

# The Significance of Color Declines: A Re-Analysis of Skin Tone Differentials in Post-Civil Rights America

Aaron Gullickson, *Columbia University*

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## *Abstract*

*Skin tone variation within the United States' black population has long been associated with intraracial stratification. Skin tone differentials in socioeconomic status reflect both the inherited privileges of a mulatto elite and contemporary preferences for lighter skin. Three influential studies have claimed that such differentials in educational, occupational and spousal attainment have remained strong in the post-Civil Rights era, based on results from large nationally representative surveys. However, these studies used a period conception of change which ignored the potential for changes across cohorts within the same period. I re-analyze the available data and find significant declines in skin tone differentials for younger cohorts, in terms of educational and labor market outcomes, but not in terms of spousal attainment. These declines begin with cohorts born in the mid-1940s. In addition, there is evidence of period declines of skin tone differentials in occupational attainment in the 1980s. I discuss possible explanations for the declines.*

## **Introduction**

Blacks with lighter skin have historically had better educational, labor market and marital outcomes than blacks with darker skin. Three influential studies have argued that this skin tone hierarchy has persisted unchecked into the post-Civil Rights era (Hughes and Hertel 1990; Keith and Herring 1991; Seltzer and Smith 1991). These three studies concluded that there has been no discernible change in skin tone differentials with regard to educational attainment, occupational attainment and assortative mating, despite a massive transformation of race relations during the Civil Rights period and some convergence in educational and labor market outcomes between blacks and whites in the post-Civil Rights era. However, because these studies only examined aggregate skin tone differences across periods, they overlooked the potentially different experiences of younger and older birth cohorts. In this article, I re-analyze these datasets, paying particular attention to differences across cohorts. In contrast to earlier research, I find evidence of pronounced cohort declines in educational skin tone differentials, and both cohort and period declines in labor market outcomes, beginning with cohorts born in the mid 1940s.

## **Colorism**

Skin tone variation within the black population reflects a long and tumultuous history of racial amalgamation in the United States. Sexual contact between white Europeans and black African slaves was relatively common in the slavery period, and the result was a large number

*This research was partially supported by NICHD training grant HD07275-19. I would like to thank Michael Hout, Ronald Lee, Michael Omi, Eugene Hammel, Ken Wachter and Heidi Sommers for comments on earlier drafts. Correspondence should be directed to Aaron Gullickson, 412 Fayerweather Hall, 1180 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027. E-mail: ag2319@columbia.edu.*

of mulatto offspring. These mixed race children were often privileged by white slave-owners and were more likely to be manumitted. Mulattoes who were not manumitted were more likely to be trained in skilled household jobs within the plantation than were their darker peers (Mullins and Sites 1984; Wirth and Goldhammer 1944). Mulattoes were also privileged relative to free unmixed blacks off the plantation. In the lower South, mulattoes formed an identifiable buffer class between blacks and whites (Davis 1991; Williamson [1980] 1995). This buffer class did not develop in the upper South, but Bodenhorn (2002) has shown that during the Antebellum period lighter-skinned freeborn blacks in this region were taller than darker-skinned freeborn blacks, suggesting greater health resources in childhood for the lighter-skinned group. Thus, by the end of the slavery period, mulattoes were highly over-represented among skilled, free blacks in the United States, and among skilled craftsmen on the plantation. Examining the genealogies of a sample from *Who's Who Among Black Americans*, Mullins and Sites (1984) have shown that mulattoes were able to use this initial Antebellum "head start" to establish themselves as the elites of the black community.

However, this advantage did not help mulattoes cross the color line. With the growth of a Jim Crow ideology, the lower South buffer status vanished, and the "one-drop rule" became dominant throughout the United States (Davis 1991). This rule defined a person as black if they had any trace of black ancestry. Therefore, the ultimate effect of early black/white mixing in the United States was to internally stratify the black population along a color gradient. This color gradient persisted until at least the mid-20th century. Several studies of localized populations in the 1950s and 1960s found a strong correlation between skin color and socioeconomic status (Edwards 1959; Edwards 1972; Freeman, Armor, Ross and Pettigrew 1966; Ransford 1970).

