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Process drama as a tool for  
developing children's empathy and  
reducing prejudice toward refugees  
in Ireland

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# Abstract

Now more than ever, children are subject to negative attitudes and misinformation about refugees in the media and at home. Refugees in Ireland are being increasingly subjected to violence and hostility. Upwards of 20,000 people, approximately 20% of whom are children, live in unfit accommodation centres for extended periods, causing significant impacts on their physical and mental health. With anti-immigrant violence on the rise, primary school teachers are in a prime position to abate this unkindness and ignorance through the next generation. This paper proposes a drama-based intervention to increase students' empathy towards this vulnerable group. The intervention includes widely researched and practised drama strategies to bring students closer to the adversity experienced by refugees in Ireland while remaining psychologically safe. In this proposed study, the sample includes 28 schools across Dublin with a range of ethos. It is proposed that teachers will complete the intervention with support, training and supervision over eight weeks. Implementing this intervention is expected to increase students' empathy towards refugees and reduce prejudice, feelings of intergroup anxiety and their perceived threat.

**Keywords.** Refugee crisis, anti-immigration violence, empathy, prejudice, drama-based pedagogy.

Anois níos mó ná riamh, tá leanaí faoi réir dearcadh diúltach agus faisnéis mhícheart faoi dhídeanaithe sna meáin agus sa bhaile. Tá níos mó foréigean agus naimhdeas ag teacht ar dhídeanaithe in Éirinn. Cónaíonn os cionn 20,000 duine, ar leanaí iad thart ar 20% díobh, in ionaid chóiríochta neamh-oiriúnach ar feadh tréimhsí fada, rud a chuireann isteach go mór ar a sláinte fhisiciúil agus mheabhrach. Agus foréigean frith-inimirceach ag dul i méid, tá múinteoirí bunscoile in inmhe an mí-chineálta agus an aineolas seo a mhaolú tríd an gcéad ghluín eile. Molann an páipéar seo idirghabháil drámaíochta chun ionbhá na mac léinn i leith an ghrúpa leochaileach seo a mhéadú. Áiríonn an idirghabháil straitéisí drámaíochta a bhfuil taighde forleathan déanta orthu agus a bhfuil cleachtadh déanta orthu chun mic léinn a thabhairt níos gaire don achrann a bhíonn ag teifigh in Éirinn agus iad ag fanacht sábháilte go síceolaíoch. Sa staidéar molta seo, cuimsíonn an sampla 28 scoil ar fud Bhaile Átha Cliath a bhfuil raon éitis acu. Tá sé beartaithe go gcríochnóidh múinteoirí an idirghabháil le tacaíocht, oiliúint agus maoirseacht thar ocht seachtaine. Táthar ag súil go méadóidh cur i bhfeidhm na hidirghabhála seo comhbhá na mac léinn i leith teifigh agus go laghdóidh sé réamhchlaonadh, mothúcháin inní idirghrúpa agus bagairt a bhraitear.

**Eochairfhocail.** Géarchéim dídeanaithe, foréigean frithinimirce, comhbhá, réamhchlaonadh, oideolaíocht atá bunaithe ar dhrámaíocht.

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# 1. Introduction

Amid the current global refugee crisis, refugees have been at the forefront of public debate in Ireland and Europe (Galantino, 2022). The Irish media are reporting more frequent acts of violence towards refugees in Ireland and increased support for anti-refugee groups and protests. In May 2023, *The Irish Times* reported that anti-immigration protestors in central Dublin set a camp for homeless refugees on fire (Power, 2023). The camp was destroyed, and the phrase “refugees out” spray painted on the wall is the backdrop to the harrowing sight of burned-out tents, mattresses, clothes, sleeping bags and cooking utensils. No one was physically harmed in the fire, but this no doubt serves as a warning of what more could come. The safety of these vulnerable individuals grows more and more at risk.

