

Liminality of Refugees and Barriers in the Irish Higher Education system



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Methodology

This paper:

- Employs the autoethnography and self-observation research methods
- Applies the concept of liminality to identify and analyse problems that refugees encounter in the Irish Higher Education system.

Liminality

- the term liminality refers to any situation or object being 'betwixt' and 'between'; a transition period, an inter-structural situation and process moving from one stage to the other stage (Turner 1967; 1982)



Autoethnography

- Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research in which an author uses self-reflection and writing to explore his/her personal experience and connect this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings (Ellis 2004; Maréchal 2010)
- Autoethnography is a reflexive research practice that uses the lens of the self (auto) to describe and write (graphy) about people and cultures (ethno) (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 9).

Why Autoethnography?

- Barriers that refugees encounter in accessing the Irish Higher Education system
- unemployment
- The prevalence of fixed-term, Hourly and Occasionally contracts is one the central problems associated with postdoctoral phase (Fumasoil et al. 2015). This is a serious issue for refugees who receive their Ph.D in Ireland. E.g. myself.

These problems in our community, together with my own liminal situation motivated me to undertake this study.

Living in Liminality

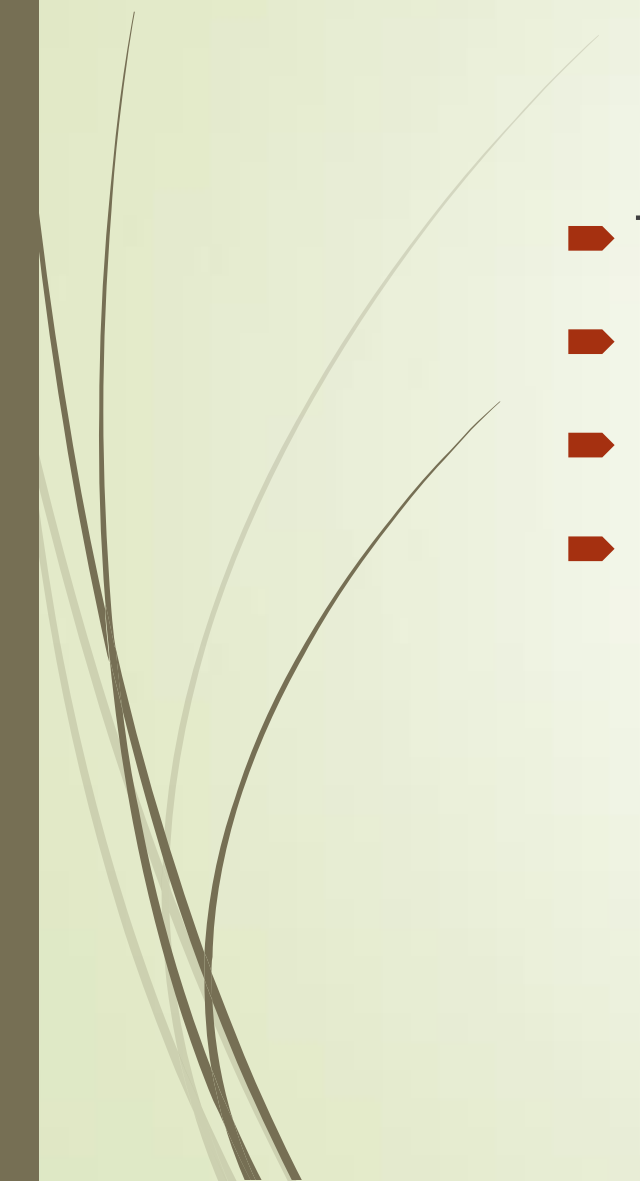
- Uncertain employment prospects, in many cases adverse financial circumstances, quite often slightly above the 'at-risk-of-poverty' level (Ates and Brechelmacher 2013), go hand in hand with self-exploitation and long working hours at the expense of a private life (Fumasoil et al. 2015)
- How about Education? Can it help?


Negative Attitudes and Liminal stage

- Negative attitudes toward immigrants result in a type of discrimination called skill-discounting, whereby those with a foreign education and work experience are less valued (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Esses, Dietz, & Bhardwaj, 2006).
- A liminal stage or condition wherein something is not properly or entirely clarified and acknowledged (uncertainty)

