

Theorizing Human Differences: A human science perspective

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“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.”

Attributed to Edmund Burke.

Abstract

Human difference is a very well established topic within psychology, but this has largely been framed within the field of psychometrics where the emphasis has been upon the measurement of these differences. The argument that I want to develop builds upon the position adopted by the British sociologist and cultural theorist, Stuart Hall, in his *W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture*, delivered at Harvard University, in 1994. In that address, Hall proposed that human differences need to be approached from a more radical, discursive perspective. He argues that religion and some sciences have been especially complicit in the theorizing of racial differences. My own position is that a *human science* approach to human differences is now long, long overdue, if we are not also to be seen as complicit. I first clarify and extend Hall’s arguments concerning racial differences using the study of gender differences, and I then use the phenomenon of genocide as a wake-up call for the human sciences to devise a concerted program of research into a much needed deeper understanding of the *discourses of human difference*.

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to explore radical social constructionist ideas (i.e. discursive), especially in how they might be made relevant to the study of human differences. Such ideas have recently become regarded as central to the discipline of psychology, as well as the wider human sciences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Harré & Secord, 1972; Gergen, 1985, 1999; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Burr, 2003). Whereas the major focus, within the psychological field, has traditionally been on the *measurement* of human differences, (e.g. human intelligence and human personality, etc.), the approach here is much more radical, in that I want to argue that we urgently need to stop focusing upon only the differences themselves, and begin exploring how the *meaning* of these differences have been discursively constructed.

Problematizing the reality of human differences

A major part of this paper is concerned with *racial* differences, although I will also be examining *gender* differences at some point as well. Nevertheless, it should be obvious that the arguments I am making can be extended to any area of human differences.

I want to begin with some deeply felt concerns that I have about the publication of a recent book, entitled: *Race: The reality of human differences* (Sarich & Miele, 2004). This book can be used as a good illustration of the range of issues with which I will be dealing. My intention is to not discuss this book at any great length. I do not have the space to outline and debate its basic argument, nor will I address the wider context and the controversial issues that this raises in any detail. Instead, what I want to do is use it as an example of the problem with which I am primarily concerned. I will raise just four basic issues:

- (i) the problem of the “reality” of human differences;
- (ii) the dismissal of social constructionist ideas in the book;
- (iii) the lack of any acknowledgment of the earlier work of Stuart Hall;
- (iv) the wider reception and reactions to this book.

I can deal with the first three of these only rather briefly, but will examine the fourth issue a little more closely.

Sarich & Miele are concerned basically with the biological argument for the “reality” of human differences. They then proceed to place their claim to the “reality” of racial difference squarely within the context of the social, cultural and political consequences of such a “reality.” The problem here is that they utterly confuse the actual difference that may exist between people with the *meaning* of these differences. Whatever differences exist between people, it is the *meaning* of difference that matters.

The book employs a troubling pseudo-scientific language using constructs such as “molecular clocks”, “genetic distance”, “human pedigree”, etc., as well as a mocking dismissal for opposing viewpoints, e.g. “illusory quest for equality”, and “mere social constructionism”. There is clear evidence that the social constructionist position is not understood, because the *meaning* of racial difference and its consequences are never discussed, except in so far as the arguments of Stephen Jay Gould (*race cannot exist*), Richard Lewontin (*race does not exist*), Alan Goodman (*and even it did exist, it should not be studied*), are casually dismissed.

What I find most disturbing of all, is the lack of scholarship, the lack of any acknowledgment, indeed any awareness of, the work of Stuart Hall. And, it is this which will be my main focus in the rest of this paper.

But, I cannot leave this discussion of Sarich & Miele, without comment on the reception and reactions to their book, which comes with such comments on its dust jacket as: “*the recent popularity of the thesis that race does not exist has had an eerie Alice in Wonderland quality. It is hard to exaggerate the need for this book . . .*” (Charles Murray); “*In the present climate of prejudice, misinformation, disagreement and*

confusion about the whole subject of race and human variation, this much needed and important informative book is just the ticket . . .” (Arthur R. Jensen); *“Sarich and Miele join a very small, select company of researchers who have examined race in an honest and scientifically responsible manner . . .”* (Joseph Carroll); and *“[this is] an important milestone in reducing the millstone of the myths that have accumulated denigrating and/or ignoring our genetic diversity . . .”* (Ralph L. Holloway).

