

INCORE

Local International Learning Project (LILP)

Single Identity Work

**Cheyenne Church
Anna Visser**

INCORE

Conflicts of an ethnic, religious, political and cultural nature continue to dominate the world's attention. Since 1990, over 150 wars have taken place, most of which are re-current, protracted and intra-state and there is little evidence that such conflicts will decrease significantly over the coming decades. Ninety percent of our states are now multi-identity states and most governments are having difficulty dealing positively with such diversity.

Addressing the causes, effects, solutions and post-settlement impacts of such wars has been the role of the UNU Institute for Conflict Resolution at the University of Ulster (INCORE) since it was established in 1993. INCORE is a joint research institute of the United Nations University and the University of Ulster. It seeks to address the management and resolution of contemporary conflicts through research, training, practice, policy and theory. INCORE's vision is of a world where the knowledge and skills exist to make non-military management of ethno-political conflict the norm.

The *Research Unit* undertakes, commissions and supervises research of a multidisciplinary nature, particularly on post-settlement issues, governance and diversity, and research methodology in violent societies. The *Policy and Evaluation Unit* is committed to bridging the gaps between theory, practice and policy. It seeks to ensure that conflict-related research and practice is incorporated in grassroots programming and governmental policy.

INCORE

University of Ulster
Aberfoyle House
Northland Road
Derry/Londonderry
BT48 7JA
Northern Ireland

Tel: + 44 (0)28 7137 5500

Fax: + 44 (0)28 7137 5510

Email: incore@incore.ulst.ac.uk

Web site: www.incore.ulst.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

INCORE would like to thank all those who contributed to the ‘Single Identity Work’ stream of the Local International Learning Project (LILP). A particular thanks to those who participated in the workshops. Special appreciation goes to the Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information (IPCRI), who have taken the time to become involved in an exploration of the similarities between uni-national and single identity work. Thanks are also due to Eimear Hayden and Jenny Lucas for all their help, during their internships at INCORE.

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Single Identity

Foreword

In today's global reality it is becoming increasingly important, and possible, for societies to share strategies in order to combat the problems of the twenty-first century. There can be much learnt from approaches in other contexts. INCORE is aware of the potential of international comparative work, and believes that it is crucial to develop models that facilitate the reciprocal transfer of lessons and methods, whilst also recognising the challenges posed by different contexts and the 'transferability' issues involved in lessons learned. Indeed it is recognised that the direct transfer of approaches, without thoughtful appraisal can be unrealistic and potentially harmful.

With funding from the Community Relations Council (CRC), INCORE initiated the Local International Learning Project (LILP). LILP aims to promote the exchange of models and ideas between Northern Irish and international practitioners and policy makers within the field of conflict resolution and community relations. The project has centred on workshops and exchange visits, although the exact format of events has varied from stream to stream.

The nine-month pilot phase of the project was divided into four thematic streams:

- Single Identity Work
- Civil Society in Transition and the Role of Civic Forums
- Multiculturalism and Diversity
- Realism of the Past

This report represents a summary of the main ideas and challenges that arose during the first stream of the project: 'Single Identity Work'.

Introduction

Around the world, conflict resolution and community relations practitioners face the challenges of overcoming difference and have developed many mechanisms that strive to achieve this. Throughout the conflict in Northern Ireland there has been awareness that some groups are not prepared or ready to engage in cross-community contact. Single identity work, in a community relations context, aims at creating a situation where such cross community contact can be initiated and can be both meaningful and valuable. Unfortunately there have been few attempts to document the single identity approach in Northern Ireland, a problem that reflects the larger question of the gap between theory and practice in the field.

Single identity work is an important element of community relations work in Northern Ireland, although there is often disagreement on the exact nature of this type of work. LILP aimed to provide space to reflect on single identity work in Northern Ireland; enabling practitioners to learn from other contexts and reflect on their own practice.

