Editorial: The challenges of a new decade

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In March 2001, the first issue of Ethnicities was published. In the late 1990s, we had become increasingly concerned about the hermetic nature of disciplinary debates on ethnicity, nationalism and related issues, such as multiculturalism and minority rights. In particular, there seemed to be a marked disjuncture between normative, often highly decontextualized, debates on societal multiculturalism within political theory on the one hand, and sociological and anthropological debates about ethnicity, social identities and the material consequences of ethnic mobilization, racism and inequality, on the other. What we wished to achieve, via Ethnicities, was more of a dialectic among these various disciplinary traditions – facilitating through the journal an analysis of wider theoretical debates on ethnicity, and their potential consequences for the (re)construction of democratic societies, alongside analysis of their practical articulation in particular social and political contexts.

Ten years on, we believe that we have accomplished much to this end. Our cross-disciplinary aims, while necessarily always incomplete, have seen articles published in the journal from the disciplines of sociology, political theory, cultural geography, anthropology, cultural and media studies, history, education, social psychology and law. The Debate section, a key feature of the journal, has addressed important and often controversial topics, including, among others, constructivist and realist conceptions of culture (1(2)), critical multiculturalism (1(3)), cosmopolitanism (3(4)), feminism, ethnicity and reproductive technology (5(2)), whiteness (6(2)), symbolic ethnicity (9(1)), critical race theory (9(2)) and, in this current issue, ethnonational identity. Review symposia, another regular feature, have explored the important contributions to the field of Bhikhu Parekh (1(1)), Brian Barry (2(2)), Paul Gilroy (2(4)), Glen Loury (3(2)), Evelyn Nakano Glenn (4(3)), Will Kymlicka (8(2)) and Veit Bader (9(4)). Meanwhile, special issues of the journal have addressed topics as wide-ranging as cities and ethnicities (2(3)), multiculturalism and identities (3(3)), racialization in the USA (4(3)), identity, culture and globalization (5(3)), ethnic inequalities and education (7(3)), women and multiculturalism (8(3)) and the Muhammad cartoons controversy (9(3)), again from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

From time to time, we have also commissioned Invited Symposia to discuss particularly important and/or pressing issues. In our first issue, we offered an
academic symposium on the key issues facing the field of ethnicity at that time, with contributions from Craig Calhoun, Nira Yuval-Davis, T.K. Oommen, Rogers Brubaker, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Roger Waldinger and Will Kymlicka. *Ethnicities* was also one of the first journals to offer an editorial (2(1)) and an academic symposium on the reasons for, and potential consequences of, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the USA (2(2)), with the latter including contributions from Mahmood Mamdani, Mohammad Waseem, Ruth Rubio-Marín, Barnor Hesse, Ien Ang and the late Iris Marion Young.

Given the significant juncture that we have reached, it seemed appropriate to offer another Invited Symposium in this issue, exploring the key challenges facing the field of ethnicity in this new decade, with contributions from Will Kymlicka, Steve Fenton, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Stephen Castles and Ien Ang. Their commentary is framed inevitably against a backdrop of the long, continuing shadow of 9/11 and its consequences. These include a burgeoning, increasingly visceral, Islamophobia, the re-emergence of the Far Right and associated anti-immigration movements, particularly in Europe, and a related retrenchment of multiculturalism as public policy in many states in favour of ‘integration’ (read: assimilation). All this, when migration, diaspora, transnationalism and globalization continue also to increase exponentially, challenging the attempts of nation states to solidify, Canute-like, their existing (albeit, constructed) sociohistorical, sociocultural, ethnic hierarchies and boundaries, along with related notions of citizenship.

Much has changed in the last decade in relation to debates about ethnicity, nationalism, multiculturalism and minority rights – in public policy and academic analysis – inevitably, in ways we were not always able to anticipate. In the next 10 years, we look forward in *Ethnicities* to continuing to chart, critique and, where necessary, deconstruct these developments, along with their wide-ranging social and political implications.