General introduction

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Thinking differently about contemporary racisms

At the end of his Du Bois Lectures delivered at Harvard in 1994 Stuart Hall sought to capture the challenge faced by scholars who were trying to understand the transformations in the new cultural politics of race, ethnicity and nation when he argued:

The task of theory in relation to the new cultural politics of difference is not to think as we always did, keeping the faith by trying to hold the terrain together through an act of compulsive will, but to learn to think differently.

(Hall 2017: 174)

Hall was, of course, writing in the aftermath of the intense debates about the cultural politics of race and ethnicity that had taken place during the 1980s and 1990s. He was particularly intrigued by the limitations of existing theoretical paradigms when it came to making sense of the new political formations around questions of difference such as race, ethnicity and nation (Henriques, Morley and Goblot 2017; hooks and Hall 2018). But more generally he wanted to explore more fully the relations of power that permeated these categories, both historically and in the present. It was on this basis that he used the Du Bois Lectures as an opportunity to explore both the opportunities offered by existing theories and the need to think differently.

Although Hall made this statement in its original form in the 1990s, it was interesting to read it again now that it has been published, some decades after the original lectures. In the period since Hall delivered his lectures there has been both a rapid expansion of research and scholarship in the field of race and racism and a flowering of new research perspectives and theoretical paradigms. New generations of scholars have emerged that have sought to broaden the boundaries of research, to question the dominant theoretical frames and to introduce new analytical and political frames (Collins and Solomos 2010; Emirbayer and Desmond 2015; Goldberg and Solomos 2002). Indeed, it can be argued without any exaggeration that a number of new generations of scholars have helped to shape and reshape this field of research both at the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. At the same time, scholarly debates about race and racism have expanded greatly just as these issues have come to the fore in key political and policy debates about racialised inequalities, migration and cultural and religious diversity. Yet, in many ways it seems curious that Hall’s injunction to move beyond dominant research agendas and to learn to think
differently remains as timely today as when Hall was seeking in his meticulous and reflective manner to outline a way of looking at race, ethnicity and nation through a different lens.

It is partly in response to Hall’s challenge that we began thinking about putting together what has now evolved into the Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Racisms. In particular, it seemed to us that there was still a need to question the ways in which research agendas on race and racism had evolved and changed over the past few decades, and to discuss the development of new areas of scholarship and research and to explore areas that had been relatively neglected by dominant research agendas. As the project developed it also became evident that there was a need for a volume that brought together both leading and emerging scholars to address key areas of research and to outline potential avenues for a conversation about where the study of race and racism is currently heading as well as to take a forward look and highlight lacunae and gaps in research. Before moving on to discuss the overarching concerns of the Handbook we want to explore some of the features of the historical background that have helped to shape the current conjuncture.

**Looking forward**

There seems little doubt as we survey developments over the past two decades that, both in terms of scholarly research agendas and political transformations, we are going through a period of important changes in the study of race and racism. This is, of course, not the first time that we have seen such a fundamental transformation in this field. Michael Banton, one of the foundational figures in the sociological study of race relations, famously argued that the early 1960s can be seen as a ‘turning point’ in the study of race and ethnic relations (Banton 1974). Banton linked this ‘turning point’ to the intellectual transformations that came to the fore in this period as well as the wider changes in social and political debates about race relations in societies such as the United States and the UK among others. More generally, Banton argued that the social and political struggles that helped to shape the Civil Rights Movement in the United States were creating a space for new perspectives to emerge, including more critical and radical paradigms. While this is not the place to discuss Banton’s account of the early 1960s, one could argue that in the period since the 1980s we have seen another, and in many ways, more complicated ‘turning point’ in research agendas that has transformed both how we think about race and racism and how we develop conceptual and methodological tools that can address current realities. Certainly, the period since the 1980s can be seen as a highpoint in the development of both existing research agendas and the opening up of new areas of investigation and research (Back and Solomos 2009; Goldberg 2015; Meer and Nayak 2015).