As of 16th April 2023, 20,299 refugees live in emergency accommodation centres in Ireland, 4,331 (21%) of which are children (Government of Ireland, 2023). The accommodation centres, which the Government of Ireland supervises, are run for profit by private companies and act as a deterrent to those seeking asylum by subjecting them to long stays of an average of 48 months in very poor conditions (Lentin, 2016). In some cases, the stays have lasted up to 12 years (Doras, n.d.). The sense of hostility towards this marginalised group is rising, with the system of Direct Provision as a defining factor. The system of Direct Provision is central to understanding to State’s response to and management of increased immigration over the last 30 years (Lentin, 2016) and the more recent refugee crisis. Residents in the centres are subject to almost total control by the centre managers, who can restrict what they eat, when they eat and the amenities they can access (Lentin, 2016). Residents live in overcrowded, often unsanitary conditions with limited access to education and a limited right to work (Doras, n.d.). The treatment of refugees in these centres establishes and solidifies the construct of the refugee as a person who is undesirable and must be subject to control by the government (Luibhéid, 2013, as cited by Lentin, 2016). In February 2021, the Government of Ireland published plans to end Direct Provision by 2024 (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021) and establish a new, more ethical system. However, by the end of 2022, this was reported as no longer possible (Bray, 2022). The national broadcaster, *Raidió Teilifís Éireann* (RTÉ), reported in June 2022 that a hotel temporarily housing refugees in Dublin introduced a requirement for all refugee residents to wear a red wrist tag for

identification (Fletcher, 2022). The Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland (MASI) describe this requirement as degrading, dehumanising and comparable to tagging livestock (Fletcher, 2022). This sense of undesirability is increasing rapidly, and now more than ever, children are regularly exposed to negative attitudes towards refugees in public and private spaces (Smith & Minescu, 2021).

Cameron et al. (2006, as cited by Smith & Minescu 2021) note that school-based interventions have been used successfully in the past to reduce children's bias and negative attitude towards refugees. School is generally the first place children have exposure to intercultural and interethnic experiences, and these experiences and interactions shape the relationships between existing and new communities (Wilson-Daily et al., 2018). A range of studies (Athanasos & Sanchez, 2020; Franks, 2008; Schroeter & Wager, 2016) show that a drama-based pedagogy (DBP) in primary education, if used correctly, can help children develop empathy, critically connect with social issues, such as the refugee crisis, and promotes perspective-taking and healthy dialogue (Athanasos & Sanchez, 2020). A DBP refers to a teaching approach where students explore issues and ideas together through drama lessons and applied theatre strategies across the curriculum (Baldwin, 2009 & Lee et al., 2015). The studies widely show that when children are immersed in a role during a drama lesson, they can visually and physically perceive social issues such as discrimination and exclusion (Schroeter & Wager, 2016), which they might otherwise see as abstract concepts. Learning through drama allows students to participate in imaginative productions while engaging in a meaningful way with their thoughts and feelings and using this to make sense of the world around them (Franks, 2008). The Primary Drama Curriculum itself (NCCA, 1999) states clearly that it aims to promote empathy using the ideas, attitudes and emotions of others. It aims to make things that are close feel distant, and things that are distant feel close both cognitively and effectively so that children can explore parts of living close enough to be examined effectively but distant enough that the child feels psychologically and physically safe (NCCA 1999).

This study will use a targeted series of DBP-based lessons, adapted from the work of Baldwin (n.d.), to bring students closer to the adversity and discrimination experienced by refugees in a way that is accessible and psychologically safe. The intervention will span over eight weeks,

and at its core aim is to increase student's empathy and reduce prejudice towards refugees in Ireland.

### 1.1. Objectives of material creation

- To develop a process drama-based intervention to increase primary school students' (age 10 years) **empathy** towards refugees in Ireland.
- To reduce students' **prejudice** towards refugees both in and out of school.
- To minimise student's **perceived threat** of refugees.
- To reduce **intergroup anxiety** among students.

## 2. Design of Intervention

The intervention material designed for this study is a series of process drama lessons adapted from Baldwin (n.d.); see p. 8-14. The material details three sample lessons, including a range of drama activities to achieve the objectives outlined above (section 1.1). The material is intended for teacher use, with clear instructions for each activity. The material is designed with a table for each activity including the title, the sequence of the lessons, the drama strategy(s), time allocation and a step-by-step procedure (see p. 8-14).

