

Race and Tobacco Research

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The use of the race concept in tobacco science is reflective of mainstream scientific and public debates about its meaning, value, and significance as a theoretical and empirical concept. The history of race in science (1830-1850), the intrinsic association between tobacco and race, and tobacco research are reviewed and discussed. Adopting the Kuhn's framework of "paradigm in crisis" and "paradigm shift," the author examines a framework for understanding recent developments and current ideas related to race and tobacco science. The period between 1980 and 2000 is examined as a "revolutionary" phase in the use of the race concept in the multidisciplinary field of tobacco science. The author discusses how the debate has emerged within the multidisciplinary field of tobacco science and possible scenarios of evolution. It is suggested that we are in the midst of a "scientific revolution" that is characterized by anomalies and inconsistencies in the use of the term; debates within the profession as to how it should be employed in theory and research; the inability of social, behavioral, and physical scientists to arrive at a consensus about the term; and the practical implications of its use. Some specific ideas and strategies are suggested to advance the scientific discussion and empirical use of "race" in tobacco science as a means of addressing health disparities.