Inheritance of the initial mulatto advantage may partially explain the skin tone hierarchy among later generations. Children inherited both lighter skin and a privileged background from their mulatto parents, and in turn they passed these characteristics on to their own children. However, the inheritance of privilege is not the only mechanism underlying the skin tone hierarchy. Hill (2000), using a longitudinal design which linked a cohort of blacks born between 1910 and 1920 from the 1920 Census to their death records, found significant differences between respondents identified by the Census enumerator as mulatto – presumably because of a lighter skin tone – and respondents identified as black in terms of school attendance and later-life occupational prestige. Although mulattoes came from advantaged households, household differences in literacy, parental occupation and family structure only explained about 20 percent of the mulatto/black gap.

This finding suggests that there are widespread preferences for blacks with a lighter skin tone (generally called "colorism") in the United States which operate independently of the class background of those individuals possessing the lighter skin. This colorism may be both intraracial and interracial in origin (Jones 2000). The general consensus seems to be that there exists a universal distaste within the black population for particularly "black" phenotypes (e.g. dark skin, kinky hair, etc.), due to ubiquitous and hegemonic white ideals of beauty (Freeman, Armor, Ross and Pettigrew 1966; Hill 2000; Hughes and Hertel 1990; Ransford 1970; Russell, Wilson and Hall 1992; Udry, Baumann and Chase 1971). In a variety of well-known experiments in the 1940s, Kenneth and Mamie Clark demonstrated that black children preferred white dolls and pictures of white children to black dolls and pictures of black children (Clark and Clark 1940; Clark and Clark 1950). Similarly, Marks (1943) found preferences for lighter skin tone among black college students in the 1940s. More recently, researchers have found lighter skin tone preferences among black children (Porter 1991; Powell-Hopson and Hopson 1988), adolescents (Robinson and Ward 1995) and college students (Bond and Cash 1992). Hill (2002b) showed that black interviewer evaluations of black respondents' attractiveness were highly correlated with lighter skin tone for women, and moderately for men.

On the other hand, there is some evidence that blacks do not universally prefer lighter skin tones. In some circumstances, blacks tend to prefer medium shades of skin and provide negative evaluations of both light and dark skin tone extremes (Anderson and Cromwell 1977; Goering 1972; Johnson 1941; Parrish 1946). Preferences for lighter skin tone are most common when some aspect of physical attractiveness is under consideration. When other characteristics are considered, particularly personality characteristics, the results suggest a preference for mid-range skin tones relative to either extreme.

It is telling that the majority of blacks fall into this preferred medium range themselves. Indeed, Goering (1972) found that black students generally preferred their own color over any other, although the level of preference varied by skin tone in that darker-skinned blacks were less likely to prefer their own color than other groups. This apparent homophily suggests an alternative explanation for the persistence of privileges among lighter-skinned blacks. The dominance of lighter-skinned blacks in positions of power and authority within the educational and occupational spheres may help reproduce such privileges, even without a universal distaste for darker skin tone. This reproduction may occur simply because of homophily among lighter-skinned individuals themselves.

It is also possible that whites prefer blacks who are "closer to white," and reward them with superior education and a better job. Although black skin tone preferences are well documented, we have less information about skin tone preferences among whites. Hill (2002a) finds that whites are less able to perceive skin tone variation among blacks than are blacks themselves, suggesting that skin tone differences within the black population are less salient for whites. On the other hand, some anecdotal evidence suggests that whites have particularly negative stereotypes about darker-skinned blacks, such as the darkening of O.J. Simpson's face on *Time* magazine's cover (June 27, 1994). In one of the few empirical investigations of the issue, Terkildsen (1993) reported that white respondents evaluate fictitious black political candidates more negatively if they have darker skin.

Although the skin tone hierarchy was clearly dominant for the first half of the 20th century, it is less clear what happened to this hierarchy in the second half of the 20th century. It may have been difficult to reproduce during the period from about 1945-1970 when the United States experienced a profound racial transformation. The Civil Rights movement, the specter of Nazi racism, and the restructuring of the urban economy all contributed to dramatic transformations of the racial system (Wilson 1978). Blacks became more integrated into previously white educational and labor market organizations, a black pride movement consciously challenged white standards of beauty, and blatant racial domination became politically unacceptable. Did the skin tone hierarchy survive this transformation intact?