On the dust jacket, of course, comments like these are to be expected, so we should look perhaps a little further towards the reviews in the specialist publications and journals for more considered reactions. In background research that I undertook for this paper, I found 21 reviews, of which 18 could be considered thoughtful and acceptable for my purpose. What troubled me most of all was how few of these 18 reviews were appropriately critical. Indeed, there were a few exceptions, which included comments such as: *“The concept of race is meaningless”* (Gross); *“Racial categories are historical constructions that have no biological meaning whatsoever”* (Foster); *“The academic debate about the non-existence of race is a rhetorical controversy rather than a substantive one”* (Meisenberg); and *“This is a strange book about a strange debate”* (Dan Seligman).

For a book that completely ignores that what really matters, which is *not* how human differences can be measured, but how these differences are being used in our culture, what they signify, what they have come to *mean*, I did find these reviews, taken as a whole, very depressing indeed.

Moreover, this book and its critical response, raised issues for me about what my own discipline of psychology, as well as the human sciences in general, are doing, if we do not take some sort of stand on a more informed perspective on human differences. Inevitably, I find myself asking: *Why are we not engaging in a completely revised program of research into our understanding of this field?*

Stuart Hall: His landmark *W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture*

My own understanding of the study of human differences has been radically influenced by the work of the highly distinguished British sociologist and cultural theorist, Stuart Hall. He was Director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, and Professor of Sociology, at the Open University, and is now retired. The paper that I am most concerned with was first delivered in 1994 as the *W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture*, at Harvard University (where it was then entitled: *Race, Ethnicity, Nation*). As far as I can establish, this paper was never published, but it was redelivered and recorded at Goldsmiths College, London, and was subsequently edited and published by Media Education as a video entitled, *Race – The Floating Signifier* (Hall, 1997).

Hall proposes that human differences must be approached from what I want to argue is a *radical constructionist perspective*. He is specifically concerned with racial differences, which he treats as a *discursive* category, although he stresses that this argument will clearly generalize to other categories of human difference. It is the *meanings* given to such differences that matters, and *not* the differences themselves. He argues that these meanings are not fixed, but they float and slide, depending upon their discursive context.

On a personal note, I should point out that this video had a serious impact on me when I first watched it, and as a result I revised many of my views on psychology pretty much forever. My interest here is to acknowledge Hall's main points, and then extend his discursive position to a consideration of gender differences, and then to the particularly challenging topic of human genocide.

A sense of Hall's argument is summarized by Sut Jhally as follows:

"We have to pay attention to the stories that the culture spins for us about what the physical differences we are born with mean. This involves examining the discourses that surround race – taking what [Stuart Hall] calls a discursive position – that is analysing the metaphors, the anecdotes, the stories, the jokes that are told by culture. [. . .] In fact when we do this, we see that historically things like skin colour have been given many different meanings over the years. There is nothing solid or permanent to the meaning of race. It changes all of the time, it shifts and slides."

(Sut Jhally – from the introduction to: *Race – The Floating Signifier*, 1997)

Hall sees "race" as one of those major concepts which organize the great classificatory systems of difference which operate in human society (i.e. such classificatory systems as: *Gender/Class/Race/Sexuality/Age*). A crucial aspect of his argument is that "race" is a discursive category, and that we need to recognize that all attempts to ground this concept scientifically, to locate the differences between the races, have largely been shown to be untenable.

Hall rejects the biological theory of racial differences, and instead argues that it is the *meaning* of racial differences that is the real issue. "Race" is a discourse, and "race" works like a language. This is not to deny the "reality" of the physical differences that exist between people, but it is the meanings given to these physical differences which is at stake. He points out how the science of genetics has been complicit in offering guarantees of how racial differences should be interpreted, i.e. given meaning. His attack is particularly on the cultural function of science, in its role of establishing facts, and guaranteeing truth. His point is that the sciences, especially genetics, have far too easily offered guarantees for the meanings given to racial differences, which inevitably leads to the "fixing" these meanings. But, it is an important part of Hall's argument that we must realize that these meanings can never be fixed. This is how Hall develops his discursive position:

"There are probably differences of all sorts in the world [. . .] there is no reason to deny this reality or this diversity (what Foucault means when he talks about the extra discursive). It is only when these differences have been organized within language, within discourse, within systems of meaning, that the differences can be said to acquire meaning and can become a factor in human culture and regulate conduct. That is the nature of what I am calling the discursive concept of race."