Each activity captures a variety of drama strategies. Drama strategies are the tools used to facilitate the drama, focus attention, scaffold learning, and structure the drama as it unfolds (Baldwin, 2009). The strategies included are drama contract, map making, guided visualisation, mimed occupation, freeze frame, teacher in role, student in role, improvisation, thought tracking, reflection, conscience alley, rumour mill, ritual, performance carousel and writing in role. See Appendix C for further information on key strategies.

The lesson contents, methodology, structure and activities were designed based on quality empirical findings from articles by various authors conducting research in the field of education, drama and refugee studies. The justification for each element is outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1: Elements of the intervention material and their theoretical foundation**

Element	Theoretical Foundation
Students in role	By acting in role students can make sense of language and issues, in this case, related to discrimination; they can project themselves into situations that otherwise seem abstract (Edmiston & Mckibben, 2011).
Teacher in role	The teacher will act as the 'Stranger' to begin to minimise real feelings of exclusion for students and make careful selections for students to play this role (Schroeter & Wager, 2017). For example, choosing students who are perceived as confident, participate well and speak up in class (Schroeter & Wager, 2017), students who have no known experience of bullying or exclusion, students who are not a refugee, immigrated recently or are under difficult circumstances.
Reflecting in role	While reflecting in role, students can move to the position of an observer and take a slower approach to reflect in real-time, interacting with the other students or with the teacher in role to reveal the true significance for them (Edmiston & Mckibben, 2011).
Reflecting and debriefing out of role	Allow students to discuss their experiences so they can make links to discrimination in society and their daily lives (Schroeter & Wager, 2017). Only when students step back from participating in their role can they make meaning of the experience (Edmiston & Mckibben, 2011).
Writing in and out of role	Writing activities during and after the process, both in and out of role, helps the teacher draw out the meaning-making function of process drama and allows for further independent reflection and processing (Schroeter & Wager, 2017).

<b>Multiple senses</b>	<p>Using drama activities that engage a variety of the students' senses through different modalities (visual, auditory, oral, spatial, movement, gestural) helps students become immersed in the imaginary world and critically reflect on the activities in a more meaningfully (Schroeter &amp; Wager, 2017). For example, background music, making maps of the imaginary world, voting, props, changing the class layout, and posters/images.</p>
<b>Kinesthetic learning</b>	<p>Teaching drama in an active and physical way to keep students engaged, i.e., getting students on their feet, moving around the room, and miming actions and activities (Athanases &amp; Sanchez, 2020).</p>
<b>Autonomous learners</b>	<p>Allowing students space to lead and make decisions during the drama activities gives them the freedom to express their responses and locate their emotions (Franks, A., 2008). Students can stand back from different perspectives and explore different ways of thinking about our society while allowing the teacher to assess their progress, engagement and understanding of the issues at hand (Franks, 2008).</p>
<b>Inquiry approach</b>	<p>The drama is centred around a key inquiry question with sub-questions along the way. It leads students to adopt a critical and questioning stance, and in turn, they can more effectively question values, beliefs, and attitudes put forward in the drama (Edmiston &amp; Mckibben, 2011).</p>



The following activities were adapted by the author from work by Baldwin (n. d.) based on the theoretical foundation outlined previously in Table 1.