There are reasons to think it did not. First, the Civil Rights movement consciously challenged dominant ideals of beauty within the black population. This activism may have altered prevailing attitudes about color and could have even reversed color prejudices within the black community. Research, however, is divided on the importance of the "black is beautiful" movement. An early study by Goering (1972) using black high school students in 1950 and 1970 found a significant reduction in preferences for light skin tone in the 1970 cohort. However, later work has suggested that skin tone is still important in blacks' self-evaluations, particularly for women (Bond and Cash 1992; Hill 2002a; Powell-Hopson and Hopson 1988; Porter 1991; Robinson and Ward 1995).

Second, the integration of blacks into previously white institutions changed institutional gatekeepers of opportunity from blacks to whites. If these white gatekeepers were less salient of skin tone than were predominantly light-skinned black gatekeepers, then this integration may have been more beneficial for darker-skinned blacks than for lighter-skinned blacks. This second line of argument assumes nothing about a change in skin tone preferences within the black or white population but rather focuses on a change in the

structure of opportunity within the educational system and the labor market.

Udry, Baumann and Chase (1971), using a sample of 350 married black couples from Washington D.C. in 1965, found evidence that skin tone differentials had reversed for recent marital cohorts of black men. They found that darker skin was associated with higher levels of education, spousal education and occupational mobility for younger marital cohorts; whereas lighter skin was associated with better outcomes for older marriage cohorts. For black women, on the other hand, lighter skin was associated with better outcomes for all marriage cohorts. According to Udry et al., increased black pride associated with the Civil Rights Movement brought about this shift for black men.

The findings of Udry et al. (1971) have been viewed skeptically by other scholars. Three more recent studies based on large national samples have presented results which are apparently at odds with their findings.

Two of these studies examined the first wave of the National Survey of Black Americans, a nationally representative survey of black Americans 18 years and older, conducted in 1980. Hughes and Hertel (1990) found significant skin tone differentials in education, occupational prestige, income, and spousal education and occupational prestige, even after controlling for family background characteristics. Furthermore, they compared the magnitude of the results from their study to earlier studies and concluded that there had been no change in the effect of skin tone on education and occupation from 1950 to 1980. Keith and Herring (1991), similarly, found significant differences by skin tone in terms of education, occupation and income, even after controlling for family background characteristics. They did not directly compare their estimates to previous ones, but concluded that skin tone discrimination "continues to occur within this era." (p. 775)

Seltzer and Smith (1991) used the special over-sample of blacks in the 1982 General Social Survey to examine skin tone differentials in education, occupational prestige and marital status. They found that lighter-skinned blacks are more highly educated, have greater occupational prestige and are more likely to be married than darker-skinned blacks, but they do not control for parental background in their analysis. They concluded that "in the later third of the 20th century, the Black community continues to exhibit a degree of class stratification based on color." (p. 284)

These three studies have provided important insight into the skin tone hierarchy within the black population. However, their pronouncements about the persistence of skin tone differentials in the post Civil-Rights era must be examined carefully. All three of these studies reached this conclusion by looking for simple period changes in skin tone differentials. If skin tone is found to have an effect on some other variable in a 1980 survey, then skin tone is treated as producing this effect in 1980. However, a survey of black Americans 18 years and older in 1980 includes many individuals who lived much of their life prior to the Civil Rights period. For older cohorts, educational, occupational and marital outcomes were determined by conditions in existence prior to 1980. Educational outcomes tend to be concentrated early in life, occupational outcomes are partly determined by occupational trajectories which have their basis in the past, and the importance of skin tone on the marriage market is important as the time of the marriage, not at a later stage in the union. The important question is not whether we observe an overall difference between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned individuals in 1980, but whether this difference has changed for recent cohorts who came of age during and after the Civil Rights period.

