CONFÉRENCE DU GROUPE D’ÉTUDE DE RECHERCHE SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS AFRICAINES (GERSA)

et du

Département de sociologie
(Faculté des sciences sociales, Université Laval)

présentation du livre

*Thicker Than Blood : How Racial Statistics Lie*

Par l’auteur

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La conférence aura lieu :

Vendredi le 24 octobre 2003
à 14 hre (Salle du Conseil de la FSS)
Local 3470 au pavillon De Koninck

Bienvenue à toutes et à tous!

Résumé/Abstract

In our complex and multicultural society, racial identity is often as much a matter of family background, economic opportunity, and geographic location as it is determined by skin color or hair texture. And yet study after study is released and reported in the media regarding African American test scores, Asian American social mobility, and the white domination of our political institutions. In short, there is a fundamental disconnect between the nuanced understanding many people have of race and the ways it is studied and quantified by researchers.

In this timely and hard-hitting volume, Tukufu Zuberi offers a concise account of the historical connections between the development of the idea of race and the birth of social statistics. Zuberi describes the ways race-differentiated data is misinterpreted in the social sciences and asks essential questions about the ways racial statistics are used: what is the value of knowing the income disparities, differences in crime or incarceration rates, differences in test scores, infant mortality rates, abortion frequencies, or choices of sexual partner between different racial groups? When these data are available, what should the principles be guiding their dissemination, interpretation, and analysis? How does the availability of this information shape public discourse, alter scientific research agendas, inform political decision making, and ultimately influence the very social meaning of racial difference?

When statistics are interpreted in a racist manner, no matter how inadvertent the racism may be, the public is exposed to seemingly neutral information that in its effect is anything but neutral. Zuberi argues that statistical analysis can and must be deracialized, and that this deracialization is essential to the goal of achieving social justice for all. He concludes by putting forward a principle of racially conscious social justice, offering an incendiary and necessary correction to the inaccuracies that have plagued this topic at the center of American life.