

CHAPTER 3.

GENERATIVE AI TOOLS ARE COLOR-BLIND ✦ COUNTERSTORYTELLING CAN HELP GENERATIVE AI TOOLS ADDRESS THEIR EMBEDDED CULTURAL BIASES

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Educators and students wonder if new text-generation technologies—generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT and Copilot—are truly able to “tell” stories with culturally nuanced, marginalized perspectives. Well, the answer to this ideological assumption is that they cannot. Matthew Kirschenbaum (2023) has already warned us of a pending, rampant “textocalypse,” the overwhelming flood of AI-generated text that threatens to drown out authentic human writing resulting from unchecked predictive textual production. Because these GenAI tools are trained on Western, English-speaking texts, they are embedded with ideological biases that marginalize the voices of peoples of color, associating certain damaging stereotypes with ethnic and cultural groups. Therefore, before climbing on the bandwagon that GenAI tools are neutral and thus color-blind, think about this question: how can GenAI tools be color-blind or ideologically neutral when they are trained on data that reflects linguistic and social biases of their creators?

This widespread bad idea—that GenAI tools are color-blind—concerns writing studies educators and students who seek to embrace a diversity of lived experiences through storytelling. If GenAI tools reflect the values and biases of the communities that create them, then how can this bad idea be challenged and undermined?

In this chapter, we begin by explaining the three problems of treating GenAI tools as if they are color-blind. Next, we turn to the generative practice of counterstorytelling, a method of narrative that challenges dominant master stories by centering marginalized voices, spotlighting racialized experiences, exposing stereotypes and injustices, and offering oft-excluded truths (Martinez, 2020). Just

imagine: if educators introduce counterstorytelling as a starting point in prompting GenAI, then students can generate their own cultural narratives that acknowledge a diversity of lived experiences and perspectives. Finally, we explain how this generative idea—counterstorytelling as resistance—can challenge color-blind racism and empower students to integrate culturally inclusive approaches in their writing.

BAD IDEA: GENERATIVE AI TOOLS ARE COLOR-BLIND

What is problematic about the myth that GenAI tools are color-blind? Far from being color-blind and neutral, GenAI tools are deeply influenced by the power structures and cultural dynamics of their creators (Gupta & Shiver-McNair, 2024). For instance, large language models (LLMs) are trained on open-source data from the internet, including mostly Western, English-speaking sources. Thus, GenAI tools tend to overlook the perspectives of marginalized communities. For example, GenAI reproduces epistemic harms by privileging Global North knowledge systems (Sharma in this collection). Therefore, we cannot assume that these tools are color-blind, because this belief—ignoring racial and ethnic differences will somehow create racial harmony—disregards the real experiences and cultural knowledge of marginalized groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Just as color-blind racism ignores fraught racial histories, the alluring notion that GenAI tools are neutral ignores the embedded prejudices, power dynamics, and knowledge hierarchies encoded in LLMs. A color-blind, neutral approach to GenAI tools tends to reinforce systemic discrimination against marginalized groups in three problematic ways: knowledge hierarchies, algorithmic bias, and monocultural narratives.

First, when we talk about knowledge hierarchies, we refer to the ways in which certain types of knowledge are valued more than others because they are linked to power and privilege. An example of knowledge hierarchy involves the undervaluing of dialects, such as African American English (AAE). Researchers show that GenAI tools tend to associate AAE speakers with archaic, raciolinguistic stereotypes, as compared to those speaking Standardized American English (SAE) (Hofmann et al., 2024) because these tools reinforce linguistic hierarchies that disadvantage non-native English writers (Gruber in this collection). At the same time, Hofmann et al. found that these LLMs are “more likely to convict speakers of AAE of a crime, and to sentence speakers of AAE to death” (2024, p. 152). Meanwhile, other researchers have found that GenAI tools generate texts that echo default gender biases and employment stereotypes (Kotek et al., 2023). Thus, GenAI tools express knowledge hierarchies, deciding what knowledge is important and whose voices get heard. Consequently, students become aware of the dangers of implicit knowledge hierarchies, encoded by LLMs, for reinforcing Western power structures and dominant cultural narratives.

Second, another growing concern of the color-blind racism of GenAI tools involves the problem of algorithmic bias, which occurs when GenAI tools produce systemic, repeatable errors due to flawed data or design, inadvertently perpetuating harmful stereotypes and racial exclusions. Algorithmic bias results in discrimination against certain groups of people, causing what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) calls “epistemic violence,” which is harm done to marginalized groups by imposing dominant ways of knowing and being. Spivak describes such violence as making the colonial subject less important, or “the other” (1988, p. 281). When GenAI tools are used, they can replicate and even amplify epistemic violence. For instance, Weixin Liang et al. (2023) found that GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers, whose writing was often misclassified as AI generated. Imagine having your writing flagged as AI-generated because you are not a native English speaker, while the same GPT detectors accurately identified samples written by native English speakers. However, it gets worse. Researchers also found that LLMs, like GPT-3, showed persistent anti-Muslim bias, completing prompts with violent language or terrorist associations (Abid et al., 2021). In essence, the key takeaway is that users might remember GenAI tools’ inherent algorithmic biases in order to avoid contributing to epistemic violence, causing harm by reinforcing racial stereotypes.