Hughes and Hertel (1990) partially address this question in their analysis. They include an interaction between age and skin tone in their models and find the interaction to be statistically significant for educational attainment. However, Hughes and Hertel are extremely ambivalent about the meaning of this interaction. First, they imply that it is an age effect rather than a cohort effect, saying "this interaction was significant in the case of education, indicating that for young people the effect of skin color on education is negligible, *but increases with age*, so that for older people those with light skin have more education." (p.

1111, emphasis mine) Later, however, they suggest that this interaction may indicate a change in the effect of skin tone over time (p. 1115), despite downplaying its significance with their general conclusion that they “detect no evidence that the effect of skin color on socioeconomic status changed appreciably between 1950 and 1980.” (p. 1114) Certainly, this latter finding has been the predominant message taken from their influential paper and this message is reinforced by the title of the paper itself: “The Significance of Color Remains.” As I demonstrate below, Hughes and Hertel were capturing an important change with their interaction term, but failed to follow it up with more precise models. I present such models below. These models reveal not only strong declines in skin tone differentials for educational attainment, but also reveal declines in skin tone differentials for occupational attainment. Furthermore, because multiple waves of the National Survey of Black Americans are now available, I can adjudicate between age and cohort interpretations of these changes.

## Data and Methods

Data come from the four waves of the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) (Jackson and Gurin 1997) and the 1982 General Social Survey (GSS82). The NSBA is a simple random sample of black Americans 18 years of age and older. The longitudinal survey was originally conducted in 1979-1980. There were three follow-up waves conducted in the 1980s and early 1990s. The sample size and years for each wave are shown in Table 1. There was significant attrition in the later waves of the survey.

**Table 1: Sample Size and Years for Waves of The National Survey of Black Americans and the General Social Survey, 1982**

Wave	Year	Dependent Variables Available			
		N	R's Educ.	R's Occ.	Spouse Educ.
NSBA, Wave 1	1979-80	2103	Yes	Yes	Yes
NSBA, Wave 2	1987-88	916	Yes	Yes	No
NSBA, Wave 3	1989-90	771	No	Yes	No
NSBA, Wave 4	1992	644	No	Yes	No
GSS	1982	510	Yes	Yes	No

The GSS82 contained a special over-sample of the black population which also recorded the skin-tone of the respondent. I use only the black sub-sample from the GSS82, which included 510 blacks, 18 years and older.

Table 1 also shows the dependent variables used in this analysis and the surveys in which they are available. I examine each respondent's total years of education, occupational prestige and spousal years of education. Occupation in both the NSBA and the GSS82 is coded according to the 1970 three-digit census codes. For those who are retired, I use their last occupation. I recode the three-digit census codes into Duncan SEI scores (Blau and Duncan 1967). Years of education are available only for the first two waves of the NSBA, while occupational scores are available for all four waves. Information on spousal education is only available for the first wave of the NSBA. The GSS82 does not contain enough married individuals to conduct an analysis of spousal education.

In both surveys, I restrict the sample to native-born blacks less than 80 years of age. Foreign-born blacks from the West Indies and Africa may be very dark and yet come from a selective immigrant group, and thus they may have a tendency to obscure the skin tone hierarchy existing among native-born blacks. There are so few people at older ages that they

may have an undue influence on change across cohorts simply by random chance. For the occupational and educational attainment models, I also restrict the sample to those over 25 years of age, to exclude individuals who are still involved in the schooling process. As a result, the youngest cohort examined in the first wave of the NSBA is the 1955 birth cohort. For later waves, I include up to the final 1963 birth cohort, because these cohorts then meet the minimum age requirement. In the GSS82, the youngest birth cohort is the 1958 birth cohort. This age restriction is not placed on the marriage models, but in these models I do restrict the sample to only those who are currently married.

In both surveys, black interviewers rated each respondent's skin tone on a scale of one (darkest) to five (lightest). This type of scale is not optimal as it involves the subjective perception of the interviewer which may be influenced by other factors, but it is the only measure available and it has been the predominant method of measuring skin tone in most studies of skin tone differentials. In the section that immediately follows, I reduce these five groups into three by collapsing the two darkest categories and the two lightest. In the formal models that follow later, I do not collapse the five groups.

