



## Testimonio

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### What is it?

*Testimonio*, a Spanish term understood as “witness account”, embodies a narrative research methodology rooted in Latin American history (against the backdrop of social inequality that has plagued the region since the 1950s). A *testimonio* is a first-person account by the person (narrator) who has faced instances of social and political inequality, oppression, or any specific form of marginalization. As opposed to other forms of narrative research, where the researcher helps mold the narrative or becomes a conduit to voice the stories, in *testimonio* it is usually the narrator her/himself who is the research tool, with an interest in telling the story from that individual perspective which, in turn, represents a larger, collective story that took place in the community that the narrator inhabits.

The goal of *testimonio* as a form of narrative inquiry, then, transcends awareness and gravitates toward political intention, questions about institutional power, the need to speak for justice, the creation of stronger pockets of resistance, and the importance of solidarity and coalition as keys to building more equitable social frameworks.

### Who uses the concept?

A myriad of fields in human and social sciences directly linked to Latin American studies have adopted *testimonio* as their methodological tool of choice. Scholars from Chicana/o Studies, feminist studies, multicultural education, and indigenous studies have integrated *testimonio* into their first-hand accounts of issues of marginalization and oppression.

### Fit with intercultural dialogue?

*Testimonio* becomes relevant for intercultural dialogue because it seeks organic intellectuals (drawing from Gramsci’s idea) that help outsiders learn about the local history of the communities that have suffered marginalization. *Testimonio* provides an open invitation to engage in real dialogue with cultures and individuals that one may otherwise just learn from second-hand accounts such as those found in traditional ethnographic studies or academic narratives.

### What work remains?

*Testimonio*, as one of the truest indigenous research methodologies, has potential to highlight stories from marginalized communities in Latin America and beyond. The challenge for researchers engaging in this methodology, one that would propel it to the next level, is to erase traditional understandings about advocacy and move into the levels of solidarity and coalition, necessary levels to let the communities themselves tell the stories that matter most to them.

### Resources

- Beverley, J. (2005). *Testimonio*, subalternity, and narrative authority. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 547-558). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Reyes, K. B. & Curry Rodríguez, J. E. (2012). *Testimonio*: Origins, terms, and resources. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 525-538. doi:10.1080/10665684.2012.698571