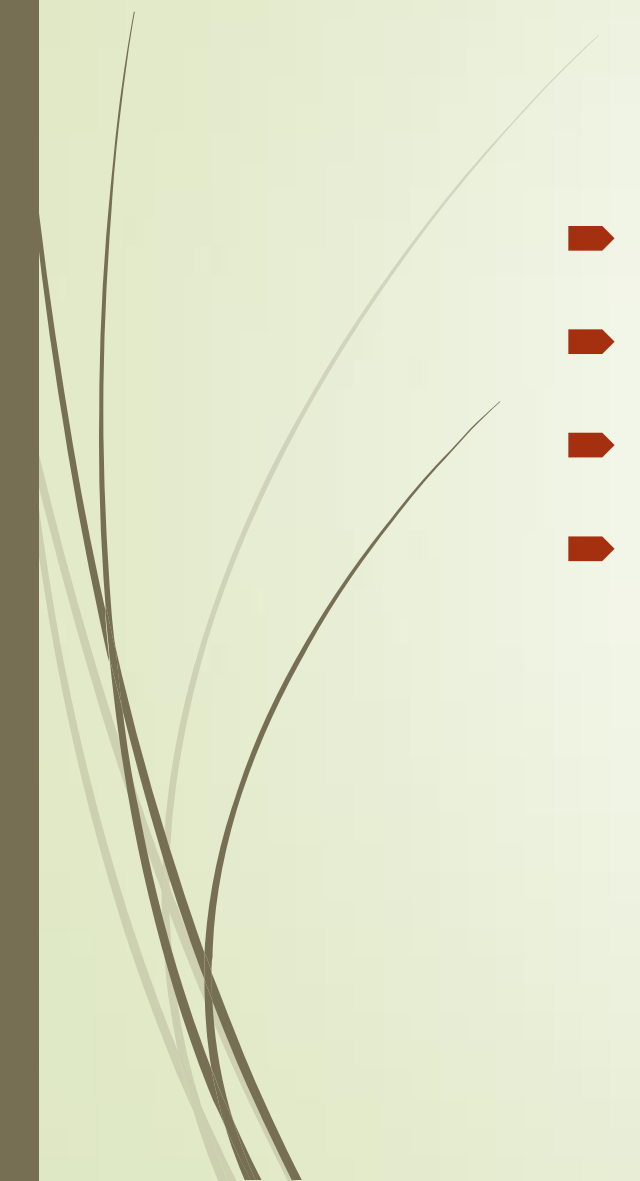


Being asylum seeker (self-observation)

- The Accommodation Condition
 - Legal Barriers in Education
 - Financial issues
 - Lack of bridges
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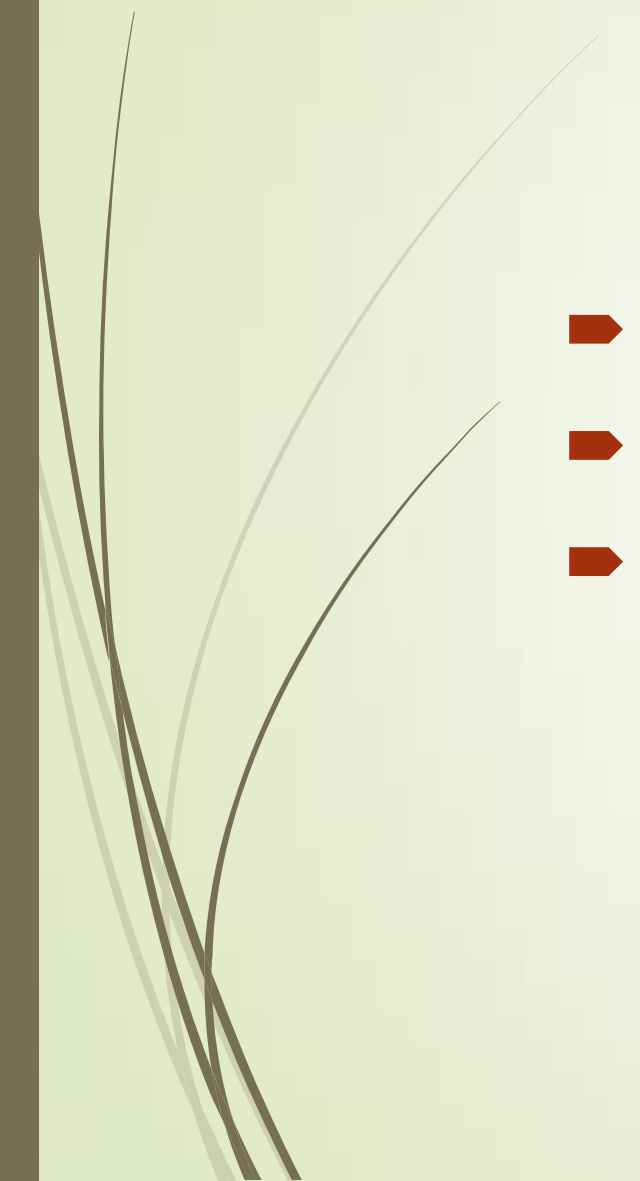


Being a refugee (self-observation)

- Discrimination
 - Recognition of the academic document
 - Lack of information
 - Lack of bridges
- 



Educated Immigrants

- Postdoctoral applications
 - Funding
 - Research Teams
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Living conditions after receiving PhD

- Income: €5000- 10000 per annum
- Unable to pay for books, conferences, socialisation etc.
- Cutbacks: Cutting from children education, sport, welfare, and socialisation (i.e. cancelling birthday parties and similar parties) which is an important process in child development, no holidays
- Free, but leaving as a prisoner (home- office)
- Borrowing from the Credit Union, friends and relatives, etc.
- Homelessness
- The relatives support system



Africans with PhDs driving taxis

- ▶ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/discrimination-at-work-you-see-africans-with-phds-driving-taxis-1.3692510>
- ▶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-38751307>



Issues

- Stigmatisation
 - Depression
 - Exclusion
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Conclusion

- Bridges should be built to help asylum seekers and refugees to access **the Irish Higher Education system**.
- As research and teaching institutions, **universities must ensure the ongoing development of new academics**. While there is a growing interest in exploring the issues confronted by new academics, much remains to be done to better understand, and improve, the pathways of academic development, particularly for underrepresented people such as refugees.
- Bridges should be build to held asylum seekers and refugees to find a position after completing their education.
- An experience of past can be employed to adopt a strategy of prevention.
- Liminality can best be managed to the benefit of refugees and our society.