### ***Trends across cohorts***

In order to provide a broad overview, I first plot the outcome measures by five-year cohorts, divided into three skin tone groups: light, medium, and dark. Figure 1 shows the results for educational attainment in terms of the absolute difference in years of schooling between lighter-skinned blacks and both medium and darker-skinned blacks. The data are plotted for both Wave I and II of the NSBA. Because I am using sample data, there is significant random noise in these points, particularly for the small older cohorts. The points are smoothed using a LOWESS technique (Cleveland 1979).

Even without the smoothing, the trend is clear. There is a convergence in years of schooling between blacks of all skin tones. For most cohorts, the ranking is as expected. Both medium-skinned and darker-skinned blacks have lower educational attainment than lighter-skinned blacks, and darker-skinned blacks have the lowest educational attainment overall. For younger cohorts, however, the differences between the three groups get progressively smaller until the differences are virtually non-existent. For the youngest cohorts in the second wave, the ordering of the groups is even reversed.<sup>1</sup>

Where the decline begins is uncertain. For the medium-skinned cohorts the decline only seems to begin in earnest for cohorts born between 1930 and 1940, while for darker-skinned cohorts the decline appears to be more constant across the time span.

Figure 2 presents similar results for occupational attainment differences by cohort, as measured by the Duncan Socioeconomic Index. To simplify the graphs, I do not show the results for the third and fourth waves here, but they are very similar to the pattern for the second wave. The pattern here is quite different from the one for educational attainment. In general, there appears to be a curvilinear relationship in which skin tone differences actually grew from the earliest birth cohorts to those born in the 1930s, and then began to decline. This decline is apparent for medium-skinned blacks in both waves and for darker-skinned blacks in the second wave.

This result is intriguing and suggests that mulatto dominance in educational institutions preceded their dominance in high-status occupations. Given that mulattoes first came to dominate the black educational system in the days of Reconstruction, this finding is perhaps understandable.

A second important feature of Figure 2 is the period convergence between Wave I and Wave II. For all cohorts still in the labor market (born after the 1915-1920 cohort), there is a dramatic

Figure 1. Skin Tone Differences In Education Across Birth Cohorts, National Survey of Black Americans

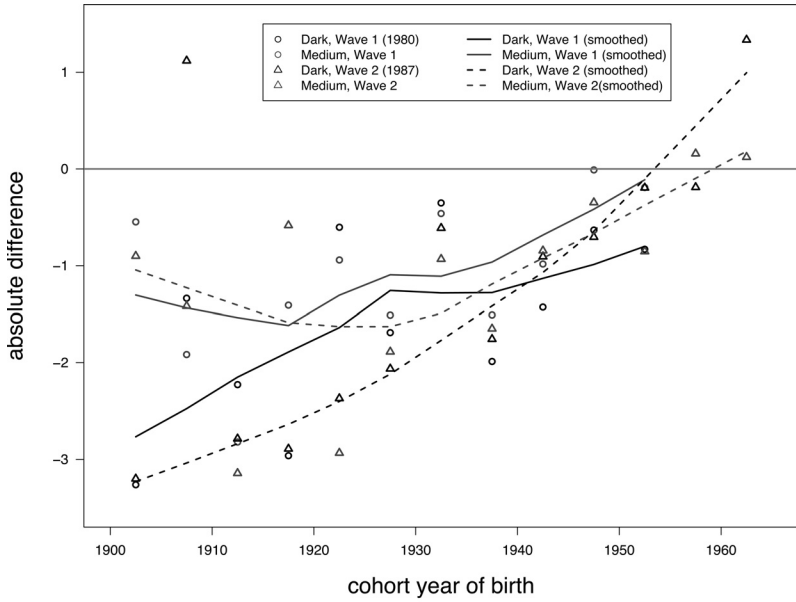
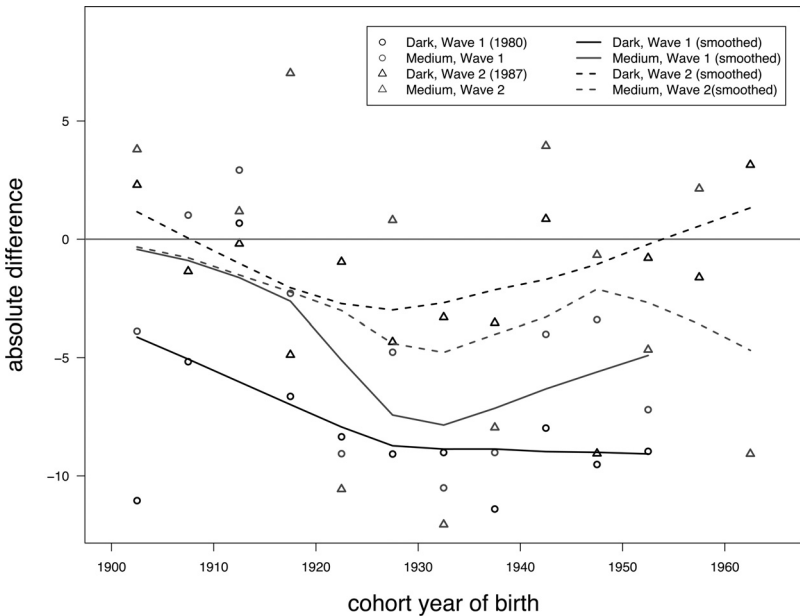


