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# Racial Attitudes in the New Millennium: Cool Feelings in Hot Times

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*In The Declining Significance of Race, William Julius Wilson (1980) stated social class was more influential than race in determining social outcomes for Blacks. This thesis remains a controversial centerpiece among race scholars. This paper examines one part of the overall puzzle of American race relations: white racial attitudes since September 11, 2001. Using Wilson's declining significance of race thesis, I question if white racial attitudes toward Blacks declined significantly from 2002 to 2004. If social class exerts greater influence on social indicators than race in the coming years, will racial prejudice, particularly toward Blacks, also decline in significance? What happens to white racial prejudice toward Blacks when a highly racialized national crisis occurs? Does racial prejudice heighten and become more significant or, as Wilson suggested, does it decline?*

*Key words: September 11, 2001, William Julius Wilson, racial attitudes, prejudice*

In 1978, William Julius Wilson daringly proposed that race in the United States was declining in significance. According to Wilson, economic and political changes in the post-Civil Rights era resulted in a bifurcated Black class structure. Wilson (1980) suggested class, rather than race, will have a greater influence on life chances for Blacks, particularly as the Black middle class continues to integrate in economic and social spheres (p. 23, p. 150). Wilson's thesis supplicated additional research on the evolution of race relations, and some thirty years later debates on the importance of race in social relations continue.

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For example, if social class exerts greater influence on social indicators than race in the coming years, will racial prejudice, particularly toward Blacks, also decline in significance? Broadly, I question if race actually declined in significance in the post-Civil Rights era; specifically, after a highly racialized national crisis, what happens to white racial attitudes toward Blacks?

The events of September 11, 2001 quickly affected the nature of communities, politics, group interactions, and American laws. The United States was in a state of unequivocal fear as a result of the attack and the perceived potential threat of additional attacks. In the wake of these fears, the government swiftly enacted new legislation intended to broaden the scope of government power under the auspices of protecting Americans. As Wilson (1980) suggested, racial "conflicts shifted ... to the sociopolitical order" (p. 23). In the weeks following September 11, 2001, racial tensions in the United States heightened, as American citizens committed numerous attacks on innocent Arab, Muslim, and South Asian individuals. Thus, as Omi and Winant (1994) suggested, "The [racial] dictatorship ... drove racial divisions not only through institutions, but also through psyches" (p. 66). Thus, despite Wilson's claim that race was declining in significance, the weeks following the terrorist attacks point to a revitalization of overt prejudice based on perceived race group membership.

### Background

The United States experienced terrorism at an unprecedented level on September 11, 2001 with the hijacking of four U.S. airplanes and the use of those airplanes as weapons against the World Trade Center buildings, the Pentagon, and a failed attempt—possibly at the White House—that crashed in the fields of western Pennsylvania. Abdolian and Takooshian (2003) contended that September 11, 2001 was unprecedented by virtue of the attacks being "immense, unexpected, cunning, ferocious, and devastating" (p. 1429).

While the events of September 11, 2001 represented the largest terrorist attack experienced on American soil, the ramifications of these attacks on the civil liberties, national identity, immigration laws and patriotism confounded the effects of

these attacks.

While the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were unprecedented in many regards, the historic and systematic policies of exclusion and profiling following the aftermath of national threat were not isolated. Ahmad (2002) pointed to Butler who suggested that,

Decentering of September 11 ... is important to understand the meaning and import of the terrorist attacks. But decentering requires not only that we expand our frame of reference to include the world before September 11, we must envision a desired world after September 11 as well. (p. 101)

Along these lines, the academic community postulated about the effects of September 11, 2001 on race relations and the resulting socio-political "othering" as indicated through changes in racial attitudes, immigration laws, perceptions of terrorism, civil liberties, and other race-related changes (e.g., Abdolian & Takooshian, 2003; Ahmad, 2002; Akram & Johnson, 2002; Coryn, Beale, & Myers, 2004; Crotty, 2004; Engle, 2004; Gwartney, 2007; Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2004; Volpp, 2002).