The implications of Hall's argument

I want to argue that a major implication of Hall's argument is that a *radical* social constructionist approach to human differences is now long overdue. I fully accept that it

is the meanings given to human differences that matters, and not the differences themselves. These meanings are not fixed, but float and slide, depending upon their discursive context. Of course, the “reality” of human diversity in terms of the physical, social and psychological is not being denied. Instead, this model of human differences proposes that they work very much like a language. Hall remarks:

“ . . . and racialized behaviour needs to be understood as a discursive, not necessarily as a genetic or biological fact. [. . .] The model being proposed here is closer to that of how a language works than of how our biologies, or our physiologies work - that race is more like a language than it is the way in which we are biologically constituted.”

“We are readers of race – we are readers of social difference.”

At the heart of my argument is that we need to make a distinction between two basic ontologies, involving a *realist* position, and a *radical constructionist* position. Put simply, the world “comes” to us in at least two distinctly quite different ways: (i) as *sensory* data, and (ii) as a *meaning*. The naïve view is that these two ways of relating to the world are very closely inter-linked, whereas, in fact they have no direct connection at all. They simply represent two distinct ontologies. Meanings do not map onto sensory data in any necessary fashion. Meanings are the result of cultural or discursive processes, and are merely imputed onto physical objects or events by a, more or less, arbitrary process. In the case of human differences, the actual differences are pretty much completely irrelevant to the meanings that these differences will eventually take on. It is my position that this can provide the basis for a completely revised program of research into our understanding of the *discourse of difference*. Furthermore, I believe it is essential that this research is approached from within a human science paradigm of inquiry for psychology.

What I am proposing is a refreshing new approach to theorizing human diversity, which can draw upon the theories and ideas of developments in discursive psychology, narrative psychology, cultural psychology, as well as critical psychology,. There are several issues this might raise, including:

- (i) the ways in which *measurement* of human differences, contributes to the construction of the meaning of difference within language and discourse;
- (ii) how constructs of difference inform human action and become embedded in various cultural, social and professional practices;
- (iii) the model of culture that is needed, within which intra- and inter-cultural differences can be properly understood;
- (iv) the need to challenge the over-simplification and polarization of differences, both in the wider political arena as well as within the discipline of psychology;
- (v) the exploration of the narratives of difference that are designed to appropriate, and ideologically fix, the meanings of human difference, as well as the consequences that then can follow from this.

I cannot take up all of these issues in the space that I have available, and will just try to begin exploring the last two of the above, using firstly, *gender*, and then secondly, *genocide* to illustrate the position I am taking.

Gender and identity politics

As a starting point, in thinking about *gender*, and without wanting to deny that actual differences do exist between people, we must accept that in the case of gender, these differences are more or less arbitrary, and act as little more than purely floating signifiers (cf. Hall, 1997). In this respect, *gender* is somewhat different from *race*, because *gender* is only, and nothing else but a construction, while *race* has a physical basis, it is embodied. Nevertheless, with respect to their *meaning*, there is little, or no difference whatsoever.

Recently (Hiles, 2004), I have argued that human sexuality and human gender are, from a psychological perspective at least, best understood as *discourses*. That is to say, both essentially involve the construction and exchange of social and cultural meanings. From this perspective, *sexuality* can be regarded as the pre-eminent discourse on human desire, and *gender* can be regarded as the pre-eminent discourse on human difference. And, while there may be some overlap of these two realms of discourse, they do need to be separated if we are to make any real progress in understanding them. Furthermore, the position that I have adopted is that much of the distress and confusion associated with human interpersonal relationships, and also with issues of human identity and human difference, could be far better managed if there was a wider understanding of the discursive context in which the conscious and unconscious exchange of meanings takes place.

To begin, I think it is helpful to think along the following lines: gender consists of two components: (i) a *body*, and (ii) a *meaning* given to that body by the culture, highlighting its difference with other bodies. It should be fairly clear that the *body* itself plays a relatively small part in all this, and largely remains covered and concealed, out of sight, unseen, although what covers the body is often selected and specifically designed to draw attention to gender differences, to exaggerate them, and indeed to construct and amplify this specific aspect of our discourses of differences. Gender, here can be seen as a sort of playfulness with the *body*.