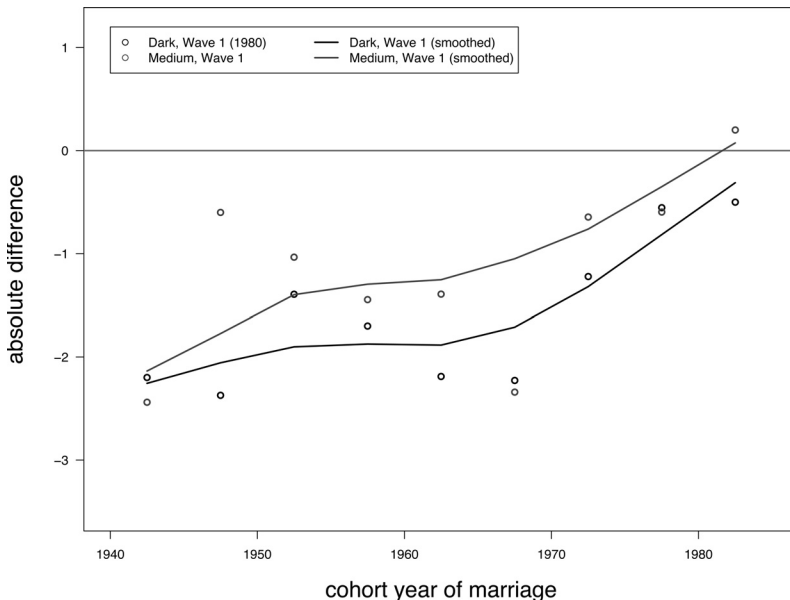
Figure 2. Skin Tone Differences in Occupational Attainment (Duncan SEI) across Birth Cohorts, National Survey of Black Americans



decline in skin tone differences from 1980 to 1987. Unlike educational attainment, which is largely achieved early in the life course and then remains constant, occupational mobility occurs throughout the life course. The results here suggest that upward mobility was greater from 1980 to 1987 for medium and darker-skinned blacks than for lighter-skinned blacks, leading to a convergence in occupational attainment across cohorts. However, because of the high attrition between Waves I and II, I cannot completely rule out that this apparent convergence across periods is an artifact of this attrition.

Finally, I plot a similar graph in Figure 3 for spousal differences in years of education by marital cohorts. It is important to use marital cohorts rather than birth cohorts here, because the year of the marriage more accurately reflects the marriage market conditions. Marital data is only available for Wave I of the NSBA, and I exclude marital cohorts prior to 1940 because there were very few light-skinned blacks (less than five) in those cohorts. The figures show the expected rank ordering of the skin tone groups. Both medium-skinned and darker-skinned groups had less educated spouses than the lighter-skinned group and the darker-skinned group had the least educated spouses overall. For the cohorts married in the 1960's or later, there is some apparent convergence of skin tone differences in spousal education.