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001 many Americans transferred their sorrow for the victims and anger toward the terrorists onto innocent individuals of Middle Eastern descent. The number of hate-crimes in the weeks immediately following September 11, 2001 rose to slightly over 1,000 (Ahmad, 2002). Akram and Johnson (2002) suggested that the complexity of these hate crimes was confounded by the failure of the perpetrator to differentiate among racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Despite the increased race-related hate crimes committed against Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians, Volpp (2002) suggested that these crimes were understood as "crimes of passion, whereby the passion is love of nation" (p. 1590). American national identity formed around ideas of loyalty and patriotism and otherness formed synchronically around opposition to patriotism, American loyalty, and America. Thus, the repercussions of September 11, 2001 called on all individuals living within the borders of the United States to forge alliances and display images of patriotism. In particular, people of color needed to prove allegiance to the United States and display a

sense of national identity.

The creation of “otherness” at moments of heightened national security—from the slavery of Africans, forced removal of American Indians, exclusionary and quota immigration laws, Japanese internment camps, definitions of Germans, Italians, and Japanese as enemy aliens—was not a new phenomenon in the United States (Engle, 2004). Identity creation of otherness occurred in a symbiotic relationship with the heightening of nationalism or national identity. Part of increased patriotism encompassed the “You’re either with us or against us” attitude, whereby questioning the American government is perceived as anti-Americanism or as a request for additional terrorist attacks (Abdolian & Takooshian, 2003).

Existing research on race relations post-September 11, 2001 suggested that groups of color, rather than forging alliances with other groups of color based on their subordinated status within the racial hierarchy in the United States, tended to reorder racial hierarchies (Ahmad, 2002). Ahmad (2002) suggested that Black and Latina/o individuals, rather than opposing the very laws they were historically subjected to, supported increased racial profiling of Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians (p. 103). The compression of attitudes among whites, Blacks, and Latina/os pointed to the creation of the “other” or “alien enemy” whereby Blacks and Latina/os forged their alliances with Whites and staked claim to increased American identity (Ahmad, 2002). Accordingly, Blacks and Latina/os supported profiling laws, which constituted what Johnson (2002) referred to as displacement, as minority groups transferred hostility onto scapegoats (Arabs, Muslims, South Asians) rather than target the real threat, their historic oppressor. Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg (2004) suggested, “sometime[s] the fear, anger, and desperate need for understanding resulting from heightened accessibility of death thoughts are directed toward those with no obvious similarities to the perpetrators of the attacks” (p. 105). Thus, the threat posed to America in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 resulted in newly forged alliances between Blacks and Whites and intensified existing racial attitudes toward Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians. According to Kunovich (2004), “[g]roup-threat theorists suggest that increases in the collective threat posed to

dominant ethnic and racial groups increase average levels of prejudice and intensify the relationship between individual characteristics and prejudice" (p. 20). Thus, the perceived threat to the United States provided the grounds for heightened discrimination and prejudice toward Arabs, Muslims and South Asians.

Despite the increased participation of Blacks and Latina/os in allegiance toward subordinating a newly defined group of "others," scholars questioned the causes of this participation. As Ahmad (2002) stated, "One has to wonder if we are witnessing an organic convergence of black and white interests, or a cynical manipulation of black opinion, the better to subordinate new communities of color" (p. 105). Through increased threat to the United States, groups of color distanced themselves from one another rather than fighting in solidarity, which resulted in the passage of laws that extended government control and that directly impacted their particular racial group in the past. Laws such as racial profiling exemplified this phenomenon and are perceived by many as antithetical to civil rights.

As previously noted, the history of race relations in the United States is characterized by its oppressive tendencies, mass violations of civil rights and liberties, and often brutality. Despite Wilson's (1980) proposition that, "life chances of individual blacks have more to do with their economic class position than day-to-day encounters with whites" (p. 1), historical and contemporary social reality suggests race still matters. Wilson's thesis suggested race relations were improving and as the economic conditions for some Blacks improved, class subordination emerged as the essential barrier. For Wilson, in order to understand current problems of Blacks, the focus must be on economic change. Wilson's analysis, while calling for a more intersectional understanding of the economic conditions of Blacks, failed to address enduring white prejudice when societal conditions call for more cohesive race relations.

