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**Races & Ethnicity**

Race is a complex topic to address, because its very existence is contentious. Race can dramatically shape the fortunes of people in modern societies despite the lack of a solid biological basis for what appears to be a biological concept.

"Ethnicity" is often used as a euphemism for "race," or for sub-groups that aren't considered real races. There is no technical definition for ethnicity among social scientists, but the term is typically used to indicate groupings of people that have three characteristics: 1) a shared culture, 2) an alleged shared biological ancestry, and 3) a shared “homeland” or alleged origin place. Since race is a social, rather than biological, concept, we can think of races as a type of ethnicity that emphasizes the alleged shared biological ancestry more than the other two components.

Race is an inherently geographical concept. A person's racial membership ultimately comes down to where in the world their ancestors came from. The concept of race was originally invented to facilitate social control in Europe's colonies. The discipline of geography was deeply involved in the use of race ideas to justify colonialism. Geographers were employed to define which people was “really” which race, and to determine the environmental causes of racial superiority or inferiority. Starting in the 1930s, biologists, anthropologists, and geographers began to make headway in debunking the idea of biological race. Unfortunately, the idea of race was deeply ingrained in society by that point. Prejudice (conscious or unconscious), stereotypes, discrimination, and their legacies (in things like poor health and poverty) are too prevalent. It is naive to imagine that we could just ignore race and hope it goes away. Because they have only social, not biological, reality, the boundaries of racial categories have shifted over time.

Racial and ethnic groups are distributed unevenly across the available landscape. We see clustering of members of a certain race here, and exclusion of them there. The racial and ethnic groups are distributed at the city or metropolitan area because of the following factors-

1. **Affinity** between people with similar ways of life is the most politically innocent reason for segregation.
2. **Market forces** play a significant role. Different racial groups tend to occupy different rungs on the economic ladder within society.
3. **White flight** is a specific manifestation of market forces, the more desirable, and less affordable, neighbourhoods to which more privileged residents were able to move are typically located in suburban areas around the edges of the metro area
4. **Gentrification** occurs when higher-class, usually white, people move back into neighbourhoods occupied by poor people of colour
5. **Public service provision** is often skewed by the racial makeup of the areas served
6. **Redlining** is the practice of banks and real estate agents preventing people of certain races from getting housing in certain areas
7. **Violence** has long played a major part in establishing the spatial pattern of racial residence in US cities.
8. **Legal segregation** is placed last here because it is the most obvious way that residential segregation could occur, but its effects may be subtle in the US and similar countries today since segregation laws were struck down or repealed in the mid-20th century