The single identity stream of LILP began with a three-hour workshop held at INCORE, Derry/Londonderry on 10th April 2001. At this meeting it was decided that it would be valuable to have a second such meeting, which was subsequently facilitated at the Workers' Education Association (WEA) in Belfast on 2nd May 2001. Participants at these workshops consisted mainly of single identity work practitioners, with additional input from individuals from some of the major funding bodies. The verbatim transcripts of the workshops provide the basis for this report, with input from research conducted during the project both in Northern Ireland and internationally.

This report has been loosely structured to reflect the discussions held during LILP. It considers the rationale for single identity work and what it entails, evaluation techniques and problems, and the challenges facing single identity work. This publication also contains a list of useful resource, for single identity work practitioners, which were identified during the course of the project. This report is not a comprehensive review of single identity work in Northern Ireland, rather it is an attempt to 'snapshot' some of the current questions and challenges. For an overview of the discussion please refer to the Agenda for the first workshop in Appendix B.

Terminology

When examining the rationale for single identify work in a conflict resolution context it is important to point out that ‘single identity’ is just one phrase which has come into play in the Northern Irish context, there are others. The Hughes and Donnelly report concluded that:

The researchers recommend the term ‘intra-community relations work’ as an alternative to ‘single identity work’. It is believed that this term more accurately describes the nature of the work being undertaken. ‘Identity’ is complex and multi-faceted and the term ‘single identity’ disguises the multi-dimensional characteristic of cultural identity. (Hughes & Donnelly, March 1998, p. 83)

Internationally other terms have been used to identify this type of work, for example in the Israel/Palestine context the Israel/Palestine Centre for Research and Information (ICPRI) uses the term ‘uni-national’ work. In Bradford the Ousley report, talks about the importance of confidence building amongst children so that they can engage in cross cultural activities. Other terms which have been used to describe the work include: ‘Mono-cultural’ and ‘common’ group work.

Uni-National Peace Education Work in Israel/Palestine

Like single identity work in Northern Ireland uni-national work in the Israel/Palestine conflict is centred around a common characteristic, in this case nationality. Since the beginning of the Intifada on 29th September 2000, it has been impossible for the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) to bring together Palestinian and Israeli students in bi-national workshops; all people-to-people projects in Israel and Palestine have been suspended. Hence uni-national work has taken on an increased significance.

All of IPCRI’s uni-national work attempts to combine two basic building blocks; security and confrontation. The role of uni-national work varies according to the group in questions, for

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instance a Palestinian may use it to deal with the question of their own identity, whereas Israeli identity has been constructed over a long period of time and, for some, may not need similar attention.

The IPCRI Peace Education project began in 1996. The objective of the programme is to enable social change through education. The programme involves both uni-national and bi-national elements.

Why Single Identity Work?

Most community relations/conflict resolution initiatives in Northern Ireland have been concerned with the facilitation of contact between Catholics and Protestants. The assumption of this work is that the lack of sufficient understanding and knowledge about the 'other' limits co-operation. This approach was informed by the contact hypothesis of inter-group and interpersonal behaviours emanating from the USA in the 1970s; the idea that bringing members of different groups together is the best way to reduce tensions between them.

In the Northern Irish context cross community work has not always been possible. The CRC identifies a variety of reasons for this, including:

- The nature of the issue,
- Feelings of insecurity or lack of confidence,
- Political suspicion,
- Fear of reactions from within communities,
- Fear of hostility from the other side of the community.

Further, even when possible, cross community work in Northern Ireland is not necessarily a positive step in its own right. As one practitioner, in the first LILP workshop, pointed out there is no point in doing cross community work without adequate preparation. He/she described a cross community event that brought two schools together, however there was no preparatory work done and the contact resulted in a fight, which left people feeling traumatised and frightened.

Single identity work is therefore usefully considered when cross community initiatives are either impossible or likely to be counter productive.

Why Single Identity?

