

CHALLENGES AND
BENEFITS OF
VIRTUAL
ETHNOGRAPHY WITH
SYRIAN REFUGEE
STUDENTS

Melissa Hauber-Özer

PhD Candidate, International Education

George Mason University

Virginia, USA



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

- Turkey: host of the largest number of refugees in the world
 - 3.6 million Syrians under temporary protection
- 6% in higher education (3% globally)
- Inconsistent quality of and access to language courses



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

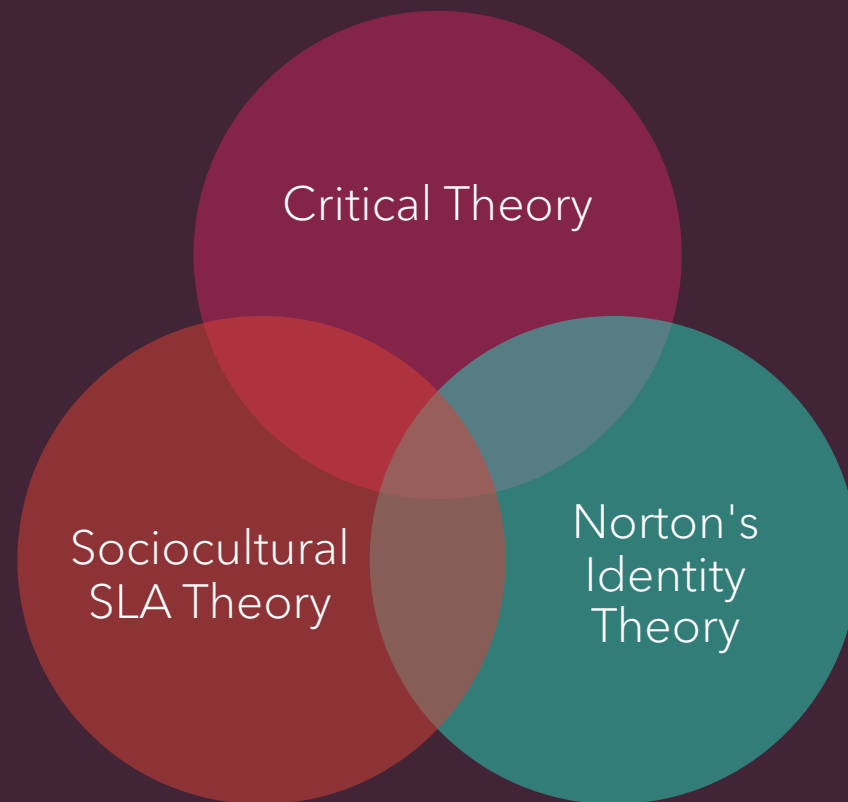
1. What are the experiences of a group of Syrian young adults living under temporary protection and enrolled in Turkish universities?
2. How do these students envision and pursue their future identities through education?
3. What motivates them to invest in higher education in the host country?



