

**SESSION THREE**

**WINN-DIXIE**

# Who do you think you are?

## Ethos and guidance

The main purpose of this session is to prompt the group to think about the nature of identity generally, and the labels that make up our personal identity. This is in many ways an abstract subject. Even as adults, we often find it hard to pin down exactly what we consider our identity to be. Furthermore it is more difficult to broach and explore this topic with young people as many of them are still at the stage of working out their own personal identity.

Nevertheless identity is a crucial topic to address when looking at division and the process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Identity (cultural, religious and political) has always been at the centre of the conflict here, and thus all of us must try to understand how it is formed, as well as how it influences our thoughts and actions. This session should have no agenda on promoting any particular identity. It is important that young people feel we are not prescribing or proscribing their identity for them.

However, session three is designed to dovetail well with sessions four and five on Presbyterianism and Cultural Diversity. Likewise, there is an unashamed recognition of the importance and authority of our identity in Christ if we are Christians; this is a central point in our understanding of how different aspects of our identity relate to one another.

Thus session three may prove to be one of the more complex and taxing sessions for both the facilitator and the group itself. Significantly, this session is therefore placed immediately after the residential weekend so that it may gain from the group dynamic and new understanding of our role in reconciliation that was hopefully achieved in the last session.

Again, allow your creativity to be exercised in your planning for this session, but stick to the spine and core activities in order to deliver PYP correctly.

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## AIMS

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- To explore the origins of identity, how it's formed and how it influences our lives.
- To explore the different aspects of our own personal identity.
- To discuss how our faith and Christian identity should relate to our wider identity.

# » THREE



We will look at the importance of identity in this session, and we'll ask the question: what makes up our identity? So much of division in NI has to do with IDENTITY. In fact division everywhere is based in identity (e.g. the idea of "Them and Us").

Even our NAMES are part of our identity; they are the main way through which others identify us.

**PO:** (these can either be rhetorical or literal)

» Has an adult ever asked you the question, "Who do you think you are!?" This is often an aggressive question. Nevertheless, the answer to this question is to be found in our identity. » Who chose their own name? Our names are chosen for us and not by us, so other people contribute to our identity. » Were you born with the identity you have now?

Our identity and the way we see ourselves begins with our names, moves out to our personalities and then begins to include connections that we have to groups.



## Introduction | 5 min |

Recap on the main points covered on the residential, including: *that as humans we have a natural tendency to divide* ✦ *that we have a relationship to social, cultural and religious division here* ✦ *that God has many relevant things to say about responding to this division etc.*

## Warm-up

### OPTIONS

**Who am I?** | 10 min | This warm-up is designed to get the group thinking about identity and finding out about themselves. Write out the names of celebrities on individual pieces of paper, enough for every member of the group. Attach a name to everyone's back. The group have to find out who they are by asking each other questions, but can only give *yes/no* answers.

**Alphabet Soup** | 10 min | This warm-up is a good way to get the group thinking about the significance of our names, as well as energising them and getting them working together. Ask them to stand in front of their chairs in a circle. Now ask them to stand on their chairs. They must now organise themselves alphabetically according to their names without touching the floor. When the group thinks they are in order ask them to say their names one after another from the letter 'A'.

**Human Knots** | 10 min | Divide into two groups and ask each group to stand in a circle facing into the centre. Everyone reaches into the centre of the circle with both hands and without looking. They then grab a hand in each of theirs. Their aim is to untangle the circle into a straight line without letting go of the hands.

## Prayer / Bible Reading | 5-10 min |

Each session should include prayer and/or scripture reading by the facilitators and group members at the start of the session.

**Suggested themes for prayer:** *that we learn something new about how our identity is made and how it influences the way we see ourselves and others* ✦ *that God would reveal His wisdom to us concerning our identities and that we will understand the full meaning of our identity in Jesus.*

**Reading** | GALATIANS 3:26-28

## Influences

### OPTIONS

**My Journey** | 35 min |

This exercise encourages participants to reflect personally on their family of origin and to become more aware of how their background has shaped them as young adults.

Facilitators could model this first by speaking about their own backgrounds under the headings (*appendix 3.1 for photocopy-able sheets*),

then ask participants to fill in the answers on their own and then share with one or two others.

**Suggested questions as a prompt for discussion:** *How do you think that your upbringing has influenced you? Think about both positive and negative influences* » *How would you describe your family?* » *Were you conscious, growing up, of any other cultures or traditions which were different to your own? How were these seen by members of your family?* » *Share with your small group something about the person who influenced you most growing up, either a family member or an outsider. What was it about them that made them important in your life?* » *Has your family background affected you in the way you see people from other traditions or Churches in Northern Ireland?*

**Circles of Influence** | 15 min |

The purpose of this activity is to enable the group to clarify and then visualise the different components that make up their personal identity.