- Only way to engage
- Represents minimum engagement
- Response to a request
- Confidence building
- Hope that it will lead to cross community engagement

What Does a Single Identity Project Entail?

Throughout the discussions facilitated by LILP, interpretations of single identity work varied enormously, from vague concepts such as a group having a common thread or some level of sameness, to more focused attention on political, historical or religious identity. The question was raised whether 'single identity work' could be considered more broadly, for instance is a women's organisation a single identity group? Other factors that could play a role in the definition of a single identity project include: geographical location, stage of development, and community development initiatives.

When classifying single identity work three general views can be identified:

- Those that consider single identity work valuable in its own right (own culture validation),
- Those which identify the value of single identity in terms of its preparation for cross community work (respect for diversity),
- Those which allow for the facilitators agenda.

Own Culture Validation

Some argue that single identity work should be considered useful in its own right. They maintain that single identity work is an acceptable alternative to community relations, not a progression towards it. To hold the view that single identity work is the first step imposes unhelpful pre-conditions. They believe that although single identity work may be a means to cross-community contact this should not be its main aim.

The most important factor, for those who believe that single identity work is valuable for its own sake, is that this work engages those who would not otherwise have become involved in a community project of any description.

Respect for Diversity

Many practitioners accept the second position, which has been articulated by the CRC as follows:

Single identity work, undertaken as part of the EU Peace and Reconciliation

Programme for example should through social, community and economic development, be aimed at increasing the confidence of a community so that it can subsequently reach out and involve itself in networking and in joint programme development at either a cross-community or cross-border level.

One participant referred to the saying that one must know oneself before you can know others, ‘and that’s really what single identity work is about, a starting point’.

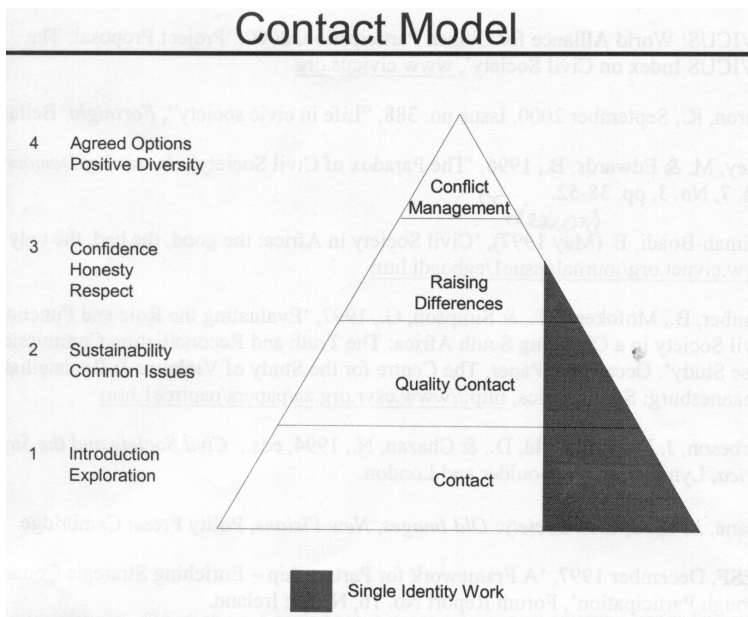


Figure 1 McCartney, C., ‘Contact Triangle Model’.

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According to Clem McCartney's 'Contact Triangle Model' (Figure 1), 'single identity work can contribute to the attainment of the first three levels; however, as progress is made, it diminishes in importance' (Hughes & Knox, July 1997 p. 338). This model places single identity work very much in the second category of 'respect for diversity', the idea being that single identity work facilitates moves towards cross community contact and thus is a preparatory step towards meaningful interaction.

Facilitator Agenda

In some cases the participants may not see themselves as a single identity group, or be aware of their classification as such, however it is the facilitator's intention that the work will progress towards contact in the community relations sense. This process was described as being 'unspoken' or a 'game' that has to be played. One practitioner described it thus:

In your head you may be saying that it is a single identity group and in your funders report it says it is a single identity group. But the group themselves would not view themselves as single identity. They would see themselves as concerned residents or community association.

