken-for-granted way of working, as well as silence being at the centre of the way things are done within the Quaker context. As has been explored by Molina-Markham, silences in Quakers can be understood, as an absence of speech, but also as a presence of "a deeply meaningful communicative event" (2014, p. 171). The complexity of silence as communication involves it being potentially an expression of resistance as well as acceptance. For example, saying nothing in a meeting could be celebrated as 'Quakerly', i.e. upholding the 'right ordering' of Quaker organizing, it could also enable resistance not to be voiced.

The architecture of Meeting Houses varies, but the aesthetics of minimal decoration without religious icons and ornate objects is an assumed aspect of how they are organized. Highly visible notice boards in entrance halls that display initiatives and campaigns which are tacitly and explicitly connected to Quaker values and testimonies help to hold in place a sense of what is worthwhile or accepted concerns for Quakers. What can be regarded as the institutionalisation of these various material arrangements associated with Meeting Houses might be considered particularly important, or perhaps necessary given that Quakers are non-credal and guided by their interpretations of some fairly openly defined testimonies. In these ways, the material space of a Meeting House can be understood to constitute and be constituted by the boundaries of the social inter-actings which unfold within it.

Power-as-productive

The third view on power considers how we internalise and normalise ways of being and doing. A key artefact is the previously mentioned 'red book' called Quaker Faith and Practice. This 'book of discipline', which is currently undergoing revision by a designated group of Quakers, was adopted in Britain in 1994 includes writings from earlier texts. Whilst as suggested above without a creed, or statement of belief which is meant to be followed there is variety between Quakers and Quaker Meetings. Quakers are expected to find their own way to 'experimentally' know of divinity (Halliday, 1991), although in Quaker Faith and Practice some procedures for organizing Quaker Meetings are given in specific detail. For example, on 'Gravestones and memorial stones':

> *"As an expression of our testimonies to equality and simplicity, Friends should adopt the use of plain gravestones in any burial grounds. In all cases, they are to be erected under the direction of the area meeting so that, in each particular burial ground, uniformity is preserved in respect of the materials, size, form and wording of the stones, as well as in the mode of placing them."*
> Quaker Faith and Practice (Fifth edition, 14.34 – https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/14-34/)

During a Quaker Meeting for Worship, the prominence of the 'red book' is significant as it is typically placed in the centre of the room on a table with some flowers and drinking water. Also, there are frequently copies of the book near the entrance(s) to the Meeting Room. Consequently, it tends to be a permanent presence alongside which Quaker affairs, worship and decisions are being made. Whilst many involved in

Quaker Meetings may not have a detailed knowledge of its contents, for instance it is rarely used as a 'manual' during the process of Business Meeting, and it has only been with the Society for 26 years, its stabilised into the actor-network of a Meeting. This means that it can be understood as an object that actively shapes and constrains the possibilities for other actors. Thus along with the assembled texts in the library which are typically part of a Meeting House (often some book shelves in a prominent location if there is no dedicated room) definitions and versions of being a Quaker are reproduced. My observations of the effects of these texts is not so much that they are prescriptive regarding what to do and believe, although as mentioned parts of Quaker Faith and Practice are, but that by connecting with the sentiments and words of these available texts, power is made and influence over ways forward constructed. So, as discussed above there is a relationship to ideas of expert powers becoming attached to certain Quakers bodies and words due to their ability to appropriately and accurately quote Quaker texts.

The third view is also associated with ideas of multi-directional power that can be relationally produced and resisted. In the processes of Quaker decision making a potentially key dimension is 'who is in the room'. What is meant by this is who has the potential based on other commitments (such a paid work) and caring responsibility (such as children or an elderly partner) to be able to be present at a Meeting for Worship or Business Meeting. As with the below quotations from the interviews with Quakers, it is possible to understand that those who can have more influence are those whose life circumstances support their presence. This is expressed in the below quote:

> "In the past those Weight Friends were those whose circumstances let them do more, you will hear quite a lot that the Society will fall apart if we have not got the recently retired to do these jobs because they have the energy and the time. So I wonder if the Weighty Friends are the recently retired because they have just got that capacity in their lives to offer more service at that time." Cathy, *from interviews with Quakers in the North of England*

Which means in relation to the possibility for resisting certain decisions or ways forward those who are absent will have limited potential. So whilst there is a formalised decision making process those with other major commitments can often be excluded as explored in other alternative organisational settings (Freeman, 2013). In decisions and associated minutes created through the formalised process of 'business method' it is the words that are uttered from the bodies present in the room which can be assembled by Clerks into a collectively agreeable position on the matter being considered. Although, absent Quakers who have previously had a pattern of involvement and were interpreted to be a 'good' or role model Quaker, as explored above, may become mobilised through the imaginings by those present of how that person(s) might make sense and respond to the situation. Such power relations can also be understood as related to notions of disciplinary power, whereby the 'bodies' and 'voices' of past Quakers are made present through the words, along with how they are uttered, by the people assembled on that occasion. Successful forms of expressing words at that moment, which are understood by those present, as expected and aspirational ways of being Quaker, mean that norms and expectations can be maintained. The influence afforded by the words to produce ways forward can be understood to help to sustain their disciplinary power within the community. This is potentially both productive to sustaining an idea of a Quaker Way, but also can promote exclusions. For example, the frequent absences of people with non-white or disabled bodies in Quaker contexts. Whilst in terms of outlooks and viewpoints, the tendency is for Quakers to be 'liberal' and promote diversity. However, perhaps the disciplinary power of how Quakerism is typically understood to be embodied can help to reproduce these absences. For instance, the stabilising of ways of being a Quaker could be understood to be enrolled with images of white skin.