Third, GenAI tools often promote a specific view of Western culture. For example, our education and communication systems operate within an English-dominated monoculture, at the expense of other languages, viewpoints, and value systems. This one-sided, monocultural focus relies heavily on knowledge systems developed in the Western countries, ignoring equally valuable perspectives from other parts of the world. Unfortunately, this lack of diversity leaves no room for sharing and valuing knowledge from all cultures (Santos, 2014). But this monoculture is exacerbated when LLM-powered conversational searchers create echo chambers, where users see only information that reinforces their existing beliefs and biases. These tools often equate SAE with power and privilege—described as educated forms of expression—which excludes diverse narratives, dialects, and language varieties.

Readers might be wondering about the threats that GenAI tools pose to marginalized communities and how they can counteract them. Educators play a vital role in creating equitable, inclusive classrooms that capture the rich diversity of students’ lived experiences. And students can oppose such biases by using a powerful approach called counterstorytelling, a way to amplify marginalized voices by creating narratives that center lived experiences and knowledges of people of color. Counterstorytelling challenges the dominant master narratives filled with stereotypes by bringing forward alternative perspectives that are usually silenced. In sum, GenAI tools are not color-blind or neutral: they reflect and reinforce existing

biases. But, with strategies like counterstorytelling, educators can strive for classrooms which ensure authentic engagement with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

GENERATIVE IDEA: COUNTERSTORYTELLING AS CRITICAL, ETHICAL, AND INCLUSIONARY RESISTANCE CAN HELP GENAI TOOLS ADDRESS THEIR EMBEDDED CULTURAL BIASES

Let us tackle the bad idea that GenAI tools are color-blind by using counterstorytelling as a form of resistance. We define counterstorytelling as a narrative practice that foregrounds marginalized perspectives to disrupt dominant accounts. Using counterstorytelling to take on GenAI involves creating and refining prompts to generate outputs in three important types of resistance: critical, ethical, and inclusionary.

- Critical resistance means looking closely at and questioning the dominant stories or master narratives. It is about being critical of the status quo.
- Ethical resistance spotlights the exclusions and privileges that support systemic and institutional racism. It is about shining a light on existing inequalities.
- Inclusionary resistance involves intentionally creating stories that reflect the experiences of marginalized groups. It is about giving voice to those who are often unheard or silenced.

By using counterstorytelling to frame our prompts, we can create more inclusive, equitable stories that address the historical injustices faced by marginalized communities. In today's world, GenAI can sometimes act as a digital oppressor, but counterstorytelling can help usher in a cultural shift. It prioritizes diverse perspectives, creates spaces for silenced voices, and helps build inclusive communities.

CRITICAL RESISTANCE

If readers are passionate about racial justice, then we can use GenAI tools in a critical way to examine the outputs to uncover any biased perspectives. To do so is to engage in *critical resistance*, which means looking at dominant or master narratives that are the widely accepted stories reflecting the interests of those in power by shaping a society's history and norms. Students who understand critical resistance can create prompts to acknowledge existing biases in these master narratives, especially those that favor Eurocentric ideologies. By so doing, they help

GenAI tools focus on goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to uncover knowledge hierarchies and implicit privileges. Instead of simply accepting GenAI's first output, students can practice collaborative storytelling to engage in deeper exploration and creative revisions, challenging Eurocentric master narratives.

Sample Prompts for Critical Resistance

Prompt 1: Ask GenAI to highlight the biases, prejudices, and exclusions in perspectives it provides, including stereotypes, implicit hierarchies and/or omissions of certain groups' experiences.

Excerpted Output (ChatGPT 5): My responses often privilege Western academic frameworks, which can reproduce implicit hierarchies and omissions—for example, when I explain climate migration, I might cite Global North theories of “resilience” while overlooking Indigenous oral histories from coastal Bangladesh that foreground community agency and alternative epistemologies of place.

Prompt 2: Encourage GenAI to provide examples of how master narratives have been challenged in the past to undermine ideologies, hierarchies, and biases.

Excerpted Output (ChatGPT 5): One example is the 1960s Chicano Movement, which directly challenged dominant U.S. histories that celebrated assimilation while ignoring Mexican American labor struggles. Another is the work of Black feminist scholars who questioned narratives of “universal womanhood” that erased race and class differences.