However there are recognised problems with this approach. One practitioner in the LILP workshops felt it was wrong to go in with a hidden agenda; rather, facilitators should declare from the outset what they understand by community relations and how they expect the group to develop. Hughes & Knox, point out that 'an explicit proactive agenda is...of paramount importance' (July 1997, p. 351).

Hughes and Donnelly (March 1998, pp. 23-37) have identified six 'types' of single identity work:

NAME	TYPE	EXPLANATION
Concurrent single identity and cross community work	Respect for Diversity	This approach sees identity and single identity work as a pre-requisite and parallel to cross community contact, and acts to ease groups into contact while ameliorating fears about contact. <i>The Belfast Interface Project</i> seeks to find a way forward for divided communities which have suffered extensively.
Personal Development	Own Culture Validation	This approach differs in that it is concerned with the individual, the focus is on building self-esteem. <i>An Cran, The Tree</i> encourages individuals to tell their story and address personal issues related to the conflict.
Critical Incident	Own Culture Validation	Such work is initiated as a response to a sectarian event in the community, without long-term parameters for generating contact. The <i>Clough Community Group</i> was established after a sectarian incident in the area.

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<p>Community Development</p>	<p>Own Culture Validation and Respect for Diversity</p>	<p>Primarily concerned with capacity building within a community, contact represents a long-term goal concerning issues of common relevance. <i>SPRING</i> is aimed at enhancing community development in a predominantly Catholic part of Armagh.</p>
<p>Cultural Traditions</p>	<p>Own Culture Validation and Respect for Diversity</p>	<p>The objective is to enlighten and educate participants. When this is moved on to a discussion of other cultures it represents the respect for diversity approach. <i>The Disraeli Street Young Men</i> encourages participations to openly discuss questions of identity and culture in order to promote understanding.</p>
<p>Political</p>	<p>Own Culture Validation</p>	<p>This approach differs in that the focus is overtly political; the aim is to encourage groups to articulate their political concerns. <i>The Archway Project</i> in Derry/Londonderry looks at the relationship between Catholic/Nationalists and the British state.</p>

Key Components of Single Identity work

Facilitators

Central to any single identity project is the role of the facilitator; 'facilitation is the key to single identity work which can contribute towards the achievement of mutual respect and increased awareness of diverse cultural traditions' (Hughes & Knox, July 1997, p. 80). Hence the levels of experience and training people have when initiating such a project are very important.

Questions emerged as to the importance of the identity of the facilitator and whether this should be an issue for the group to discuss. Should the facilitator declare their identity or wait until they are asked, and what should they do if asked? Practitioners had adopted different strategies to dealing with this issue. Other questions which arose included: does the identity of the facilitator have an impact on the process, for example does it take longer to build trust, if you are from the other community?

No one, in the LILP workshops, rejected the assumption that in the Northern Irish conflict a member of one community could act as a facilitator for a group from another community. However it was generally recognised that adequate training for facilitators is crucial.

Recruiting

The most important thing about any single identity work project is the participants; the practitioners involved in the discussions facilitated by LILP recognised the importance of recruiting the right people. When recruiting participants for a single identity project the most important factors were identified as follows:

- Word of mouth or reputation,
- Support from important members of the community,
- Groups who request assistance but who have not identified themselves as a single identity group,
- Advertisement,
- Meeting with community groups and leaders,
- Structures that are already in place such as the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland,
- Positive discrimination in the selection process.

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Safety Nets

One of the most significant aspects of a single identify project is its ability to provide a 'safe space' to engage with those who would not be able to do so on a cross-community basis. In order to do this it is important to consult with the group about their fears and expectations for the project. It may be necessary to make this process anonymous. As one practitioner pointed out it can be helpful to draw up a contract in order to create a safe environment for the projects' participants.