Title	The Island Map (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 1 – Activity 1
Drama strategies	Map making, guided visualisation, drama contract
Time	15 minutes
Procedure	<p>Before the drama begins, we must make a drama contract.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students gather on the floor in front of an A1 flipchart. Title: Our Drama Contract. Teacher explains what a contract is.</li><li>2. With the person sitting next to them, students discuss what they think is important to include in our contract. For example, we will be brave and willing to try, we won't laugh at each other, we will be helpful and kind, we will be safe with props, etc.</li><li>3. Teacher and students co-construct the chart. Students share suggestions and teacher scribes, adjusting where needed.</li><li>4. All students sign the contract.</li></ol> <p>To introduce the lesson the class will visualise and make a map on an island. The purpose is to set the scene, build belief and investment in the drama.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Students close their eyes. Teacher begins guided visualisation with calm, tropical background music: <i>"Imagine you are on an Island. The island is remote, in the middle of nowhere. We all live here; we were born here, and we all know each other. We have never left the island, and no one else has ever visited it. The island is beautiful. There are high mountains and... What else can you see on our island?"</i></li></ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. On a large roll of paper, the students take turns to draw on feature of the island to make our map. E.g., the mountains, the river, a school, boats, houses, a farm, a church, a market, a lake, town hall, etc.</li> <li>3. When the students approach the map to draw, they say <i>"I am drawing X, this is where X"</i>. For example, <i>"I am drawing boats, this is where the fishermen work"</i>.</li> <li>4. The map is displayed in the classroom for each lesson.</li> </ol>
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Title	The Island Workers (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 1 – Activity 2
Drama strategies	Mimed occupation, freeze frame, teacher in role
Time	10 minutes
Procedure	<p>After creating our map, students will imagine what they do on the island, what is their job and what would their daily tasks look like.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students decide on their job and move to a space in the room.</li> <li>2. In the space students freeze in an image of them doing their job.</li> <li>3. Teacher gives an 'action' signal and the frozen pictures come to life, remaining silence (mime).</li> <li>4. The teacher walks around the room and when she taps a student's shoulder, they will say their job. E.g., farmer, fisherman, teacher, cook, etc.</li> <li>5. The student freeze again and the teacher indicates that in a moment she will enter the role of the Fisherman. The teacher shows her role signifier (a hat) and explains that when she wears the hat, she is no longer the teacher.</li> <li>6. Students continue the mime, and the Fisherman enters will urgent news. <i>"A man has washed up on the beach. He came in on a raft boat... You have to come with me to see him!"</i></li> </ol>

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Title	A Stranger Arrives (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 1 – Activity 3
Drama strategies	Teacher in role, students in role, improvisation
Time	5 - 10 minutes
Procedure	<p>The teacher will change to the role of the Stranger and students remain in role as the islanders.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The teacher changes her role signifier to a cloak and tells the students she will now be the Stranger.</li><li>2. The students approach the Stranger, they can ask questions and engage in dialogue.</li><li>3. At first the Stranger does not speak, he seems to be scared, but gradually he begins to answer some questions.</li></ol>

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Title	What should we do with him? (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 1 – Activity 4
Drama strategies	Thought tracking, reflection and debriefing
Time	15 minutes
Procedure	<p>Teacher will exit the role and move the drama forward.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The students gather in a huddle to discuss what they should do with the Stranger.</li><li>2. Students discuss for a few minutes and then teacher freezes the discussion – it was decided that he will be moved to the old chicken pen for now.</li><li>3. The students gather closely in a circle and pretend they are the walls of the pen.</li></ol>

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4. The students hold one hand up to their eye with their fingers in a circle. They pretend they are the stranger looking out through a gap in the wall. When the teacher taps their shoulder, they say what they can see and how they feel (e.g., I'm so hungry, will they give me food? Why have they put me in here? I miss my home)
5. End of lesson – debrief out of role. Students share their thoughts so far, thoughts about the stranger, predictions, what we know so far.

Title	The Stranger emerges (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 2 – Activity 1
Drama strategies	Mimed occupation, student in role, freeze frame, thought tracking, improvisation
Time	10 minutes
Procedure	<p>One student will act in role as the stranger in this lesson. The student is briefed by the teacher on how to behave and improvise during the activity.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students re-enter their roles from the last lesson and resume their mine from activity 1, they are working at their usual daily tasks.</li> <li>2. The chosen student wears the role signifier of the Stranger, and they enter the scene.</li> <li>3. The Stranger approaches students around the room, they might indicate that they are hungry, scared, cold, etc.</li> <li>4. Students improvise this interaction for a few minutes.</li> <li>5. Teacher freezes the scene and tells students they will share their inner thoughts. The teacher will give a hand signal to each student, and they share their characters thoughts out loud.</li> </ol>

Title	We need a decision (Baldwin, n.d.)
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Sequence	Lesson 2 – Activity 2
Drama strategies	Conscience alley, debrief
Time	10 minutes
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The class steps out of role and the teacher explains that the islanders need to decide what to do with the Stranger.</li> <li>2. Conscience alley – the class is split in half and form two lines facing each other, with space in the middle. One side of the alley want to help the Stranger, the other side want to send him away.</li> <li>3. Teacher models examples from both sides. The teacher slowly walks between the lines. When the teacher passes them, the students share what they think we should do with the stranger and why.</li> <li>4. The teacher gets a note from the island leader; it was decided that the stranger will be sent back to the pen. They will lock the doors and guard it.</li> <li>5. Debrief out of role – open space for discussion and questions.</li> </ol>

