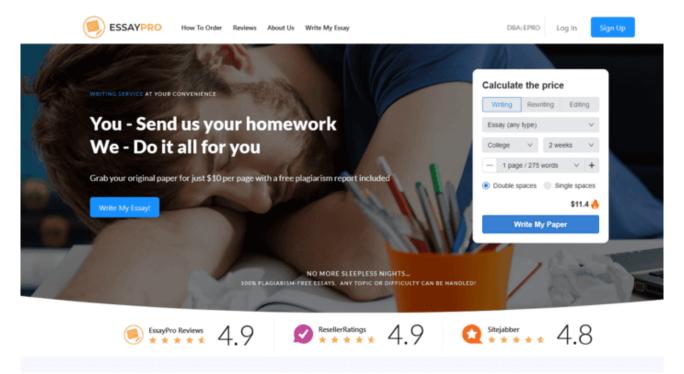
Race: Is It a Valid Issue?



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Race: Is It a Valid Issue?Biological advancements such as Darwinism and Mendelian genetics had a profound impact on the study of race in the scientific community. These new concepts eventually led some scientists to question the validity of traditional notions about race. The resulting debates continue even today. The idea of race, especially in citizens of this country, evokes strong feelings because of the enormous social implications associated with racial identity. The social connotations of racial categories have had a profound influence on the way scientists understand human variation. Early ideas of race were colored by these connotations, and they still play a critical role in the way we understand race today. This paper will explore, with an emphasis on historical context, the current debates over whether to continue to inlude race in scientific, and especially medical, studies. Recently, some scientists have advocated the elimination of race from scientific studies altogether. They argue that it is not a useful category for the study of human subjects. Others argue just as strongly that it is. It will be helpful to first examine the historical development of the concept of race before examining the usefulness of race in scientific investigations. Race is a relatively new concept. Ancient civilizations, though they encountered and included people from many different parts of the world, did not make social distinctions based on physical appearance. They distinguished people according to customs and religion; not race. Acclaimed classicist Frank M.

Snowden writes:The Egyptians, whose contacts with Nubia dated back to the Old Kingdom, did not usually designate Kushites by color terms. Though the monarchs of...... middle of paperction. New York: G. P. Putnam's 1940.Sauer, Norman J. "Applied Anthropology and the Concept of Race: A Legacy of Linnaeus" Race, Ethnicity, and Applied Bioanthropology. Ed. Claire C. Gordon. Arlington, VA: National Association for the Practice of Anthropology 1993.Shanklin, Eugenia. Anthropology and Race. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company 1994.Smedley, Audrey. Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview. San Francisco: Westview Press, Inc. 1993.Snowden, Frank M., Jr. Before Color Prejudice: The Ancient View of Blacks. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1983.Stepan, Nancy. The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960. Hamden, CT: Archon Books 1982.Williams, David R., Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, and Rueben C. Warren. "The Concept of Race and Health Status in America." Public Health Reports. 109, no. 1 (January/February 1994): 26-41.

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