Resources and Models

The central resources in designing a single identity project are facilitator experience, and the participants involved in the group. As one practitioner described it 'the greatest resource in any of these programmes was obviously the people and them actually wanting to be there.' However there is a variety of useful written material available that can be adapted to suit the needs of individual projects.

Despite time constraints, which mean that it is not always possible to consult such resources, their value was recognised, particularly because many of them are based on the work of practitioners. However it was also recognised that there is a need to be cautious when using such resources and that training may be necessary to ensure that they are being used effectively.

The LILP single identity work *Resource List* is available in Appendix A.

Evaluation

The evaluation method and associated criteria for single identity work appears to depend on how it is being defined. Some suggest that single identity projects are successful, insofar as they engage people who would not necessarily have become involved. As one practitioner put it, 'first of all this is a group that hasn't been engaged at all so give us the money and we can engage through communication at some level. That has to be the first or the main outcome'. Evaluation of this approach is often concerned with basic outputs such as how many people were involved in the project.

If one believes that single identity work is preparation for cross-community contact, then there is a need to consider the nature of that engagement. The question is not only, is there engagement? But rather, what is the quality of that engagement? Evaluation becomes concerned not only with the number of participants but also with the quality of contact, the changes in entrenched attitudes, and the willingness to embrace objectives of community relations. Hence such evaluations would include both outputs such as the numbers who participated in the projects, and outcomes such as any measurable change in attitudes.

Evaluation Techniques

Evaluation techniques vary drastically from the very informal to more structured evaluations involving questionnaires and expert evaluators. Techniques, outlined by the practitioners involved in the LILP workshops included:

- Experience and opinion of the facilitator,
- Initial meeting/interview with the group,
- Chat and conversation with the group,
- Attitudinal questionnaire to back up conversational analysis,
- Employ professional evaluator to interview the group.

Those practitioners who employed formal evaluations recognised the importance of employing all of the above techniques to get a

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clearer picture of the impact of the project. For example one practitioner said that, 'I think evaluations are really, really important. It has to be a combination of paper work and conversations and anecdotal stories'.

Problems of Evaluation

Although significant work has been done on the evaluation of single identity projects, gaps and difficulties were identified in the existing procedures. These included:

- Some participants employed only informal techniques, arguing that a more formal approach was impossible
- There were no *identified* mechanisms for the evaluation of long term impact
- Despite explaining to the project participants why evaluation is necessary it is still difficult to engage them in this process
- There are difficulties in measuring behavioural change
- There is a need for professional evaluation techniques, and training in these techniques

Conclusions

The unfortunate length of the conflict in Northern Ireland has provided conflict resolution practitioners the time to many different ways to address the causes and manifestations of the conflict, not least through community based projects and the development of single identity work.

Participants in the LILP ‘Single Identity Work’ stream felt that it was difficult to provide a definitive set of characteristics of a single identity work project, as each is context dependent. In other words, ‘every group comes with a different background and different context and different history and you are engaging with them in a different way’. Nonetheless as this report has shown a number of common approaches and characteristics can be identified.

The following are the main questions and concerns associated with single identity work that arose during the LILP programme:

- How do you overcome the problem of terminology, which leads to confusion over what a single identity project entails?
- Can you consider single identity work for its own sake (cultural validation) to be community relations work?
- Is community development an end for single identity work?
- Does single identity work re-enforce entrenched attitudes and stereotypes?
- How quickly should the emphasis shift from ‘within’ community to cross community work?
- How do you ensure participant commitment, and effectiveness of participation?
- How can funder objectives and practitioner realities be reconciled, for example when proposing a cut off point for a project?
- How important is the identity of the facilitator?
- How should the current weaknesses in evaluation be overcome?
- Considering the context dependent nature of projects, can

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the use of resources be made more effective?

- What is the long-term impact of single identity work?