This is even more the case in the current conjuncture, which has been marked by increasing recognition that questions about race and racism are central to social and political relations on a global scale. In the first two decades of the 21st century we have seen a resurgence of both more classical forms of racism and a growth of what some define as forms of new racism or cultural racism. As debates about immigration, refugees, terrorism and multiculturalism have become entangled with questions about racial difference and national identity there has been a growth of both extreme right political activism and more mainstream expressions of racialised ideologies (Elias and Feagin 2016; Meer and Nayak 2013; Murji and Solomos 2015). At the same time, we have seen a growth of avowedly anti-racist movements and ideas, both at national and more localised levels, that seek to provide alternative political and ideological frames for a discussion of how to counter racism in all its forms and to promote alternative modes of living together with difference (Hage 2015;
Lentin 2015; Nelson and Dunn 2016; Paradies 2016). In the case of refugees, we have seen both strong mobilisations against their arrival and counter-mobilisations that support providing them with humane treatment and support (see Chapter 7 by Kushner). Both of these developments have left their mark, and it is important to acknowledge the reality that both racism and anti-racism are helping to shape our experiences of the global environment as well as the everyday realities in specific societies. This is something of a recurrent theme throughout this volume and features as a key issue in a number of chapters (see in particular Chapter 15 by Bojadžijev, 32 by Wieviorka and 34 by Essed).

As a result of this evolving conjuncture, it can be argued that we have seen a new phase in the study of race and racism, particularly in the social sciences and humanities. This is evidenced in the growing bodies of scholarship and research in various geopolitical contexts, which have helped to push the boundaries of this field into new areas and disciplinary boundaries. These bodies of research have resulted in a wide range of monographs that have studied the impact of racism in specific national settings as well as from a comparative angle. There has also been a rapid expansion over the past four decades in the number of specialised journals covering questions about race and racism in the social sciences, as well as in more specific sub-fields such as gender, cultural studies and philosophy. There has, as a result, been a proliferation of articles about race, racism and ethnicity in many disciplines, including sociology, geography, politics and international relations, social policy, criminology and related fields. It is also worth noting that we have seen many of the mainstream journals in these fields open up much more to covering the latest research on race and racism.

While much of the research is carried out in specific national intellectual environments there is also at least some evidence that there are conversations developing among researchers that seek to bring about a greater awareness of the need for a comparative research focus as well as to give voice to cross-disciplinary research agendas. The need for more comparative research in this field has been clear for some time and has been the subject of both theoretical and empirically focused debate. Certainly, interdisciplinary initiatives have enabled scholars of race and ethnicity to draw upon knowledge bases and theoretical traditions both from pre-existing academic disciplines such as sociology, political science, history and anthropology, as well as from interdisciplinary areas such as women’s studies, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, queer theory and similar areas of inquiry. This changing intellectual context has infused a new vitality into the field. We hope that this sense of vitality comes through in the contributions we have been able to include in the ten parts of the Handbook.

However, it remains the case that whatever the success of efforts to generate more comparative research and to bring about more conversations that cross national and disciplinary divides, we still live in an environment where much of the core research in this field is carried out within quite limited intellectual and scholarly environments. While there are some hopeful signs of increasing dialogue and collaboration it remains a source of concern that the need for more of a comparative frame for research and scholarship remains more of a hope than a reality (see Chapter 4 by Joseph and 5 by Moraes Silva).

**Overarching themes**

Bearing this background in mind, it seems important to restate the overarching concerns that have helped to shape the Handbook and its ten component parts. The first of the concerns that helped to shape the Handbook was the need to provide an overview of key current debates and developments in this rapidly evolving field of scholarship and research. While there have been other efforts to produce such overviews that have helped to fill some of the
gaps in research and knowledge, we felt that there was a need for a more comprehensive snapshot of this fast-changing area. Rather than focus on some of the main areas of scholarship we broadened the scope of the Handbook to include issues that have received relatively little coverage, and we have therefore invited contributions focusing more on issues such as nationalism, intersectionality, culture and religion and research methods. In doing so we very much hope we have been able to broaden both the scope of what we have been able to cover and to provide avenues that can be usefully explored in the future.