Through this distinct and highly divided "color line" within the history of the United States, skepticism surrounds the nature of alliances between Blacks and Whites in the newly reinterpreted "othering" of individuals from the Middle East or of Middle Eastern descent. According to Omi and Winant

(1994), historical race relations in the United States are characterized as "racial dictatorship" whereby the political arena and all citizenship matters remain in the hands of Whites and all persons of color are specifically excluded. Accordingly, this racial dictatorship took three distinctive forms: the definition of "American," the organization of the "color line," and finally the consolidation of "oppositional racial consciousness" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 66). For Omi and Winant (1994), the process is achieved through hegemony implemented with both coercion and consent, and this represents the new nature of race relations in the United States, as racial dictatorship shifts to racial democracy (thus from domination to hegemony). Therefore, are these newly forged relationships between Blacks and Whites (or the convergence of black and white attitudes toward people of Middle Eastern descent) a repercussion of the hegemonic rule of the power elite in the United States? If traditional racism is declining in the United States, does this convergence merely signify a shift toward the new or modern racism through hegemony rather than erosion of racist ideology and structure?

The bulk of the race-related work post-September 11, 2001 focused on immigration policy, civil rights laws, and racial attitudes about individuals primarily perceived to be Muslim or Arab (or more generally individuals from the Middle East or Middle Eastern descent), but no research exists studying the impact of September 11, 2001 on racial attitudes toward Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Thus, while numerous studies examined the impacts of September 11, 2001 on America and its policies, a dearth of research exists on racial attitudes directed toward people of color not targeted through September 11, 2001 racial projects and how September 11, 2001 impacted those attitudes.

Whereas research suggested a decline in traditional race-related prejudice among Americans, I seek to examine whether or not prejudice still persists to the same or different levels against Blacks, and to determine what types of individuals are more likely to admit prejudiced attitudes. If Wilson is correct, then racial attitudes should decline in significance in tandem with the importance of race. As mentioned previously, attitudinal beliefs remain a significant force in American society,

particularly when considering the legislative and policy implications related to racial and other minority groups. This paper provides a clearer understanding of prejudice, the pervasiveness of negative racial attitudes in American society, and suggests the traditional component of prejudice is not declining in significance since September 11, 2001.

### Method

The data for this study come from the American National Election 2000, 2002, and 2004 Panel Studies from the Center for Political Studies Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York (D B 7532.R01) (American National Election Studies, 2004). Respondents were interviewed in 2000, 2002, and again in 2004 through computer assisted interviewing technology (CATI) telephone interviews. Eligible respondents were 18 years of age or older at the time of the first interview. This paper differs from existing studies, which examined Whites' attitudes toward Blacks by investigating the consequences of a major national tragedy on white racial prejudice.

Research into the influences of racial stereotyping provided contradictory results regarding the demographic characteristics of individuals who utilize racial stereotypes. Research indicated that age has a positive relationship with stereotyping (Firebaugh & Davis, 1988; Fossett & Kiecolt, 1989; Kinder & Mendelberg, 1995). In their study on the trends in anti-Black prejudice, Firebaugh and Davis (1988) noted that one important factor in the decline in racial prejudice was "cohort replacement" as younger, less prejudiced cohorts replaced older, more prejudiced birth cohorts (p. 251). However, Sniderman and Piazza (1993) suggested this increased tolerance might no longer persist. Research by Plous and Williams (1995) found a curvilinear relationship between age and endorsement of racial stereotyping, although the relationship with educational level was not controlled in their study.

### *Measures*

*Gender.* The impact of gender on acceptance of negative stereotypes was also inconsistent. Some research indicated that

women were more likely than men to support policies to aid Blacks and to hold fewer negative stereotypes while Plous and Williams (1995) reported that gender differences were relatively small.

*Religion.* The relationship between religion and prejudice is a complex issue in that prejudice can vary by religious group or belief structure. Allport (1958) suggested that religious groups usually held similar levels of prejudice but chose different groups to dislike. Additionally, Allport (1958) noted two forms of religiosity that influence prejudice: one that focuses on brotherhood and tolerance, and one that breeds prejudice. Later research found religiosity was not associated with prejudice but with how individuals held their beliefs (Hunsberger, 1995). Hunsberger's (1995) research suggested individuals who rigidly adhere to their beliefs were more likely to be prejudiced than those who were more open in their beliefs. Hunsberger (1995) also cited conflicting research on the association between religious service attendance and prejudice. While some research suggested a curvilinear relationship between religious service attendance and prejudice, Hunsberger, citing Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992), stated that the current "empirical evidence has not consistently supported this 'curvilinear' conclusion, with some researchers arguing that the relationship is indeed a relatively strong linear one" (p. 116).

