

## **Acculturation as storied cultural learning experience**

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In intercultural communication studies, acculturation is a popular topic that addresses the process through which individuals acquire new cultural patterns through intercultural contact. Acculturation is a dynamic process that often involves changing attitudes towards cultural otherness and identity and an expanded repertoire of cultural knowledge and skills. Longitudinal research in this area typically attempts to capture such acculturation trajectories by eliciting participants' interpretations at, and about, different moments in their intercultural contact with somewhat structured questions related to acculturation concepts.

In this paper, I argue that narrative inquiry can be a useful supplement to the longitudinal approach above. First, I discuss two major links I find between narrative and acculturation: a) narrative offers rich insights into the participants' constructed acculturation experiences in relation to the events they find meaningful, and their sense-makings in terms of attitudes, cultural learning and identity are key elements in acculturation research; and b) participants' tellings and retellings of the same events may shed light on how their understandings vis-à-vis such key elements develop over time and with enriched experiences. Following this discussion, I present a case study to illustrate how my Chinese participants developed meaningful understandings regarding their acculturation by storying and restorying their initial academic experiences at four points during their sojourn in the UK. Finally, I draw all the threads together and consider the broader issue about how the narrative concept can help researchers better understand participants' experiences and interpretations through their constructed identities which are storied and restoried across the lifespan.