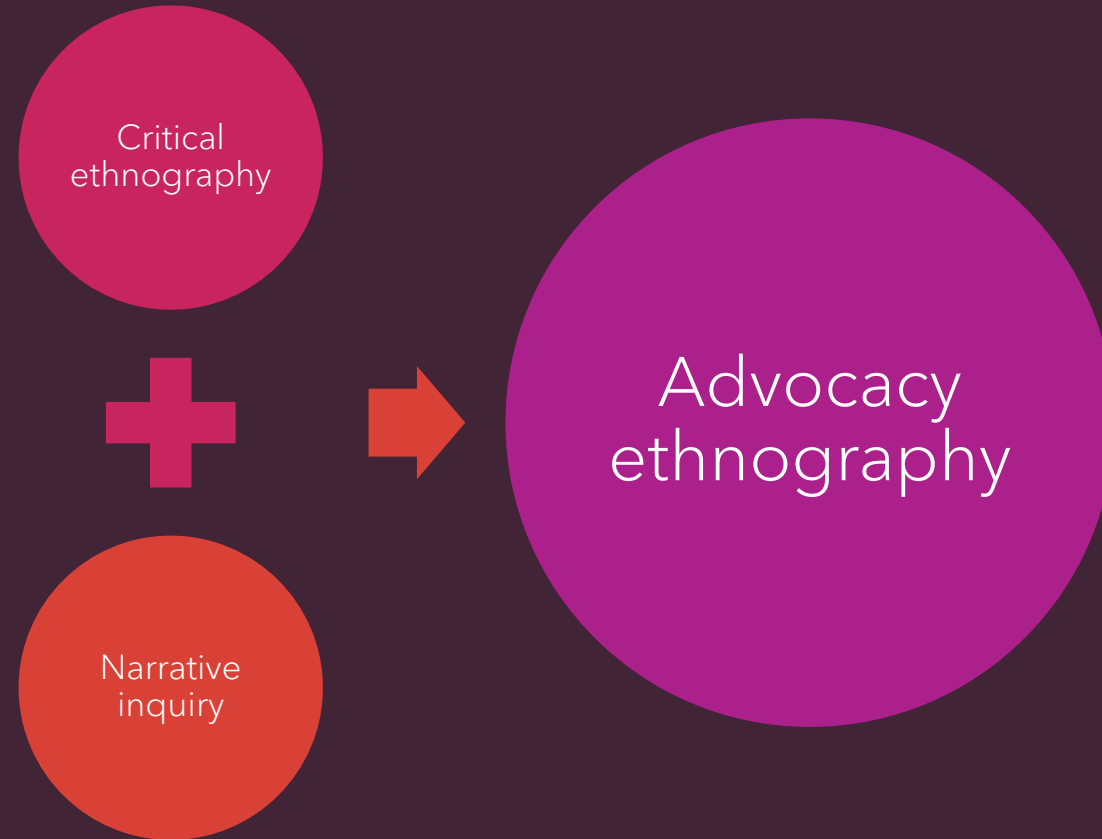
RATIONALE & PURPOSE

- Limited research on refugees in higher education, especially in asylum settings
- Pervasive focus on barriers and gaps
- Need for an asset-based, solution-oriented approach

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



METHODOLOGY

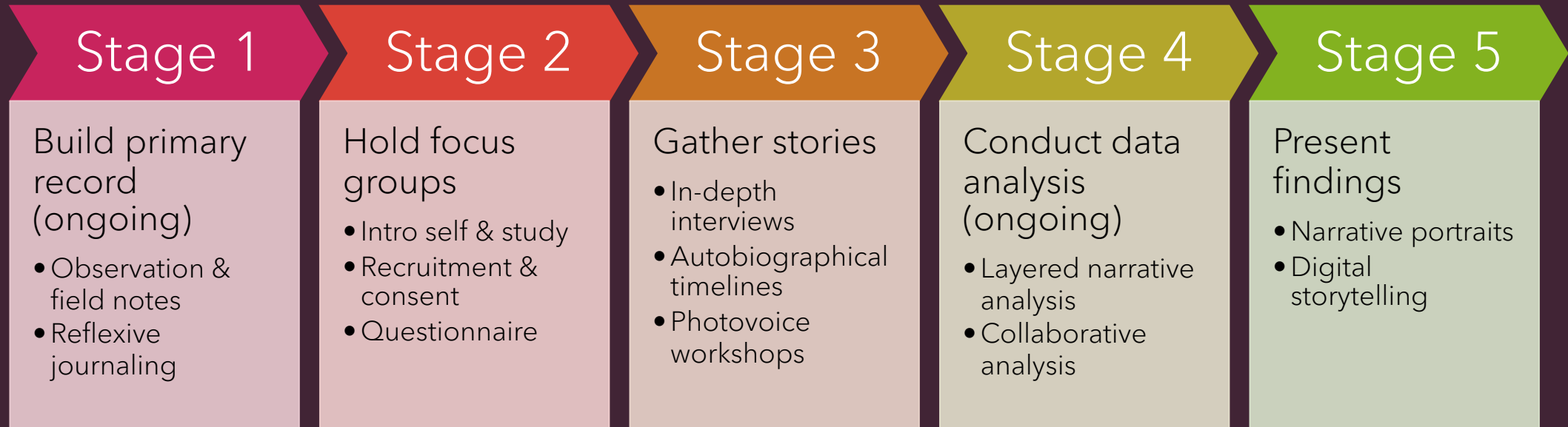


PLAN A

- Method: participatory critical ethnography
- Participants/co-researchers: one group of Syrian students
- Setting: one university in the border region
 - Access
 - Existing relationships
 - Key informant assisting with recruitment, document translation, and interpretation



PLAN A: CAR SPECKEN'S 5 STAGES



PLAN B: MODIFICATIONS

Stage 1

Build primary record (ongoing)

- ~~Observation & field notes~~
- Reflexive journaling

Stage 2

~~Hold focus groups~~

- ~~Intro self & study~~
- **Remote** recruitment & **online** consent
- **Online** questionnaire

Stage 3

Gather stories

- **Online**, in-depth interviews
- ~~Autobiographical timelines~~
- Photovoice workshops **by Zoom**

Stage 4

Conduct data analysis (ongoing)

- Layered narrative analysis
- ~~Collaborative~~ analysis **with key informant**

Stage 5

Present findings

- Narrative portraits
- ~~Digital~~ storytelling



METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

- Ethical concerns
 - Privacy
 - Potential burden on participants
- Participatory design
 - Focus groups
 - Interview protocol
 - Photovoice
- Relationships
 - Rapport & trust-building



LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

- IRB modifications
- Platforms (Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp)
 - Familiarity
 - Fatigue
- Interpretation
- Connection
 - Unreliable internet
 - Participant devices
- Recording quality & transcription
- Participant incentives



ADVANTAGES

- Speed of data collection
 - Recruitment
 - Availability
 - Scheduling flexibility
- Reduced costs
 - Interpretation
 - Workshop supplies
- Data in Turkish
- More varied experiences

ADVANTAGES





REFLECTIONS

- Reconsidering research purposes
 - Who is this for?
- Reframing relationships
 - Trust & rapport building (interviews)
 - Reciprocity
- Rethinking possibilities
 - Dissemination
 - Expansion (national or international)

KEY REFERENCES

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CONTACT

- Melissa Hauber-Özer
mhauberr@gmu.edu
m.hauberozer@gmail.com