*Education.* Researchers consistently found education to be one of the strongest determinants of attitudes concerning race (Hesselbart & Schuman, 1976; Kunovich, 2004; Plous & Williams, 1995; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Taylor, 1998). Some researchers contended that education was the most important factor in delineating the amount of stereotypes an individual embraces (Plous & Williams, 1995; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993), which reinforces Lippmann's (1922) earlier research.

*Income.* In addition to education, researchers suggested that income, as a part of an individual's socioeconomic status, was associated with negative racial stereotyping. Researchers contended that individuals with lower socioeconomic status were more likely to hold negative attitudes toward minority groups due to the belief that minority group members posed a threat to their status (Blalock, 1967; Blumer, 1958; Kunovich, 2004; Oliver & Mendelberg, 2000). Individuals with lower

income and lower socioeconomic status sought to denigrate members of minority groups as a reaction to perceived inter-racial competition for resources.

*Political Affiliation.* Sniderman and Carmines (1997) found that “conservatives who like Blacks are as likely to be opposed (to government policies to aid African-Americans) as those who dislike Blacks” (p. 94). Wood and Chessser (1994) found Republicans more likely to stereotype than Democrats and Independents. In sum, research indicates that an increase in conservatism leads to an increase in racial stereotyping while an increase in liberalism leads to a decrease in racial stereotyping.

### Predictions

This study examines how the feelings of whites toward Blacks changed from 2000 to 2004, during which time a racial project against individuals of Middle Eastern descent was forged. I hypothesize the following among white respondents:

1. As age increases, feelings of coolness for Blacks increase.
2. Males feel cooler toward Blacks than females.
3. As years of college attendance increase, feelings of coolness toward Blacks decrease.
4. As income increases, feelings of coolness toward Blacks decrease.
5. Self-identified Republicans feel cooler toward Blacks than self-identified Democrats.

### Results

This paper examines white respondents’ attitudes toward Blacks, therefore the population of the NES Panel Study was limited to white respondents. The 2000 NES Panel Study included 1,393 white respondents, 932 in the 2002 study, and 700 in the 2004 study. In order to maximize respondents, separate regressions for each year of available data were run and coefficients compared across models.

Compared to the white population in the 2000 Census, the white subset of the NES Panel Study had fewer respondents

with a household income of less than \$50,000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000d), slightly more females (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000a), slightly older respondents, (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000b), and similarly educated respondents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000c). A comparison table is shown below:

Table 1. Comparison of Panel Study Demographic Variables to US Census Data

	NES Panel Study			2000 US Census
	2000	2002	2004	
% with Some College or More	43.2%	46.9%	68.7%	54.1%
Median Age	37	53	55	37
Percent Female	55.3%	55.2%	56.7%	50.9%
Household Income of <\$50,000	44.2%	44.7%	44.1%	55.3%

This study examines the relationship between gender, education level, income, political orientation, religiosity, age, and their influences on warmth or coolness toward Blacks in 2000, 2002, and 2004, which include pre- and post-September 11, 2001 responses. Attitudes toward Blacks were gauged by asking respondents to rate their feelings toward Blacks on a continuous thermometer gauge from 0 to 100, with 0 representing coolness, 50 neither unfavorable nor favorable opinions about Blacks, and 100 representing warmth or favorable opinions of Blacks.

Most of the dependent variable information was obtained through close-ended questions, except age and gender (1 = male). Age was analyzed in the models as a continuous variable. Education, income, political ideology, and religious importance were all measured through dummy variables: *some college and above* and *no college and below*; *household income of \$50,000 and above* and *household income below \$49,999*; *self-identified Republican* and *not self-identified Republican*; and *religion as important* and *religion as not important*.

I use two separate measurements of the strength of religiosity in people's lives for the models: importance of religion in the respondent's life (mentioned above) and frequency of religious service attendance. For religious service attendance, a score of 5 indicates the respondent attended religious services every week, a score of 4 indicates they attend almost every week, a score of 3 indicates they attend once or twice a month, a score of 2 indicates they attend a few times a year and a score of 1 indicated they never attend religious services.