ETHICAL RESISTANCE

Ethical resistance tackles systemic and institutional racism, by shining a light on how racial inequalities are built into society's institutions, like schools and workplaces. For example, systemic racism shows up through disparities in education, healthcare, housing, and jobs that unfairly affect marginalized groups. Consider how redlining, a discriminatory housing policy that has historically denied minorities access to homeownership, is now evolving into digital redlining. In San Antonio, the enduring effects of redlining continue to limit upward mobility through segregated schools and unequal housing opportunities, demonstrating how historic housing discrimination reproduces systemic inequities in education and wealth (Baker et al., 2022; Mendoza, 2022). Similarly, institutional racism is often hidden and deeply rooted, affecting policies and practices of

organizations. For instance, in policing, institutional racism can be seen in practices like racial profiling, when police officers disproportionately target people of color for stops, searches, seizures, and arrests based on their race rather than evidence of wrongdoing. Using counterstorytelling, readers can prompt GenAI tools to counter its own algorithmic biases by spotlighting systemic and institutional racism. By so doing, we can bring to the forefront issues of barriers faced, biased disciplinary practices, and underrepresentation which has wide-ranging impacts on individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

Sample Prompts for Ethical Resistance

Prompt 3: Ask GenAI to identify examples of systemic racism at various institutions, including providing historical and contemporary examples of discriminatory practices that have short- and long-term impacts on marginalized communities.

Excerpted Output (ChatGPT 5): In housing, systemic racism is evident in the history of redlining, which denied Black and Latino families access to affordable mortgages and continues today as digital redlining. In education, school funding tied to property taxes disproportionately underfunds schools in historically segregated neighborhoods, limiting opportunity across generations. In healthcare, disparities in access to treatment and maternal health outcomes continue to harm communities of color.

Prompt 4: Request GenAI uncover and analyze the institutional barriers and exclusionary practices faced by marginalized groups that perpetuate inequality.

Excerpted Output (ChatGPT 5): Institutional barriers often operate through policies that appear neutral but have unequal effects. For example, zoning laws that restrict affordable housing in certain neighborhoods perpetuate segregation. Workplace practices such as biased promotion criteria and lack of representation in leadership positions limit advancement for women of color. In higher education, legacy admissions favor historically privileged groups, reinforcing cycles of exclusion.

INCLUSIONARY RESISTANCE

Imagine you are trying to write a story that really captures the unique experiences of people whose voices often go unheard. This goal is what *inclusive resistance*

is all about: creating narratives that showcase and amplify marginalized voices by addressing the cultural contexts and gaps to bring race and diversity to the forefront. Readers can develop prompts that highlight a specific culture, race, ethnicity, or nationality, rather than writing a generic, universalized prompt. For example, a prompt that asks GenAI to provide a story from the perspective of a marginalized group, focusing on their cultural experiences, may not be reflected in its first output. In addition, educators can encourage students to share bias-aware prompts with their classmates, revising prompts that set the right cultural context; prompts can be used to ask GenAI to attend to cultural gaps, nuances, and stereotypes. We encourage readers—especially students—to commit to equity and diversity by rewriting, reflecting, and discussing how GenAI prompts can ensure that diverse perspectives and voices are represented and heard.

Sample Prompts for Inclusionary Resistance

Prompt 5: Ask GenAI to provide experiences that address cultural gaps, nuances, and stereotypes, ensuring that diverse voices are empathetically represented.

Excerpted Output (ChatGPT 5): Latina students in STEM often describe feeling isolated when they are the only women of color in their classes. A bias-aware narrative can highlight not just the challenges of underrepresentation but also the resilience and community networks they build, countering stereotypes that question their belonging or ability.

Prompt 6: Request GenAI generate narratives that amplify cultural perspectives of those that are often unheard or silenced, highlighting their contributions and challenges within society.

Excerpted Output (ChatGPT 5): From the perspective of a Black domestic worker in the 1940s, a story might emphasize both the economic exploitation and the crucial role these women played in sustaining families and communities. Such narratives foreground their voices and contributions, which have historically been overlooked in mainstream accounts of labor and social history.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO ACTION

While a color-blind, neutral approach to GenAI tools might seem appealing, true progress lies in embracing counterstorytelling as a practice of critical, ethical, and inclusionary resistance. As educators and students committed to cultural

diversity, it is crucial to recognize how knowledge hierarchies, algorithmic biases, and monocultural narratives perpetuate stereotypes and systemic exclusions. By engaging in counterstorytelling through their own prompting of GenAI, readers can challenge master narratives by uncovering the hierarchical biases and unacknowledged exclusions of marginalized communities. Critical resistance not only creates room for diverse cultural knowledge and perspectives in academic and discourse spaces, but also empowers us to expose and challenge systemic and institutional racism. Ethical resistance spotlights ingrained inequalities within societal structures, while inclusionary resistance amplifies marginalized voices, paving the way for a more culturally inclusive, equitable future, one where GenAI serves as a tool of empowerment rather than oppression.

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