Title	Did you hear the rumour? (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 2 – Activity 3
Drama strategies	Rumour mill
Time	15 minutes
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In role, the islanders gather and spread rumours about the stranger. Teacher begins and the rumour spreads around the room. Students can add to and embellish what they hear.</li> <li>2. Once the rumour has circulated the last person shares what they heard.</li> <li>3. Out of role, the teacher and students discuss how the Stranger has done nothing to hurt anyone and has shown no aggression or</li> </ol>

	<p>violence. None of the rumours are true but we can see how easy it is for them to get out of hand, making people angry and fearful.</p> <p>Rumours can change people's attitudes, how they treat people and even cause violence.</p>
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Title	I dreamt last night (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 3 – Activity 1
Drama strategies	Performance carousel, ritual
Time	15 minutes
Procedure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher tells students that the islanders are having nightmares, they cannot keep the Stranger out of their dreams. Students silently reflect on what the dreams might look like.</li> <li>2. In groups of 4, students decide on and perform a silent dream sequence to show their fears.</li> <li>3. Students practice their performance a few times and then we will perform as a class.</li> <li>4. Each group will perform their sequence, freeze, and then move to the next group. When they are not performing, the students stay frozen.</li> <li>5. Repeat the carousel x2 times.</li> </ol>

Title	Dear Diary... (Baldwin, n.d.)
Sequence	Lesson 3 – Activity 2
Drama strategies	Writing in role – diary entry
Time	30 minutes
Procedure	One of half of the class will write a diary entry from the perspective of the stranger, the other half from the perspective of their role as an islander.

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This should be integrated with Literacy lessons, diary / recount writing should be pre-taught and practiced outside the drama lesson.

1. Students step back into their assigned role (the stranger or islander). Students are asked to close their eyes and sit for a moment to enter the mind of their character.
2. Guided reflection – students are prompted to think about who they are, what they look like, how they spend their days. They reflect on what has happened so far, how they feel, what they are thinking, what they are worried about, what they hope will happen.
3. Teacher presents a writing frame with prompts (see below). Students write independently, teacher conferences with students while they work digging further into their perspective and ideas so far. Teacher makes anecdotal notes for assessment for and of learning (AFL & AOL).
4. Using the writers chair, 2 – 3 students from each side share their diary entries with the class.

*Differentiation:* Students with additional needs in literacy may have a goal to write five clear sentences. Or depending on needs, give a visual representation and describe orally.

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## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Proposed sample

The research project is proposed to be conducted in 28 primary national schools (NS), which vary in ethos, DEIS status and location. DEIS, which is the Irish translation of ‘opportunity’, status refers to a government policy which is ‘Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools’ and responds to educational disadvantage, focusing on the supply of additional resources and funding to schools to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential (Department of Education, 2022). Schools with DEIS status as assigned to Urban Band 1, Urban Band 2 or DIES Rurual, depending on the location and degree of disadvantage, Band 1 being a greater level of disadvantage than Band 2. The study includes Educate Together (ET) schools, which operate under a non-denominational and ethical-based ethos, and Community National Schools (CNS), which operate under a multi-denominational and equality-based ethos, under the patronage of the State. The study will also include Catholic primary schools, which make up the majority of schools in Ireland (89%, according to Oireachtas, 2020).