Furthermore, the *meanings* attached to the body are more or less arbitrary. Pointing out that gender differences are more or less arbitrary is not to deny how powerfully they act as a code for enforcing a range of related socio-cultural codes, e.g. dress codes, grooming codes, interpersonal interaction, social relations, social distance, public space, speaking rights, courtesy, and politeness, etc., etc.

Gender is marked in every human culture. Although this is not necessarily always a two-fold opposition, several cultures acknowledge a third gender, and the number of genders (as well as the number of sexualities) need not be limited to only two. Gender is very likely the crucial component of human identity. It is possibly one of the first discourses of difference that the young child discovers. In turn, it offers a crucial way for the growing individual to express their identity. Nevertheless, gender is by no means the only component of identity, and neither is it uncomplicated in its expression.

Theorizing gender, from a radical constructionist position, as basically a code, stresses that it is merely a set of rules which generate a normative function in regulating behaviour and experience. Human identity then becomes implicated in what Michel Foucault calls the *ethical subject*, involving decisions about the manner of how one ought to conduct oneself, acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code (Foucault, 1984, p.26). Although Foucault is concerned with human sexuality, his ideas equally apply to gender. He points out that codes/rules, while being prescriptive, can be implemented by the individual in ways that they themselves choose (*determination of the ethical substance*), or, by taking up a position in relation to these codes/rules (*mode of subjection*), or, by establishing a range of related practices (*elaboration*).

Gender identity, from this perspective of human subjectivity, is seen as a product of the positions and normative choices with which we must engage. Out of this activity, our identity is fashioned. And, within these gender codes/rules, there is implicated our relation to the other. We feel similar to this “other”, different from that “other.” But this must be done without ever having direct access to what another person is thinking or feeling. This problem of intersubjectivity lies at the foundation of the issues raised in understanding human identity. Paradoxically, we construct a self in the relation to other selves, without ever being able to directly access/contact these other selves.

Gender is complicated by sexuality, although possibly this may be more so in some cultures and sub-cultures than in others. The complication arises probably because both gender and sexuality start with a physical body, both implicate the “other” in some way, and both are heavily “policed” by codes and rules for normative conduct. Inevitably the discourses of *difference* and *desire* overlap, and complicate each with the other (see Hiles, 2004).

And this is where the politics of identity, and especially *Queer theory* has something to contribute (Guantlett, 2002). Firstly, the word “queer” is usually associated with homosexuality, but we must realize that it applies to rather much more than that. “Queer/camp” is more concerned with identity politics. It problematizes the arbitrary and the ideological, moving beyond issues of authority, codes and simple “otherness”. It raises, but does not necessarily resolve, issues of human difference, with respect to individual vs. group, acceptance vs. rejection, conformity vs. subversion, performative expression vs. knowing acceptance, etc, etc.

Clearly, there is a very wide range of ways in which we construct and express our identity as human beings: appearance, dress code, tattooing/piercing, adornment, material trappings, affiliations, relationships, choice of partners, social and gender roles, sexuality, behavioural and social/cultural practices, creativity, etc, etc. Most of these ways of making and expressing meaning overlap and reinforce each other, but they also can exist in tension, create conflicts, send mixed meanings, and can be deliberately used in seemingly contradictory ways. There is also considerable inequality in the tolerance that society offers to transgression of its codes, e.g. in some cultures women dressing as men goes unchallenged, in ways that men dressing as women attracts a quite different response. What seems clear is that, human diversity just does not fit easily into bipolar oppositions.

Queer theory points out that the notion of human identity as *fixed* needs to be challenged. Identity is not something that determines who we are, but rather, identities are constructed from very many elements of human difference. This includes a range of codes that can be followed normatively, or can be subverted, or can be teased with and played with, such that the individual is able to exercise choice in subtle, and sometimes in perverse ways.

The overlap between these discourses of gender and sexuality, with Hall's discourses of race, is patently obvious. The "reality" of human differences is not the issue here. It is the *meaning* of differences, and not the actual differences themselves, that is at stake. Moreover, this points to an important, but somewhat neglected area of theorizing and research, for both psychology and the human sciences.

Let us now turn to a quite different matter – an example of how the narratives of difference can be used for the deliberate manipulation of the *meaning* of human differences, leading to disastrous consequences.