Second, we wanted to be open to developing a space to think about our key concepts and questions differently. This is something that we noted at the beginning of this Introduction was of some importance to us and we have therefore intentionally sought to include a range of perspectives that cover different conceptual strands in the study of race and racism, and it would be wrong to claim that all the different voices that are heard in the various chapters are in agreement about theory or approaches to empirical research. Rather than seek to include research that speaks from a particular perspective, we have intentionally sought out authors who can speak from a broad range of theoretical and methodological starting points. Indeed, a recurrent theme to be found in many of the chapters is a concern to explore a range of theoretical and methodological approaches in order to take the analysis of contemporary forms of racism beyond the dominant current analytical frames that have shaped research over the past few decades.

Third, we have also sought to highlight the need for on-going conversations about how we can develop more of a dialogue across the limits imposed by national scholarly traditions. Perhaps the most important site for such a dialogue to develop is the need for a fuller engagement between scholarship in the US and the emerging scholarly traditions in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and other parts of the globe. Given the developments that we have seen over the past few decades we now have growing bodies of research that seek to provide new theoretical perspectives on key facets of both race and racism. Yet it is noticeable that there is still relatively little of a conversation between scholars based in the US and those working in European or other research contexts. The relative absence of a dialogue between these rapidly expanding bodies of scholarship and research is a feature of the current situation, and we hope that the various parts of this Handbook help to illustrate the possibilities for developing a conversation that can include scholars on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond.

By focusing on these overarching concerns together we hope that we have produced a volume that addresses the need for a more systematic account of the changing research agendas in this field and the emergence of new areas of interest. More importantly, of course, we have sought to bring together contributions from authors who have something to say on the basis of their scholarly research.

**Contemporary racisms in perspective**

One of the themes that runs through all the parts of the Handbook is the need to locate the more contemporary developments, on which many of the individual chapters are inevitably focused, in a more historical perspective that sees them as the product of historical processes that have helped to shape the present. In particular, the development of transatlantic slavery in the Americas, European colonialism and imperial expansion, the articulation of forms of racial thought, migration, racist and anti-racist mobilisations and the articulation of nationalism are all in different ways highlighted as playing an important role in shaping important features of the present situation (Crenshaw, Harris, HoSang and Lipsitz 2019; Molina,
HoSang and Gutiérrez 2019; Singh 2017). Part of the challenge faced by contemporary scholarship is how to balance the need to situate the present in a wider historical perspective without simply reducing the present to the past.

At the same time the need to broaden our vision towards a more nuanced historical perspective has been made more evident by recent trends. A case in point can be found in the efforts to make sense of the trends that have come to the fore in the first two decades of the 21st century, including research on ethno-nationalism and transnational religious mobilisation. If we take the case of ethno-nationalism, there seems little doubt that it has been the subject of much scholarly interest over the past two decades (see Chapter 13 by Wodak, 20 by Hughey and Rosino, and 21 by Rhodes and Hall). Partly as result of the re-emergence of new forms of ethno-racial and nationalist political discourses in this period, we have seen a growth of research on questions concerning the role of racist movements and ideologies, the rise of right-wing movements and the emergence of forms of exclusionary nationalism (Leddy-Owen 2019; Valluvan 2019). Much of this body of research has been focused on the need to make sense of what is new about these forms of mobilisation and to tease out their impact, both nationally and transnationally. This is particularly the case when it comes to the growing meshing together of forms of populism, from both the right and the left, and nationalism in the discourses of political and social movements.

A similar point can be made about the growing bodies of scholarship on the emergence of transnational forms of religious mobilisation and the growth of movements and networks within minority communities in the West. While there was a certain amount of research on religious and cultural identities in the decades at the end of the 20th century, there seems little doubt that in the aftermath of 9/11 there was a massive expansion of both funded and other scholarly research that focused on this phenomenon (Mahmood 2017; Sageman 2019; Selod 2018). Much of the emerging scholarship in this area has highlighted the need for a more systematic research-based understanding of the intersections between religious and racialised forms of identity and the development of new bodies of empirical knowledge and theoretical concepts that will allow us to make sense of the contemporary situation.

