



Counter-Narrative

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What is it?

Counter-narrative refers to the narratives that arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized. The idea of “counter-” itself implies a space of resistance against traditional domination. A counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins. Instead, these must come *from the margins*, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals. A counter-narrative thus goes beyond the telling of stories that take place in the margins. The effect of a counter-narrative is to empower and give agency to those communities. By choosing their own words and telling their own stories, members of marginalized communities provide alternative points of view, helping to create complex narratives truly presenting their realities.

Who uses the concept?

Scholars in different social sciences have relied on counter-narratives to illustrate their research. Fields such as Critical Race Theory and LatCrit, Political Science, Sociology, Education, Postcolonial / Postmodern and Indigenous Studies have embraced the potential of counter-narratives as part of their research methodologies. Counter-narratives have also found a healthy niche in qualitative inquiry in approaches such as narrative inquiry, life history, and especially in the indigenous-based approach of *testimonio*. These approaches have placed a premium on the use of counter-narratives as a source of socially conscious qualitative research.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

In an increasingly multicultural world, counter-narratives are an essential and necessary component of today’s narratives about world affairs. Intercultural dialogue must consider the stories and voices of different communities and societies, especially those still marginalized. If the goal of intercultural dialogue is to reach better levels of mutual understanding, participants need to hear the points of view of communities typically ignored.

What work remains?

While there is a heightened interest in counter-narratives in today’s socio-political contexts, researchers worldwide need to embrace the potential of counter-narratives as the means to improve our collective understanding and even as a precursor to conflict resolution. Only if we create the conditions where all those involved in social interactions have a space to tell their stories in their own terms will we find effective ways to engage in empowering dialogue leading to sustainable solutions to today’s crises.

Resources

- Bamberg, M., & Andrews, M. (2004). *Considering counter-narratives: Narrating, resisting, making sense*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
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- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 8(1), 23-44.