Genocide and human differences



"It was the Belgians who created the division" (Paul/Dube – *Hotel Rwanda*)

*"When people ask me, good listeners, so why do you hate the Tutsi, I say 'Read our history.' The Tutsi were collaborators for the Belgium colonists. They stole our Hutu land. They whipped us. Now they have come back, these Tutsi rebels. They are **cockroaches**. They are murderers. Rwanda is our Hutu land. We are the majority, they are a minority of traitors and invaders. We will squash the **infestation**. We will wipe out the RPF rebels. This is RTLM Hutu Power Radio. Stay Alert. Watch your neighbours."* (taken from: *Hotel Rwanda*)

I have highlighted the key words "cockroaches" and "infestation" in the above quote. The central questions I want to examine are: "*What precisely is at stake here?*", and "*How is the meaning of difference being constructed?*", and "*How can these constructions lead to such devastating consequences?*"

We are now concerned with an appalling example of the *discourses of difference* in action. The quote above is taken directly from the opening sequence of the film *Hotel Rwanda* (2004; Dir. Terry George), and is a fair representation of the kind of broadcast

made on Rwanda Radio during the atrocities that took place in Rwanda during 1994 (Human Rights Watch, 1999, 2006). The human differences, which are central to the plot of the film, are subtle and not obvious to a Western audience. But they were deliberately exaggerated and distorted during such propaganda broadcasts in order to highlight the meanings of difference between the two indigenous groups, in order to fuel the subsequent genocide. Also, in another recent film concerning the genocide in Rwanda, *Shooting Dogs* (2005; Dir. Michael Caton-Jones), throughout the first scenes, we don't know who is Hutu and who is Tutsi, until we are *told* this further into the film. To a Western audience, the differences between the characters have no meaning until the tragic circumstances of the plot unfold.

The situation in Rwanda in 1994 is therefore a particularly disturbing example of the construction of the *meaning* of the difference between two ethnic groups, that was to lead to the genocide of nearly a million people. In “reality”, simply *calling* one ethnic group of people “cockroaches” can have devastating consequences. Moreover, we must remember that in this specific case, the differences between the two groups were small, they had shared the same culture for nearly two thousand years. But, it is the case that even small differences can be exaggerated and exploited discursively.

“Forerunners of the people who are now known as Hutu and Tutsi settled the region over a period of two thousand years. Originally organized in small groups based on lineage or on loyalty to an outstanding leader, they joined in building the complex state of Rwanda. They developed a single and sophisticated language, Kinyarwanda, crafted a common set of religious and philosophical beliefs, and created a culture which valued song, dance, poetry, and rhetoric. They celebrated the same heroes.”

Human Rights Watch (1999, p. 3)

The language of genocide

“ . . . A cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly. It is true. A cockroach gives birth to another cockroach . . . The history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi stays always exactly the same, that he has never changed. The malice, the evil are just as we knew them in the history of our country.”

(Kangura, March 1993 – cited in Human Rights Watch, 1999).

The (Hutu) propagandists repeated the basic assumption that Hutu and Tutsi were different people by nature, i.e. by their “racial” differences, since they were descended from “Bantu” and “Ethiopic” groups. These differences were even equated with the fundamental difference between male and female. It was repeatedly asserted that the notion of Rwandans as a single people was a Tutsi “trick”. The Tutsi were regularly depicted as “invaders” who had stolen Rwanda from its rightful inhabitants (Human Rights Watch, 1999, p. 72-3).

The word “genocide” was coined as recently as 1944, by the legal scholar Raphael Lemkin, (Hinton, 2002), but it is something that has a very, very long history. This new terminology played a significant role during the Nuremberg trials following the Second World War, and was subsequently recognized in International law by the United Nations in 1946.

Genocide has been defined as “*the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group*” (Roth, 2005). It is my own view that this definition could be considerably improved by extending it to include “*the deliberate killing of anyone merely on the basis of being different.*”

Genocide has existed throughout human history, and there seems to be very little prospect of it dissipating. In their remarkable, but disturbing, text, Totten, Parsons & Charny (2004) have documented the major genocides of the Twentieth Century (see Table 1). Throughout the eyewitness reports that they have collected, the role of the meaning of difference recurs again and again. In Table 2, based upon my reading of Totten et al’s text, I have listed some of the “instruments” of genocide.