**Table 2: Sample schools that will participate in the study**

School Type	Control	Experimental
Catholic, DEIS Band 1, inner city	GSC, Dublin 1	SEPS, Dublin 8
	SANS, Dublin 8	SMPS, Dublin 7
Catholic, DEIS Band 1, suburban	SGNS, Dublin 7	SSC, Dublin 7
	SFJNS, Dublin 17	STSNS, Dublin 24
Catholic, no DEIS Status, suburban	SFSNS, Dublin 5	SCNS, Dublin 9
	SM, Dublin 13	SMNS, Dublin 4
ET, DEIS Band 2, suburban	SET, Co. Dublin	BET, Dublin 7
	BET Dublin 13	LET, Co. Dublin



CNS, DEIS Band 1 & 2, suburban	TCNS, Dublin 24	SA, Dublin 24
	LCNS, Dublin 20	SC, Dublin 15
Catholic, DEIS Band 2, suburban	SDNS, Dublin 5	SJNS, Dublin 3
	HCNS, Dublin 6W	SPNS, Dublin 7
ET, no DEIS status, suburban	GET, Dublin 9	CET, Dublin 15
	FET, Dublin 16	DSP, Co. Dublin

Table 3 outlines the proposed study schedule. The schedule includes a phase pre-summer for the pilot before the study begins and a phase post-summer for the final evaluation.

Each experimental group will be asked to complete the intervention over an eight-week period with at least one hour assigned per week.

### 3.2. Operational variables

*Empathy.* To determine students' empathy towards refugees, a five-item questionnaire will be used. Students are presented with five statements and must select an emotion they feel when they read it (happy, sad, worried, angry, no feeling). The statements are a series of facts about refugees. Points are assigned to each answer and all score will be average. A higher score indicates a higher level of empathy. See Appendix B for the full scale.

*Prejudice.* A seven-item scale by Wilson-Daily et al. (2018) will be adapted to measure students' prejudice towards refugees. See Appendix B. Students will be asked to imagine that their friend has made several statements about people who come to Ireland from different countries and to rate on a five-point scale whether they agree or disagree, 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The adapted six items are as follows: They take jobs away from people who were born here; they are hard workers; they are a burden; they use the money we need for our own poor people, they do not know our laws, and they do not follow

them, they take advantage of our healthcare and fill up A&E departments, they make our society better by adding the new culture.

*Intergroup anxiety.* To measure students' level of intergroup anxiety, a three-item scale by Turner, Hewston and Voci (2007, as cited by Smith & Minescu, 2021) will be used. See Appendix B. Students will be presented with a scenario: "Imagine you are put in a class where you were the only student with your skin colour, and all the other students were refugees. How would you feel?". They will then respond using three categories: happy – unhappy, comfortable – tense, and pleased – worried, each rated on a five-point scale. The scores will be averaged, with a higher score indicating a higher level of anxiety.

*Perceived threat.* A scale by Berry and Kalin (1995) adapted by Smith & Minescu (2021) will be used to assess students' perceived threat of refugees. The scale measures two types of threats: symbolic threats to culture and values and realistic threats to the national economy and resources (Smith & Minescu, 2021). The scale will have five points for each threat type. For example, under symbolic threat: "The values and beliefs of refugees are basically similar to those of most Irish people", and under realistic threat: "Ireland has plenty of money to make sure everyone is secure". An average of the responses under both categories will be used to determine the general perceived threat, with a high score meaning a greater sense of perceived threat.

## **Control variables**

*Socioeconomic status.* A socioeconomic status (SES) score will be calculated using criteria adapted from Wilson-Daily et al. (2018). The criteria are highest education attained by parent(s), number of televisions in the home, access to and frequency of travel abroad, number of devices (e.g., phone, iPad, laptop) and the highest parental occupational level as categorised by the Standard Occupational Classification System ([SOC](#)).

*Other demographics.* Students will indicate age, gender and nationality.

*Immigrant background.* Students' immigration background will be determined by their parents' birthplace (Wilson-Daily et al., 2018). Students will indicate if their parents were born in Ireland or abroad. If they were born abroad, they would provide for the country. If both

parents, or single parents, were born abroad, they would be classed as having an immigrant background.

*Teacher attitudes.* The same adapted seven-point scale from Wilson-Daily et al. (2018) under the prejudice variable will determine the teacher's attitudes towards refugees and identify potential prejudice.

### **3.3. Objectives of the study**

- 1: To determine if the intervention increases the level of empathy of primary school students (age 9 - 10 years) towards refugees in Ireland.
- 2: To measure students' prejudice towards refugees in Ireland and if it is reduced following the intervention.
- 3: To ascertain the extent of students' perceived threat of refugees and the success of the intervention in reducing it.
- 4: To assess if feelings of intergroup anxiety can be reduced through the intervention.