While recognising the problems and questions, which face single identity work, there can be little doubt that these types of projects have had and will continue to have a central role in addressing the conflict in Northern Ireland.

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IPCRI, 2001, 'Uni-National Peace Education Work in Israel/Palestine', Unpublished paper, IPCRI: Israel

APPENDIX A: RESOURCE LIST

Community Relations Council, 1991, *An Ulster Wean's A to Z*. Belfast: CRC Cultural Traditions Group. With Companion Guide: Murphy, K., 1999, *A Companion to an Ulster Wean's A to Z*, Community Relations Council: Belfast.

Aimed at children of primary school age *An Ulster Wean's A to Z* (also available in 'Wall Frieze' format of 16 full colour posters) is an educational tool featuring an alphabetical series of words and places familiar to children in Northern Ireland. Intended as a tool for community groups, youth workers, and teachers, *A Companion to an Ulster Wean's A to Z*, is aimed at primary school children. Using a thematic approach, the resource suggests practical ideas, materials, and activities to help children's groups develop an understanding of their culture. Themes explored include music, story, language, food, sport and games, crafts, symbols and monuments, and historic buildings.

Community Relations Council, 1999, *A Young Person's Guide to Cultural Diversity in Northern Ireland*, CRC Cultural Diversity Programme: Belfast.

A magazine pointed towards teenagers exploring the similarities and differences between people in Northern Ireland while also posing reflective questions aimed at stimulating dialogue and discussion. Themes addressed include stereotyping, language, sports, symbols, music, and rituals.

Community Relations Council, 'Cultural Symbols in Northern Ireland.' CRC: Belfast.

Aimed primarily at younger children as an educational tool, this double sided rotating disk illustrates and conveys basic information and descriptions of a range of the cultural symbols of Northern Ireland.

Community Relations Council, *Programme Work of the Community Relations Council: Single Identity Work*. CRC: Belfast, <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/progs/train/siw.htm>.

A resource describing an introduction to single identity work including objectives, guidelines, and a methodology for measuring success.

Community Relations Council 1999, *Youth Workers Handbook: Cultural Diversity in Northern Ireland*. CRC Cultural Diversity Programme: Belfast.

To be used as a youth worker guide to *A Young Person's Guide to Cultural Diversity in Northern Ireland*. Attempts to stimulate an atmosphere of critical questioning for the recognition and appreciation of the diversity of culture in Northern Ireland. Provides a loose guideline of pointers and suggestions for best adopting an appropriate exercise for each contextual group-work situation, and includes detailed background information.

Community Relations Council, *Who Do You Think They Are? Celebrating Diversity in Our Society: A Positive Approach to Difference*. CRC Cultural Diversity Programme: Belfast.

A cultural identity resource pack designed to confront and challenge stereotypes, recognise cultural plurality, and attain an appreciation of diversity. Includes a tutor and participant pack as well as a series of pen pictures.

Fitzduff, M, 1995, *Community Conflict Skills*.

A group work handbook addressing both theoretical perspectives as well as over 100 modules designed to assist groups and agencies in establishing objectives for CR work.

Glencree Centre for Reconciliation, 2000, *A Place Apart? Exploring Conflict, Peace and Reconciliation: The Case of Northern Ireland*. Ed. Maria McLaughlin and Colm Regan. Glencree Centre for Reconciliation & Educating and Acting for A Better World, Glencree: Wicklow.

Aimed at assisting teachers and educators with presenting issues involving Northern Ireland to students living in Ireland. Taking into account diversity, peace, reconciliation and conflict in general, this resource provides single identity exercises as well as providing further references.

McMaster, Rev. Dr. J., 1996, *Building Confidence: A Single Identity Programme for Church Based Groups*. Youth Link NI: Belfast.

A six-session programme aimed at adults, young adults, youth workers, and clergy of Protestant, Catholic, or Single Protestant denomination. Attempts to explore issues relating to identity,

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awareness, and understanding in the hope to affirm a positive sense of one's own identity as well as that of others.

