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Q1(c)

Race and Ethnicity.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · Race and racism, biological basis of morphological variation of non-metric and metric characters. Racial criteria, racial traits in relation to heredity and...

9.5 Race and racism, biological basis of morphological variation of non-metric and metric characters. Racial criteria, racial traits in relation to heredity and environment; biological basis of racial classification, racial differentiation and race crossing in man.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on race and ethnicity
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Race as a few fixed stocks fails Boas's plasticity evidence and Lewontin's genetic apportionment.

Race still organises inequality as a social category.

Ethnicity is a maintained boundary of language, history, and politics, as Barth argued.

Cohen showed ethnicity at work in urban competition.

In India the same people may be sorted by caste, tribe, or language depending on the boundary in play.

Introduction

Race and ethnicity both sort people into groups, but they do not sort the same way. Race claims biology; ethnicity claims history, language, and belonging.

Body**Race**

- Classical racial types treated skin, hair, and skull as fixed stocks, a scheme that **Franz Boas** undermined by showing that head form changes with environment.
- **Richard Lewontin** showed that most genetic variation lies within so-called races, not between them, so race is a poor biological taxonomy.
- **UNESCO statements after 1950 and later human-genome work keep the same lesson:** clines and local populations exist; continental race as destiny does not.
- Race remains a social fact of discrimination, census, and violence even when it fails as a gene map.

Ethnicity

- **Fredrik Barth** in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries treated ethnicity as a boundary that people maintain, not a list of inner traits.

- Language, origin story, ritual, and political claim make an ethnic we, as **Abner Cohen** showed for urban ethnic politics.
- In India, tribe, caste, language, and religion can all be ethnicised; the anthropologist must say which boundary is at work, not paste one label on all difference.

Flow diagram

Human variation -> Race as weak biology
Human variation -> Ethnicity as boundary
Race as weak biology -> Social discrimination
Ethnicity as boundary -> Barth Cohen

Conclusion

Race is a weak biological class and a strong social injury. Ethnicity is a made boundary of belonging, and the two must not be used as synonyms.

Facts & figures

Franz Boas

Immigrant anthropometry showed that cranial form is plastic, which undercut fixed racial types.

Richard Lewontin

Most genetic diversity is within continental groups, so race is a poor biological partition.

Fredrik Barth

Ethnicity is the social boundary people defend, not a museum list of customs.

UNESCO race statements

Post-war scientific statements rejected race as a hierarchy of worth and as a tight biological taxonomy.