While it is beyond doubt that we have seen some important new research during these two decades that has been focused on making sense of these new trends, there is also an awareness that there remain important gaps in our knowledge of this new situation. In part, this is the result of the need to make sense of phenomena that are relatively new, or at least are expressed in new ways within the turbulence of the contemporary period. In this changing social, political and intellectual context, there are a number of issues that remain to be addressed more fully and it is to this issue that we now turn.

Rethinking the study of race and racism

Following on from the issues that we have discussed above it is also important to explore how we can rethink the study of race and racism and move it beyond the limitations that we have discussed thus far. In particular, we need to explore questions such as: how can we best develop the tools that we need to analyse the changing research agendas that have helped to shape this field of scholarship and research? What new theoretical tools will help us to understand new forms of racism and their expression in political and social environments? What methodological tools will help us to develop new research agendas that help to capture the complexities of the present situation? While it is beyond the scope of a single volume such as this to tackle all of these questions, there is much in the volume that helps
us to address them, both at the level of theory and in terms of the empirical focus of research.

It is important to remember, however, that the questions that typically preoccupy scholars of race and ethnicity usually do not emerge solely or even primarily from scholarly literature. Rather, the political and social aspects of race and ethnicity across specific local, regional, national and increasingly global contexts catalyse much work in contemporary race and ethnic studies. When it comes to the study of race and ethnicity, it is impossible for the field to extract itself from the subject of its study; nor (some would say) should it. As a result, work in this field stands in a particular relationship to contemporary social and political realities. As many of the chapters in the Handbook explore in some detail it is precisely because political and policy agendas are always part of any discussion of contemporary racisms that we need to pay close attention to the links between research and socio-political processes.

There seems little doubt that one of the key questions we shall have to confront in the future is how to understand and tackle the social and political impact of racism, both as a set of ideas and as a form of political mobilisation. In broad terms we shall need to be able to explain both the roots of contemporary racist ideas, practices, organisational forms and social movements, as well as the source of their current appeal. Yet it is precisely on the issue of their contemporary appeal that current research seems to be least enlightening. Researchers have not, by and large, had much to say about the reasons why we have seen the persistence of racist ideas and practices in recent times. We shall also need to consider what kinds of counter-strategies can be adopted to challenge new types of racist mobilisation. Again, research on the historical trajectories of anti-racist mobilisation is enlightening, yet we do not as yet have a clear understanding of the reasons why certain anti-racist strategies work and others seem to fail to make much of an impact on expressions of racism (see Chapter 15 by Bojadžijev, 18 by Ray and Fuentes and 33 by Essed).

Perhaps what is striking about the current state of research on race and ethnic relations is that it is a field of scholarship that is still rapidly expanding. We have seen the growth of scholarship and research shaped by a range of conceptual frames, including critical race theory, postcolonial and decolonial theory and feminist theory. Indeed, the past two decades can be seen as a kind of high point in the establishment of ethnic and racial studies as a core theme across both the social sciences and humanities (Crenshaw, Williams, Charles, HoSang and Lipsitz 2019; Go 2018; Valdez and Golash-Boza 2017b). Much of this new research has helpfully pushed the boundaries of race and ethnic studies beyond the more limited research agendas of the second half of the 20th century.

Part of the challenge that we face in trying to make sense of the processes that are shaping the contemporary situation is the need to widen our field of vision and look forward to likely future trends. This is another recurring refrain that runs through the Handbook, with a number of authors noting that there is a need to link research focused on the present situation with questions about likely future trends, both in terms of substantive research issues as well as conceptual and theoretical frames of analysis. This is particularly important at a time when we are seeing the articulation of new forms of racist thought and movements that articulate an often messy and confusing mixture of nativist, populist and ethno-national ideology. All of these developments are the subject of discussion in different parts of the Handbook (see in particular Chapter 12 by Mondon and Winter, 14 by Ferber, 19 by Valluwan and 21 by Leddy-Owen).