McMaster, Rev. Dr. J., & Higgins. C., 2000, *Churches Working Together: A Practical Resource*. Community Relations Council: Belfast.

First published in 1994, this updated version of *Churches Working Together* takes into account the developments since the 1994 cease-fires including the changing political future due to the Belfast Agreement. This resource has a broader theme than the original, develops current, updated models and strategies, takes into account greater involvement with a wider community, and finally, seeks to provide the encouragement for new initiatives in understanding.

Nerve Centre, 2000, '1916 Lest We Forget: Symbols CD-ROM', Derry/Londonderry.

Interactive CD-ROM, exploring the symbolism of both the Battle of the Somme as well as the 1916 Easter Rising, which both helped to shape the history of 20th Century Ireland. This resource tries to highlight common themes by looking at history and the continuing significance of both events.

Nerve Centre, *Workshop Series and Other Resources*, Derry/Londonderry.

The Nerve Centre runs several workshops, training sessions, training courses, as well as producing single identity relevant CD-ROMS, animated videos, etc.

Ulster Peoples College, *Unit 1, The People's History*, Belfast.

Single Identity Course Work Manual: A guide to a course utilising an in-depth historical perspective on single identity.

Ulster Peoples College, *Unit 2, Using the Internet and Multi-Media for Archiving, Research, and Group Work*, Belfast.

A course format for those producing a historical product using multi-media. Specifically, the people of the local community work together with educators to produce a history of the community from the viewpoints of the residents. The history is provided by residents, photographs, leaflets etc. and then transferred onto a CD-ROM or

the internet. Essentially, an exploration of the identity of the residents' community.

Workers' Educational Association, *Paths through the Past: An Introduction to Irish History*, WEA: Belfast.

Training and educational pack designed to facilitate an understanding of the past in order to move forward towards a future based upon real lessons of the past. This resource aims to create relationships founded upon understanding the differences of perception and appreciating all traditions.

Workers' Educational Association, 1991, *Us & Them*, WEA: Belfast.

Single identity course designed to enable individuals to explore the complex or conflicting issues surrounding their sense of identity living in Northern Ireland. Using group learning students are challenged to confront stereotypes and labels associated with their identity as well as that of others.

Workers' Educational Association, 2000, *Us & Them Too: Exploring Diversity and Equity in Northern Ireland*, WEA: Belfast.

A course designed to expand upon the sectarian emphasis of *Us and Them* and incorporate the marginalized elements of Northern Ireland. The course focuses upon diversity and equity beginning with a general exploration of prejudice and stereotyping. However, the course does deal with particular social groups and categories such as gender, age, race, and sexual orientation.

Inclusion or non-inclusion within this list is not a reflection of the quality of the material. Although every attempt has been made to make this list as comprehensive as possible, we are aware that there will be omissions due to time constraints.

INCORE would welcome any suggestions or additions to this resource list, which is available on our web site.

APPENDIX B

SINGLE IDENTITY WORKSHOP

10 April 2001

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. LILP & Meeting Objectives
3. Single Identity Work – What is it?
4. What resources did you use to develop your projects or programmes on Single Identity Work?
5. Why chose to implement a Single Identity project?
 - What are the advantages?
 - In what situations is it most/least appropriate?
6. Core Building Blocks
 - 3 minute summary of best project
 - What are the key features/building blocks?
 - Situations/contexts where one or all of these core building blocks don't work
7. Problems or Concerns
 - Projects that didn't work out well and why?
8. Questions: (for instance)
 - At what point in a conflict life cycle can Single Identity work be utilised?
 - Is it a stepping-stone to a cross community project or is it an end in itself?
 - In the Northern Ireland context when do you stop doing Single Identity work?
 - In the Northern Ireland context is it an out-dated model?
9. What is success?
 - Examples of meaningful outcomes
 - Monitoring & Evaluation
10. International Presentation
Next Steps