

The Status of the Race Concept in Contemporary Biological Anthropology: A Review

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ABSTRACT The race concept dominated the study of human biological variation for centuries. Prior to, and especially after, the Second World War, a number of anthropologists questioned the scientific value of the concept, initiating a debate over 'the existence of human races'. Research suggests that the debate has still not been resolved, as significant differences exist among anthropologists from different countries and regions of the world. In some places the concept of race seems to be falling out of favour (e.g., the USA and Western Europe), while in others it is generally accepted (e.g., China and Eastern Europe). The reasons for these differences are many and complex. They are of a scientific, ideological and professional nature. Furthermore, it would appear that chance, especially in smaller countries, plays a significant role in the attitudes of biological anthropologists towards the race concept.