It would be wrong to assume that we can understand these movements and ideas by using our existing theoretical and methodological tools. Rather, there seems to be an obvious need to push the boundaries of existing perspectives further by introducing new
analytical frames into the discussion. Thus, we have seen a growing body of research on the need to bring in questions about intersectionality. Part of the complexity of analysing the historical impact of racism is that it is often intertwined with other social phenomena, and indeed it can only be fully understood if we are able to see how it works in specific social settings (Alexander 2006; Alexander and Knowles 2005; Duyvendak 2018; Salem 2017; Valdez and Golash-Boza 2017a). One interesting example of this process can be found in the ways in which modern racial and nationalist ideologies rely on a complex variety of images of race, sexuality and nationhood. Such images often emphasise questions about identity, both in relation to majority and minority communities. Because race and ethnicity are intrinsically forms of collective social identity, the subject of identity has been at the heart of both historical and contemporary discussions about these issues (Brubaker 2004; Calhoun 2007; Gilroy, Sandset, Bangstad and Hoibjerg 2018; Leddy-Owen 2019; Malešević 2019).

Yet is also clear that if we aspire to develop our understanding of the social conditions that shape the role of race as a social phenomenon there is a need for more critical discussion about the changing boundaries of scholarship in this field. In the current environment there are a range of challenging and innovative research agendas about race and racism that need to be addressed by sociologists. Charles Gallagher has noted the following in relation to American sociology:

A glance at any recent sociological annual meeting program reveals a wide range of scholarship where truly novel questions about race are being raised. Emerging areas of inquiry include research on intersections of race, class and gender, racial hybridity, identity formation, colorblind narratives of racism, growing racial inequality, pan-ethnic movements, race and religious intolerance and colorism.

(Gallagher 2007: 553)

This is, in some ways, a reasonable description of the current state of play in the social sciences more generally. But it is also worth noting that even in the decade or so after Gallagher’s overview the range of issues that have come to the fore have continued to evolve, with increasing attention to questions such as nationalism, ethnocentrism, anti-racism, whiteness, xenophobia and cultural racism. These issues have also become the subject of debate and analysis in the humanities, cultural studies, geography and related scholarly fields (Bulmer and Solomos 2019; Crenshaw, Williams, Charles, HoSang and Lipsitz 2019; Murji and Solomos 2015).

In the coming period it is perhaps through addressing questions such as these that we can hope to deliver on the promise to connect the study of race and racism with the wider social and political transformations that we are living through. Achieving this promise has not proved easy over the past few decades and it is likely to remain so in the coming period, but it is to be hoped that developments outlined in this Handbook provide a base for further research, innovation and reflection on the question of race and its role in our contemporary globalised social environment.

The intersections between race and religious identities among migrant and ethnic minority communities is a good example of the shifts in scholarship and research that we have seen at the beginning of the 21st century. While questions about religious and cultural diversity had begun to form a part of research agendas from the 1990s onwards it is only at the beginning of the 21st century that they have come to constitute an area of great significance for the field of race and ethnic studies. Religion seems in this context to have become more visible, both as a social and research issue, and also increasingly intertwined with race and
ethnicity. As a result, the connections between race, ethnicity and religion have become an important arena for social and policy related research in the past decade or so. More importantly, it has become evident in the aftermath of events such as 9/11 (and subsequent terrorist attacks in a number of European countries) that contemporary research about race and ethnicity needs to look more rigorously at the role that religion plays in shaping racialised social relations in contemporary societies (see Chapter 28 by Meer and 29 by Kastoryano). The claims by some groups within minority communities to religious and cultural rights that are seen as outside of the common values of the West have become part of the current climate of public debate and are likely to shape both popular and policy agendas in the coming period. It is important in this context to explore more fully how race, ethnicity and racism increasingly form part of transnational processes, both in terms of movements and political mobilisation and more generally in terms of cultural and mediated flows (see Chapter 29 by Kastoryano).

It is also important to develop more fully conversations that take us beyond the bounds of national scholarly traditions. Given the increasingly global and transnational processes that have shaped contemporary expressions of racism, it is a great pity that we have at best very limited conversations that manage to engage scholars across national research agendas and scholarly traditions (see Chapter 5 by Moraes Silva). The most notable example of the limits on existing conversations can be found in the ways in which theoretical and empirical debates about race and racism in the US and in Europe rarely engage with each other in a substantial manner. There are some notable exceptions to this generalisation (Foner and Simon 2015; Hochschild and Mollenkopf 2009; Kelley and Tuck 2015), but there is still a tendency for researchers on each side of the Atlantic to carry out their research in relative isolation and to engage in little conversation about theory, methods and general research approaches.