### **3.4. Data collection proposal**

The data sample will be collected pre and post-implementation of the intervention. Using the instruments proposed in 3.2, operational and control variables, data will be collected from all control and experimental groups listed in Table 2. See Appendix B for the all data collection instruments.

### **3.5. Data analysis proposal**

The Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) system will be used to analyse the data collected. This system will facilitate accurate comparisons at multiple points in time between the control and experimental groups during the study. The analysis will focus on the results pre- and post-implementation and compare the control and experimental groups. It will assess any changes, improvements, or lack thereof, in students' **empathy, prejudice, intergroup anxiety** and **perceived threat**.

**Table 3: Study implementation schedule**

	Academic year September – June											
Phase of study	1 yr pre	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	1 yr post
Pilot study <sup>1</sup>												
First evaluation												
Intervention training												
Implementation												
Second evaluation post-test												
Final evaluation post-test												

<sup>1</sup> In order to ascertain and aim to improve, if necessary, the proposed measures' psychometric qualities.

### **3.6. Hypothesis**

Each study objective will have two hypotheses. One indicates that there is no change in the sample classes following the implementation of the intervention, and the other indicates a change.

#### Study objective 1 - Empathy:

H1<sub>0</sub>: The implementation of the intervention material does not increase students' level of empathy towards refugees in Ireland.

H1: The implementation of the intervention material successfully increases students' level of empathy towards refugees in Ireland.

#### Study objective 2 - Prejudice:

H2<sub>0</sub>: Implementing the intervention does not reduce students' prejudice towards refugees.

H2: The implementation of the intervention significantly reduces students' prejudice towards refugees.

#### Study objective 3 – Perceived threat:

H3<sub>0</sub>: Following the drama intervention, students' sense of the perceived threat of refugees is not reduced.

H3: Following the drama intervention, students' sense of the perceived threat of refugees is reduced.

#### Study objective 4 – Intergroup anxiety:

H4<sub>0</sub>: Following the drama intervention, students' feelings of intergroup anxiety remain the same.

H4: Following the drama intervention, students' feelings of intergroup anxiety are greatly reduced.

### **3.7. Expected limitations**

This study aims to prove that a widely researched and targeted process drama intervention can increase students' empathy and reduce their prejudice towards refugees in the community and on a wider scale. However, there are some potential limitations to this proposed study.

Teachers' personal bias, both conscious and unconscious, political views, potential immigrant background and personal empathy and prejudice may limit the study and provide unreliable results. For example, a teacher with less empathy and more prejudice towards refugees may result in a sample group with lower results than a teacher with a greater sense of empathy and less prejudice. The teacher's ability, confidence and passion while teaching process drama may also determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Outside school factors such as parents' and peers' attitudes towards refugees, religious intergroup (Smith & Minescu, 2021), political views and the extent to which they share these views with the children may limit the results. A study conducted by Smith and Minescu (2021) indicated a significant influence of family on anti-refugee bias.

Time restraints may limit the study. The new Primary Curriculum Framework, launched in March 2023, sees reduced allocated time for arts education, including visual art, music and drama education, to only 2 hours per week, or 8 hours over one month (NCCA, 2023). This is a reduction of one hour per week from the previous curriculum (NCCA, 1999). With the ever-changing demands of the primary school classroom, the many curricular subjects and limited time per day, other subjects and events may take priority, and the planned timeframe to implement the intervention is not possible or altered significantly. Disruptions related to classroom behaviour, classroom environment and absences may also limit the results.

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**Aoife Duffy**



Appendix A

**Writing prompt – Lesson 3**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: Stanger / Islander ?

*Dear Diary...*

**A lot is happening...** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I'm thinking about...** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I'm worried about...** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I hope that....** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Aoife Duffy**

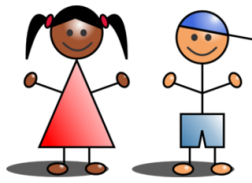
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Appendix B

## Measurement instrument 1: Empathy

I feel....	Happy	Angry	No feeling	Sad	Worried
A refugee is someone who wants to be protected in Ireland. They often have to flee their home because of war or conflict.					
Sometimes they are separated from their families for a long time.					
A refugee can be someone who needs protection because they have been threatened with violence or death because of their religion, orientation, race political views or being a girl.					
When someone arrives to Ireland, they have to wait in housing centres that are overcrowded, they cannot choose to when to eat, what to eat and are under strict control.					
Refugees can also experience violence in the country they are looking for protection in, such as Ireland.					
Refugee children often come to Ireland with no English. They must leave their old school and most of their friends behind and join a new school without the language.					

