Social studies as a field has been slow to address race and diversity. Furthermore, in the subfield of the history of social studies, race has been eclipsed by other issues, such as methods (for example, inquiry, historical thinking, controversial issues); other topics (for example, the Constitution, citizenship education); and influential leaders in the field (for example, James Harvey Robinson, Thomas Jesse Jones, Harold Rugg, Donald Oliver). One study in the 1970s declared that the field of social studies had taken a “kid-gloves approach” to race and difference and was not on the vanguard of significant change. Indeed, social studies has not been known for pursuing innovative directions in research, curriculum, and teaching. Additionally, the historiography of social studies education has not employed race in its predominant lines of inquiry. To date, the social studies historiography has overwhelmingly focused on examining committee reports and the contributions its leaders, most of whom were White and male.

That social studies has not highlighted race to a significant degree—in practice, in research in general, and in the historiography—is ironic, given that much of the field’s origins can be traced to a course of study designed for African Americans and American Indians at the Hampton Institute in Virginia in the late nineteenth century. Although the teaching of history in schools predated educator Thomas Jesse Jones’s curriculum at Hampton, the growth and development of social studies was directly affected by Jones’s authorship of the 1916 Report on Social Studies. Further elaborating on the genesis of social studies, Margaret Smith Crocco asserts that in the early-twentieth century “social studies…was designed to remediate cultural deficiency and create better citizens out of those some intellectuals feared were not suitable raw material for democracy.” Arguably, awareness of issues regarding race and diversity has always been present in the field, although these matters have not always been attended to explicitly. In this volume, we seek to investigate the interplay of the emerging social studies
field, from the time of the Emancipation of enslaved peoples in the second half of the nineteenth century to multicultural and Afrocentric education initiatives of the late twentieth century. Likewise, we seek to incorporate viewpoints from various regions and local communities. With the exception of Thomas Fallace’s chapter on founding social studies leaders and race, each of the authors examines how local teachers, students, and community members interpreted and implemented the teaching and learning of social studies and history, while considering racial difference and the struggle for equality.

Contributors were asked to consider the intersection of race and social studies in any time period or region of their choosing. Therefore, it is important to note that the scholars do not focus on national social studies organizations or other formal organizations, nor do most focus on national social studies leaders. This book builds instead on an emerging body of literature that examines the implementation of social studies initiatives in segregated and desegregated schools by African American and European American teachers. In addition, several authors examine race and social studies in a cross-section of regions across the United States. Dayton, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; Detroit, Michigan; and New Orleans, Louisiana; as well as the state of South Carolina, are a few of the places represented in this collection. The authors explore a variety of education initiatives and writings, such as textbooks, curriculum plans, student government organizations, cultural celebrations, and standards-based reform efforts to situate their studies in the interstices of race and social studies education.

For the purposes of this book, we did not define social studies for the authors. The result is an expansive and flexible definition that suits each particular case history. In some chapters social studies is defined comprehensively, as contributors draw on a broad definition of social education, or what Margaret Smith Crocco defines as “teaching and learning about how individuals construct and live out their understandings of social, political, and economic relations…and the implications of these understandings for how citizens are educated in a democracy.” Other contributors define it as the teaching and learning of particular subject areas, such as history or civics. Finally, some chapters address the new content area developed in the 1910s called “social studies,” which referred to an integration of the social sciences—civics, history, sociology, and economics—in the effort to prepare citizens for a democracy.

Likewise, we gave authors considerable leeway when it came to addressing, defining, and applying race in their contributions. Race has occupied a central role in American society since the beginning of European colonization, when enslaved people from Africa were brought to the North American continent. In this book, the authors explore the role of race in