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Rubenstein received his AB from the University of Chicago in public affairs, his MSc from the London School of Economics in urban and regional planning, and his PhD from the Johns Hopkins University in geography and environmental engineering. Before becoming a full-time writer, he was professor at Miami University from 1976 to 2013, responsible for the university's urban planning and environmental science programs. His human geography textbooks, published by Pearson Education, are the principal source for more than one-half million AP human geography students in high school.