## Measurement instrument 2: Prejudice



Imagine you are having a conversation with your friend. There are seven things below that they have said to you. Read each sentence and choose if you agree or disagree with what they told you. Put an X in one box for each sentence.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree or disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
They take jobs away from people who were born here					
They are hard workers					
They are a burden					
They use the money we need for our own poor people					
They do not know our laws, and they do not follow them					
They take advantage of our healthcare and fill up A&E departments					
They make our society better by adding the new culture					

Adapted 7-point scale from the work of Wilson-Daily et al. (2018).

## Measurement instrument 3 – Intergroup anxiety

Imagine you you are put in a new class where you were the only student with your skin colour, and all the other students were refugees. How would you feel?

Put an X in one box for each row.

1	Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither unhappy or happy	Happy	Very happy
2	Very tense	Tense	Neither tense of comfortable	Comfortable	Very comfortable
3	Very worried	Worried	Neither worried or pleased	Pleased	Very pleased

Adapted from Turner et al. (2007, as cited by Smith & Minescu, 2021).

**Aoife Duffy**



Appendix C

## **Drama strategies**

The below provides further information about key drama strategies included in the intervention from the work of Baldwin (2009).

### **Conscience Alley (or Decision Alley/Thought Tunnel)**

The class divides into two lines facing each other with a corridor down the centre through which a character can walk. As the character walks between the lines, one side tries to persuade him/her to take one course of action and, the other, the opposite course of action. Or one line gives the pros and the other the cons. Each person has opportunity to speak to the character when he/she is standing nearest them. The character can join one line to indicate a decision has been made in accordance with that line. The line can be made longer if people break away once they have spoken and add themselves on to the end of the line.

### **Freeze-frame**

A freeze-frame is made by in-role action being halted mid-flow to a given signal, for example, the teacher calling 'Freeze'. Those in the scene need to then remain very still, as if frozen. At a further agreed signal, for example, 'Action', the freeze-frame can be broken or thawed, and the action can then carry on again.

### **Performance Carousel**

This is a theatrical way of seeing the linked work of several groups in sequence. All groups imagine they are on stage waiting still and silent for their spotlight turn. One at a time seamlessly each group performs, while the rest are still and silent. The groups might move into a still image starting position and all freeze at the end of their group performance before melting down into stillness between group scenes.

### **Ritual**

This involves everyone carrying out repeated agreed actions, words or sounds for a significant purpose within the drama. Ritual makes actions and words significant and important and might give them symbolic meaning.

### **Rumours**

In a short amount of time everyone makes up and spreads a rumour among the whole class. Some rumours may be true and others may not. Good false rumours are not easily distinguishable from truth. Afterwards the rumours may be gathered for collective consideration. This quickly creates many plot possibilities.

### **Teacher in Role**

This involves the teacher taking a role in the drama. They will signal clearly to the children when they are in or out of role and may use a piece of costume or prop to make this clear. The teacher only stays in role for as long as is necessary to the drama. They do not need to act, just present a set of attitudes with seriousness and consistency.

**Teacher as Narrator**

This involves the teacher telling, or telling back, parts of the drama as if he/she is a storyteller. This may be used to gather and share what has happened in the drama so far and to move the drama forward in time so that it does not get stuck. It enables the teacher to model narrative storytelling.

**Thought-tracking**

This involves speaking the inner thoughts of a character out loud and is often an opportunity offered to the whole class at a key moment. It may be that a child gets an opportunity to speak the character's thoughts aloud when the teacher is passing nearest to that child. Sometimes a touch on the shoulder is used as a signal that it is their turn to speak the thoughts of the character.