As we look at the contemporary conjuncture it is important to address the question of what trends are likely to come to the fore in the coming period. We have argued above that the past few decades have seen the emergence of new forms of racial reasoning that have been shaped by the new politics of immigration and the mobilisation of racialised political agendas. This is not to say that what is at work is simply a process of linear evolution towards what is sometimes called new racism or cultural racism. For what is clear is that the framing of racialised discourses as new does not necessarily help us to understand the complex variety of arguments and ideas that are to be found within contemporary racist discourses. Nor for that matter does it tell us much about what is new and what is old in the racial politics that confronts us in the present environment.

While it is important to be clear about the differences between contemporary forms of racism and the traditional forms of racism, it does seem that some of the arguments about this issue do not really add much analytical clarity. From different perspectives other recent writings have talked of the emergence of meta-racism, new racism or more descriptively new cultural forms of racial discourse. While there is something valuable and important about these arguments, it seems important to emphasise that what some writers have called new racism is not a uniform social entity as such. There is strong evidence that racial discourses are increasingly using a new cultural and social language to justify their arguments, but the search for a uniform definition of new racism has proved intractable and has again emphasised the slippery nature of contemporary racisms (Bobo 2017; Singh 2017). A key problem is that in a very real sense what some writers today call new racism has in some sense always been with us. While it is true that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was an emphasis in much racial thinking on the biological superiority of some races
over others, it is also the case that racial thinking has always been about idealised and transcendent images of culture, landscape and national identity.

An important feature of racism over the years has been the various ways it has managed to combine different, and often contradictory, elements within specific social and political contexts. In this sense we would agree with Mosse that racism is not a coherent set of propositions that has remained the same in the period since the 18th century, but can best be conceived as a scavenger ideology, which gains its power from its ability to pick out and utilise ideas and values from other sets of ideas and beliefs in specific socio-historical contexts. There is, in other words, no essential notion of race that has remained unchanged by wider political, philosophical, economic and social transformations (Mosse 1995). The characterisation of racism as a scavenger ideology does not mean, however, that there are no continuities in racial thought across time and spatial boundaries. Indeed, it seems obvious that when one looks at the various elements of racial discourses in contemporary societies there are strong continuities in the articulation of images of the other as well as in the ways in which racist movements define the boundaries of race and nation. The evident use of images of the past and evocations of popular memory in the language of contemporary racist and nationalist movements points to the need to understand the complex ways in which these movements are embedded in specific images of landscape and territory.

There seems little doubt that one of the key questions we shall have to confront in the future is how to understand and tackle the social and political impact of racism, both as a set of ideas and as a form of political mobilisation. In broad terms we shall (a) need to be able to explain both the roots of contemporary racist ideas and movements and the source of their current appeal, and (b) need to consider what kinds of counter-strategies can be adopted to challenge new types of racist mobilisation. Yet it is precisely on this issue that current research is least enlightening, since researchers have not had much to say about the reasons why we have seen a resurgence of racist ideas in recent times. Simplistic and monolithic accounts of racism will in the final analysis do little to enlighten us on why it is that particular social and political contexts millions of people respond to the images, promises and hopes which are at the heart of mass racist movements. Additionally, they tell us little about the possibilities and limits of political strategies and policies that aim to challenge institutionalised racial inequalities. In relation to the long running debate about differentiated citizenship rights, we must be alert to the ways in which the effort to identify and respond to differences among people may turn into a process of reification, leading to a false imputation of essentialist qualities to the members of some group, ignoring important variations within groups. One of the limitations of anti-racist politics as it has developed is precisely this pattern of reifying minority communities as static and unchanging cultural and political collectivities. There is a need to confront the reality that in the present environment we have in one way or another to move beyond the certainties both of racism and simplistic multiculturalism and anti-racism.