As previously mentioned, this paper examines if attitudes toward Blacks changed significantly post-September 11, 2001. In order to ascertain whether a statistically significant change in Whites' attitudes toward Blacks occurred between sample years, I generated a Paired Samples T-Test, resulting in a failure to reject the null hypothesis that the mean scores for Whites' gauging of favorability toward Blacks is zero. In other words, the difference between the mean values for Whites' "thermometer" ratings of Blacks is statistically different between 2000, 2002 and 2004. Regression results from the 2000 NES panel study are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2. 2000 Black Thermometer Regression

	1	2	3
Gender	-2.163* (.980)	-2.288* (.985)	-1.642 (1.000)
Age	-.017 (.029)	-.008 (.029)	-.026 (.029)
Education		2.997** -0.029	3.127** (1.023)
Income		-.109 (1.109)	-.014 (1.109)
Religion Importance			2.460* (1.151)
Religious Attendance			1.039* (.506)
Republican			-1.679 (1.012)
Constant	67.378*** (1.556)	65.378*** (1.725)	60.985*** (2.401)
r2	.004	.010	.019

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\* p &lt; 0.001 (Standard Errors in parentheses)

Some hypotheses were supported through the 2000 NES data. Education is consistent and significant across all models, with an increased educational attainment raising thermometer scores. Gender is consistent in the first two models, but then it loses significance in the final model. Gender is consistently negative across models, indicating that males are “cooler” toward Blacks than females. Both measures of religiosity—religious attendance and importance—are positive and significant, suggesting higher levels of religiosity increase thermometer scores. Age, income, and Republicanism are not statistically significant. Regression results from the 2002 NES panel study are presented below in Table 3.

Table 3. 2002 Black Thermometer Regression

	1	2	3
Gender	-3.411** (1.172)	-3.537** (1.184)	-3.048* (1.204)
Age	-.040 (.036)	-.034 (.037)	-.051 (.038)
Education		1.276 (1.213)	1.133 (1.215)
Income		-.169 (1.264)	.257 (1.273)
Religion Importance			2.504* (1.413)
Religious Attendance			1.089 (.624)
Republican			.286 (1.219)
Constant	69.177*** (2.064)	68.240*** (2.359)	62.743*** (3.195)
r <sup>2</sup>	.008	.007	.012

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001 (Standard Errors in parentheses)

In the 2002 model, gender and religious importance are the only significant predictors of Black thermometer scores. Again, men’s scores are lower than women’s scores and increased religious importance raises thermometer scores. Age, education, income, religious attendance, and Republicanism do not have a significant effect on thermometer scores. Regression results

from the 2004 NES panel study are presented in Table 4.

For the 2004 model, gender is consistently significant and negative across the three models, indicating males tend to have lower Black thermometer scores. Religious importance is again positive and significant, with people who identified religion as important in their lives having higher thermometer scores. Age, education, income, religious attendance, and Republicanism are not significant across all models.

Table 4. 2004 Black Thermometer Regression

	1	2	3
Gender	-4.268** (1.390)	-4.463*** (1.398)	-3.945* (1.405)
Age	-.006 (.044)	.014 (.047)	-.004 (.047)
Education		1.294 (1.594)	1.323 (1.586)
Income		1.287 (1.533)	1.341 (1.533)
Religion Importance			5.227** (1.686)
Religious Attendance			.561 (.715)
Republican			.872 (1.458)
Constant	69.556*** (2.627)	66.973*** (3.227)	61.124*** (3.949)
r <sup>2</sup>	.013	.016	.035

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001 (Standard Errors in parentheses)

Gender and religious importance were the only independent variables significant across the three points. Since each model is for a specific year, we can compare coefficients across models with the knowledge that time is controlled for in the comparisons.

Gender is consistent in the first model of each year, and it remains significant throughout the nested models in 2002 and 2004 and has the largest coefficients in the 2002 models.

Age is consistently small and insignificant across models, with directionality being inconsistent across the three years. Education has the largest coefficients in the 2000 models, and all coefficients are positive and significant. The coefficients are much smaller in the 2002 and 2004 models, and none are significant for these years either.

The income variable did not appear to be very large across any of the models, but it was the largest for the 2004 models, with respondents with higher incomes having a predicted thermometer score 1.3 points higher than respondents with family incomes lower than \$50,000. Thus, Wilson's prediction that class difference would ameliorate racial prejudice does not hold true.