Hand out the Circles of Influence sheets (appendix 3.2). Ask the group to fill in the spaces between the lines with the different identities that they think influence them the most. The most influential labels should be nearest the centre of the circle.

**Circles of Influence discussion** | 20 min |

Split into small groups and ask them to discuss what they have put in their circles of influence. Ask them to discuss the questions below (appendix 3.3 for photocopy-able sheets).

- 1 Share your influences with your group, and particularly what went nearest to the centre of your circle.
- 2 Do you share many of the entries on the sheet with a group of people (e.g. Man Utd. Fan, British, White etc.)? How many entries are ones that only you have (e.g. "John's brother", experiences you have had etc.)?
- 3 In what ways does your identity have anything to do with being part of a group?

**Where do I belong?** | 40 min |

The purpose of this activity is to show the group the variety of groups to which they owe 'loyalty' in terms of our identity, while enabling them to both prioritise them and see the tension this can create.

**Ask the group to:** *think about the different groups they belong to (e.g. family, football team, nation etc.)* » *write up to ten of these on a sheet of paper* » *mark up in plenary the variety of groups they identified* » *list their groups 1-10 in order of priority* » *share in pairs why they gave the groups the priority that they did and if there are any competing tensions between the groups.*

Take an onion and use it to illustrate the layers of identity we have by peeling it in front of the group.

The labels/identities that fill up the concentric circles could come from all types of factors, including Geography (e.g. Northern Ireland, Belfast), Culture (e.g. British, Irish), Relationships (e.g. mother, brother), Style (e.g. rap music, Nu-metal), Hobbies (e.g. football team, surfer) or Experiences (e.g. becoming a Christian) etc.

Many aspects of our identity are not ours alone: i.e. we share parts of it with other people, and in doing so become part of groups (e.g. British, Protestant, Irish). This means that we often don't totally control our own identity: although some things about our identity are always unique to us.





What do you think Paul is saying here about our identity in Christ? The core position that our faith should hold in our identity is clear from this verse. Paul is saying here that, although we can legitimately hold a variety of identities, all other identities (national, cultural, social or gender) should be below or subordinate to our incorporation into the family of God through faith in Jesus.



We have a clear picture of who we are which fits certain criteria, even down to the shapes we identify with. This can be different from the way other people see us.

Some of our identities are manufactured things. Very quickly in this exercise we see ourselves as different from the other 'shape groups'. Not only can we begin to see ourselves as different, we can also become negative about the other shape groups in a competitive way.

**PQs:** Do you feel like you have something in common with your group/different from the other shapes? Why?

## Quote

From the time we are born we are all part of a group – usually a small family group that exists in a community, which lives in a certain country and feels itself to belong to a nation. We need to belong to a group to survive, not just to achieve physical security, but emotional security also. Staying within that group usually means learning and abiding by its rules, and being relatively supportive of its members. Often the norms of the group itself will dictate our behaviour i.e. we will judge the different behaviour that different groups require of us and adjust our attitudes and behaviour accordingly.

MARI FITZDUFF;

Former Director of the Community Relations Council NI

## 5 Minute Break

### Bible Reading | 5 min |

Ask someone to read | GALATIANS 3:26-28 | *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

### Shape Game | 30 min |

The purpose of this game is three-fold: to show how much we like to divide into different identity groups » to show how we are influenced by the 'need to belong' » to illustrate how our first reaction to difference is often negative.

Place the shapes at different points in the room and ask the group to sit by their chosen shape (Appendix 3.4 for photocopy-able shapes). Ask them to discuss in these small groups why they chose the shape. Does the shape reflect something about you? Do the groups share similar reasons for choosing the shape? Ask them to share their reasons for choosing their shape in plenary.

Read out the psychological study answers of what the shapes represent (appendix 3.4). Now ask them if they want to move (they will move to shapes that they think represent their personality). Ask those who move

to share why they moved; do they identify more with the descriptions that have been made for another shape? Ask the groups which shapes would cause them most difficulty, i.e. which shapes could they never associate with?

For more information about this exercise, visit:  
[www.personalitytest.net/funtest/symbol.htm](http://www.personalitytest.net/funtest/symbol.htm)

### **Conclusion**

Our identity is shaped by our Christian faith, our personality, our community, and the culture in which we live. » This identity is influenced by our need to belong to groups. » We can sometimes become unsure or fearful of those who are different. » We can see others who don't belong to our group as competition, particularly if they are unknown to us. » This can result in division. » Identity is crucial then, when we talk about how we live in Northern Ireland.

### **Close in Prayer**

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