It is essential to question deterministic and fixed notions about the relationship between race and racism and broader sets of social relations. We have to develop an analysis of contemporary racisms that is capable of understanding and explaining the power of the diverse racisms that have taken shape in the contemporary environment. In the current conjuncture of political turmoil and tension it has become easy in quite diverse societies, such as Germany, Britain and France, to see migrants and racial minorities as the principal threat to order and social stability. Before we can successfully challenge the hegemony of such ideas, we must be able to understand both why they have arisen at the present time and why it is
that they have managed to attract sizeable political support. In order to do this, we must develop an analysis of racism in the present that is adequate to the task of telling us something about the future as well as the past, and in order to do this we need to investigate contemporary racisms in all their diverse forms.

**Outlining the Handbook**

The *Handbook* contains thirty-four chapters and is organised in ten interlinked parts that aim to provide a comprehensive and readable resource for scholars, researchers, students and general readers who would like to explore the changing forms of racism in contemporary societies. For a variety of reasons some parts are more extensive than others, but we hope that in their totality they will provide readers with many of the key issues that are part of both scholarly and everyday civil society debates about race and racism in the contemporary world. The various chapters that make up each part of the *Handbook* do not speak with one voice, and they use different conceptual and empirical points of reference. We hope, however, that when looked at in their totality they share the overarching concern of the volume as a whole to push the boundaries of current debates forward.

In order to facilitate the utility of the *Handbook* we shall begin each part with an introductory overview of the issues that are covered by the chapters they contain. But it is important to say something here about the overarching concerns of the various components of the *Handbook* and the common themes that help to tie them together. The various chapters in Parts I and II seek to provide an overview of theoretical and historical efforts to situate the analysis of contemporary racisms as well as to explore some facets of contemporary racisms in global perspective. Taken together, these two parts provide the starting point for readers who want to get a feel for some of the theoretical debates that have helped to shape the field of study as a whole. The focus of Part III shifts to an exploration of the state and political institutions in structuring contemporary expressions of racism. The chapters in Parts IV and V explore the role of racist and anti-racist movements and ideologies in a variety of national settings. There has been a noticeable expansion of both racist and anti-racist movements in the contemporary period and the chapters in these parts provide an insight into the evolution of these movements. The chapters in Part VI explore the linkages between racism and nationalism at both a conceptual level and through case studies of the mobilisation of nationalism. The research agendas on racism and nationalism have developed in somewhat different directions in recent times but there is much to be gained, as the various chapters in this part argue, from developing more of a dialogue between researchers in these discrete fields. Part VII brings together contributions from a number of leading scholars that focus on the intersections of race and gender. The focus in Part VIII moves on to the interrelationship between racism, culture and religion. Part IX takes up the question of the methodological challenges and dilemmas of doing research in this evolving field. Finally, Part X brings together reflective chapters that address the broad question of how we can think beyond the bounds of racism in the current conjuncture. The chapters in this part of the *Handbook* provide somewhat different perspectives to this question and suggest that there is a need to broaden our vision if we are to understand the complexities of racism in the contemporary period.

Returning to Stuart Hall’s argument at the beginning of this Introduction, it seems clear that over the next period we shall face the challenge of how to move beyond the certainties of what we think we know and to think differently about race and racism. Rather than assume we know all that we should about the morphology of contemporary racisms, it
seems important for us to remember that there are significant gaps in research and scholarly knowledge that need to be addressed, both from a conceptual and empirical angle. We are living through a period that has been characterised by the emergence of new forms of racism, the development of movements that articulate a mixture of xenophobic and anti-immigrant rhetoric, the resurgence of nativist ethno-nationalist populism, and the articulation of anti-Muslim ideologies. In this environment we need to be able to develop the necessary theories and research tools if we are going to be able to make sense of these developments and to develop political strategies that will tackle them in an effective manner. It would be a mistake to see these phenomena simply through the lens of the past and not make the effort to comprehend what is new about them (see Chapter 15 by Bojadžijev and 34 by Essed in this volume).

We hope that readers of the Handbook will find that it provides a useful guide to the changing research agendas in this field of scholarship and research.

References