The importance of religion indicator is significant in all models. Religion importance appears to have the largest coefficients in the 2004 model and the smallest coefficients in the 2000 model. Frequency of attendance of religious services is only significant for the 2000 model. The importance of religion in a respondent's life is a stronger predictor of Black thermometer scores than religious service attendance.

The self-identified Republican variable was relatively large but insignificant in the 2000 model, with self-identified Republicans having a predicted thermometer score 1.6 points lower than non-Republicans. The coefficient was smaller and insignificant in subsequent models.

Gender is the most consistent predictor, with gender being a significant predictor of Black thermometer scores in the first nested model for each year. In 2002 and 2004, gender is significant across all three nested models. Religious importance is also significant across all years. This specific set of independent variables does the best job of explaining variation in the Black thermometer score for the 2004 model when comparing the r-squared statistic across models.

The inconsistency in the literature on predictors of prejudice is replicated in this study, with few independent variables consistently remaining statistically significant throughout the models. Interestingly, income did not mitigate Whites' feelings of relative coolness toward Blacks. As Wilson (1980) noted, during slavery, "the economy provided the basis for the development of the racial caste system, and the polity

reinforced and perpetuated the system" (p. 61). The prejudice and feelings of coolness among Whites remains stuck in a racial caste system where Whites are unfavorable to Blacks, even as household income increases.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Data from the 2000 to 2004 National Election Survey Panel Studies provide rather inconclusive results regarding the change in white racial prejudice and the characteristics of those who hold prejudice beliefs. While the main goal of this paper was to determine if Whites' attitudes toward Blacks changed significantly as a result of September 11, 2001, this paper also sought to examine the prevalence of traditional prejudice in the United States. Results suggest the difference between Whites' rankings on the feeling thermometer is statistically significant, although predictive demographic characteristics are inconsistent. From 2000 to 2004, Whites' feelings toward Blacks consistently warmed. However Whites, without fail, felt warmer to other Whites while feeling cooler toward all other racial and ethnic groups, including Blacks. In other words, while the mean score for Whites' rankings of Blacks increased (became more positive), predictors for how Whites rank did not parallel previous research on prejudice.

While the results of this study suggest that the shift in prejudice attitudes might signify a change in prejudice, from traditional to modern prejudice, further research into the patterns of modern prejudice needs to be assessed before drawing strong conclusions on this change. Further research is needed to assess the support or lack of support for public policy, however the validity of separate constructions of prejudice is questioned through the work of Essed (2002), whereby racism is less of a dichotomized phenomena and more of a problem relating both the structure (public policy) and compendious practices. For Essed (2002), racism can also be examined as "everyday racism," characterized by the repetition of racist practices involving "socialized attitudes and behavior" and including "cumulative instantiation" (p. 178). Therefore, racism is embedded in ideology, structure and process (Essed, 2002).

Additional research also needs to examine the relationship

between Whites' prejudice attitudes toward Blacks, and their prejudice attitudes toward individuals of Hispanics, Asians, and Middle Eastern descent. Examination of comparative minority groups might solidify understandings of the patterns of prejudice beliefs or pose additional questions as to the nature of prejudice. Finally, further examination of the consistency of racial attitudes across time is needed. Panel studies, which follow respondents' racial attitudes across time, would provide insight into the stability of racial attitudes.

Finally, through the completion of additional research into the attitudes of Whites toward public policy, deep questioning and debate needs to occur around the "decentering" of September 11, 2001. While the goal of this paper is not to provide a vision for the world after the terrorist attacks, dialogue should begin surrounding the passage of future anti-civil rights laws and the ramifications of those laws on all persons. As Butler (as cited in Ahmad, 2002) suggested, this dialogue should include envisioning the future of our world moving beyond September 11, 2001. The data do not suggest a complete warming of racial attitudes or that Whites feel as warm toward people of color as they do to other Whites. Thus, the data question Wilson's overall premise of the declining significance of race. Wilson's call to examine the importance of social class is certainly needed. Overall, a more intersectional approach for examining social relations, whereby social class, race and gender (among other social locations), lends to a richer analysis. The data from this study suggest White racial attitudes toward Blacks nominally improved post-September 11, 2001 but remain lower than Whites' feelings toward other Whites. Thus, the data question if race has truly declined in significance, particularly among white racial attitudes.

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