Indeed, it is an appallingly sobering matter to consider that these acts of mass genocide of the last century, that sadly replicate the acts of genocide throughout history, and will undoubtedly continue into the future, using these very same “instruments” of genocide, are premised merely upon the *meanings of difference*. The issue that this poses for me, is that – *Is this not a wake-up call for the human sciences, and for psychology in particular, to devise a concerted program of research into a much needed deeper understanding of the discourses of human difference?*

To quote Totten et al (2004, p. 486), there is:

“a critical need for synergy among scholars in different fields in the study of genocide . . . real progress must be made in addressing key structural changes that often serve as underlying factors of violent conflict . . . among some of the many systemic issues that need to be addressed are racism; rabid or racial anti-Semitism; other types of extreme prejudice or discrimination that ‘marks’ a particular group of people as ‘other’ ”.

Table 1: A Century of Genocide

(Totten, Parsons & Charny, 2004)

1904-6	South West Africa – Hereros by German interests
1915-23	Armenia – Armenians by Ottomans
1932-3	Ukraine – Ukrainians by Soviet Union
1933-44	Europe – Holocaust of Jews by Nazi regime
1933-44	Europe – Holocaust of Gypsies by Nazi regime
1939-41	Germany – Holocaust of Disabled by Nazi regime
1965-6	Indonesia – Communist party members by govnt.
1971	Bangladesh – Bengali nationalists by govnt.
1972	Burundi – Hutu by Tutsi
1975-99	East Timor – Indigenous population by govnt.
1975-9	Cambodia – Buddhists & ethnic groups by Khmer Rouge
1988	Iraq – Kurds by Hussein regime
1994	Rwanda – Tutsi by Hutu
1995	Bosnia – Muslims by Bosnia Serbs
1999	Kosovo – Albanians by Serbs

Table 2: Some instruments of genocide

(Totten, Parsons & Charny, 2004)

gas chamber
starvation
internment
massacre
execution
deportation
sectarianism
rape
forced labour

Conclusion

My focus in this paper has been on much more than simply the nature of human differences. I have also been concerned with establishing a pluralistic approach to this field, which permits the inclusion of two distinct ontologies: the *realist* and the *radical constructionist*. Furthermore, in more general terms, I am also interested in setting a moral agenda for psychology and the human sciences.

Taking up the challenge laid down by Stuart Hall, I have argued that the study of the *meaning* of difference must be given at least the same status, and perhaps even a more urgent status, than research concerned with the “reality” of differences. In my own discipline of psychology, psychometrics, which has been almost entirely devoted to the study of the “realities” of human differences in intelligence and personality, etc., cannot remain the exclusive approach to the study of human differences. Taking up another field, I have tried to emphasize that the issue of major importance in the study of human gender is the *meaning* of gender differences. Human gender is as much a floating signifier as is “race”, and the study of gender must include a radical discursive approach. Studies that focus upon only the gender differences themselves, wittingly or unwittingly contribute merely to notions of the “reality” of those differences, i.e. to a *realist* position. The real danger is that we become complicit in the fixing of the *meaning* of difference.

My paper is also designed as a wake-up call to a crucial challenge faced by the human sciences, as set down by Stuart Hall in 1994. There is little evidence that this challenge has been taken up very seriously (viz. the lame responses to such texts as Sarich & Miele, on “the reality of racial differences”). Of course there are exceptions from a more general perspective (see Artiles, 1998; Ore, 2002; Noonan, 2003), but these are isolated, and are seemingly oblivious to the critical position set out by Stuart Hall in 1994!

I also argue that there is possibly no other field in more urgent need for research than in the tolerance and understanding of human differences, such that the “reality” of human differences is challenged by this program. The human sciences must, of necessity, develop new paradigms of inquiry as our research questions become more ambitious,

more refined, and more urgent. Indeed, it is my belief that the human sciences are in a unique position to promote a radical empowerment of human concerns, in order to challenge the oppression, unnecessary suffering, and discrimination based upon the manipulation and distorted understanding of human difference.

Looking back over the previous century, it would seem to be little more than a “lost” century as far as making any real progress in the understanding of human difference is concerned. Indeed, such a notion is sadly discerned possibly by W.E.B. Du Bois, when he began his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, written in 1903, with these words:

“Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. The meaning is not without interest to you, gentle reader: for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line”.

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