Closing

In this chapter I have attempted to explore how relations of power can be approached in the alternative organizational context of Quaker organizing. By taking a relation perspective on power, appreciating how social and material aspects can variously become present and absent, I have attempted to extend visibility upon how Quakers get things done together. In doing so I have drawn upon aspects of my personal

involvement with two local groups, undertaking interviews with twenty Quakers in the North of England, and most recently completing half-day workshops exploring leadership and influence with eight local groups across Britain. This chapter has been an initial foray endeavouring to apply ideas across three views on power by taking a relational perspective. There are some emergent observations that I want to notice in drawing this chapter to a close.

Firstly, each of the three views on power have brought different, as well as overlapping, attentions to how to consider relations of power as a lens to explore Quaker organizing. From the summary table that was presented, glimpses of possible understanding are offered associated with each of the views. Consequently, explanatory potential was not confined to a particular view or stream of ideas about power which implies that the particularities of the alternative organizational context explored does not negate the value of any of the three views. It was only the positional dimensions of the power-as-possession view which did not easily connect to the context. This is because the lack of formalised hierarchy associated with the Quaker context appeared to substantially diminish possibilities to understand some potential dynamics of power-over whereby individual bodies are contractually enabled to mobilise sanctions or rewards.

Secondly, we can reflect on how some bodies' words, becoming and remaining (in)significant within the organizing of a Quaker Meeting, can mirror the tightrope of tensions of solidarity and autonomy which identify alternative organizations. Whereby a person struggles to stabilise as being understood as speaking the 'collective will' amongst potentially competing logics of collective concern, and being distinguishable as an individual who embodies a 'Quaker Way'. Others have expressed similar tensions in a Quaker context relating to an "ethos that abhors individually held power, yet appreciates personal experience" (Kline, 2003, p. 192). Also, similar tensions have been suggested in relation to leadership in alternative organizational contexts (Buzzanell et al., 1997). Additionally, ideas of leadership in traditional organizational contexts have explored how positional leaders can inform presences through tactical linguistic and visual connections that can imbue relations of power into their performances by harnessing other things and bodies from absent realms and contexts (Benoit-Barné et al., 2020; Fairhurst & Cooren, 2009). In Quaker contexts such a lens does help to make sense of relations of power, but where peoples' performances to 'be Quaker' may become interpreted as formulaic, or read as tactical, their potential to slip from the tightrope of being enrolled as expressing 'God's will' can in that moment severe their prominence in constituting the web of associations involved in 'getting things done together'.

Thirdly, the notions of presence and absence, which were drawn upon in respect of existing work on relations of power and leadership influence, were simultaneously helpful but challenging. They were helpful to explore how those people and materials that were visibly present could be understood to enrol and mobilise absent bodies and objects. Doing so helped to consider the makings of power in Quaker organizing and what aspects can be noticed as significant. However, conceptual challenges involve questions such as 'present and absent to whom?' and 'in what way?'. For example, something or somebody might not be physically present, but are present in the words of a person who is physically present. Consequently, how might divisions between absence and presence be construed? It felt like the boundaries between presence and absence can become very fuzzy as so likely conceptually problematic as categories to frame an analysis. This is particularly pertinent when drawing upon actor-network approaches which develop a language of associations in an attempt to transcend ideas of social or 'real' space (e.g. Latour, 1990). However, amongst these dilemmas and challenges the potential to explore ideas of how those absent variously become present within "process of power based reality construction" offers interesting possibilities for exploring the 'distribution' of leadership within this context (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 5), as well as help to open up possibilities for understanding the meanings and practices of non-hierarchical leadership (Western, 2014).

Finally, to be overly definitive about the fruits of this initial investigation would be premature. As with experimenting with any theoretical perspective, I find a lurking and worrying sense about the extent to which it is overly performative. By this I mean it is more inscriptive than descriptive of the realities that are sought to be described (Law, 2004). If we start looking for something it can be surprising how much more

prominent it becomes! However, inevitably as the actor assembling this text I am centrally enrolled in construing and mediating what is presence and absent within the actor-networks (Allen, Brigham, & Marshall, 2018). Consequently, when attempting to explore the ephemerality of relations of power we need to temper feeling too firm a grasp on upon realities that we craft, as we can inadvertently enact dynamics of power-over which we intend to question.

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