**Figure 3: Skin Tone Differences in Spousal Education across Marital Cohorts, National Survey of Black Americans**



While these figures provide an important overview, they are not sufficient for three reasons. First, they do not take into account confounding factors which may vary across cohorts and produce spurious results. For example, education is important for both occupational attainment and spousal selection. Because Figures 2 and 3 do not account for educational differences between skin-tone groups, they may simply be “carrying through” skin-tone differences which are native to the educational sphere.

Second, the LOWESS smoothing gives each five-year cohort the same weight, despite the fact that some of these cohort samples are very small and thus subject to more random variation, particularly for the older cohorts, where the range of values increases considerably.

This statistical noise makes pinpointing the timing of change difficult.

Finally, these figures have no measure of statistical inference. I would like a more rigorous method of identifying potential changes to the skin tone hierarchy and the timing of such changes. To address these issues, I now turn to multivariate models.

### ***Multivariate models***

A simple model for measuring skin tone differences would be:

$$\gamma_i = \alpha + \beta s_i + \chi'_i \lambda + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Where, for the  $i$ th individual,  $\gamma_i$  is some outcome variable,  $s_i$  is a skin tone variable, and  $\chi_i$  is a vector of covariates. When these covariates have been added to the model,  $\beta$  provides an estimate of the net "effect" of skin tone, or the differences between skin tone groups holding other factors constant.

Equation (1) is the general model used by Keith and Herring (1991) and Hughes and Hertel (1990). I wish to extend this model to capture potential changes in the skin tone hierarchy across different cohorts. In keeping with the approach of previous research, I model the skin tone measure as a continuous variable. One could also measure skin tone using categorical variables. However, given the general expectations that skin tone acts as a gradient, the continuous variable approach seems reasonable. The gradient approach is also supported by the results of Figures 1-3, which generally show the appropriate rank ordering and distancing between the three groups of lighter-skinned, medium-skinned, and darker-skinned blacks. Using this formulation,  $\beta$  becomes the change in  $\gamma_i$  associated with being one skin tone category lighter. A sensitivity analysis (not shown here) demonstrated that the results are substantively the same when skin tone is treated as a categorical variable.

The model I use assumes that decline of skin tone differentials begins with a certain cohort and continues at a linear pace for subsequent cohorts. This type of model can be used to determine if a particular time period in the 20th century is associated with a decline of the skin tone hierarchy. I refer to this type of model as a "threshold model." The basic threshold model is, as follows:

$$\gamma_i = \alpha + (\beta + \gamma t_i) s_i + \delta w_i + \chi'_i \lambda + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Where  $\gamma_i$  is the outcome variable of interest for the  $i$ th individual, either years of education or an occupational prestige score,  $w_i$  is the cohort year of birth (occupational and educational attainment models) or marriage (marriage models) for the  $i$ th individual,  $s_i$  is the skin tone score for the  $i$ th individual, and  $\chi_i$  is a vector of control variables for the  $i$ th individual. The key variable in this analysis is  $t_i$ , which is defined as follows:

$$t_i = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } w_i < v \\ w_i - v & \text{else} \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

Where  $w_i$  is the cohort year for the  $i$ th individual and  $v$  is some year before which skin tone differences have not changed between cohorts. After year  $v$ , the skin tone effect changes at a linear rate of  $\gamma$ . A positive value of  $\beta$  indicates skin tone differentials favoring lighter-skinned

individuals. A negative value on  $\gamma$  indicates a linear decline in these differentials after some year  $u$ .<sup>2</sup> The key coefficient in these models is  $\gamma$ , which measures the strength of change in skin tone differentials for cohorts born (or married) after some year,  $u$ . I identify the best-fitting  $u$  by selecting the year which maximizes  $R^2$  in the model. I then compare this best-fitting threshold model from equation (2) to the more parsimonious no-change model from equation (1) using the standard F-test and the BIC statistic (Raftery 1995).

The threshold model imposes a fairly rigid form on changes across cohorts, because it assumes flatness followed by a linear change. In order to test the validity of this form, I also utilize a set of polynomial models. Polynomial terms allow the skin tone effect to change in non-linear ways across cohorts, allowing for greater flexibility. I fit models which include fourth-order polynomial cohort-skin tone interactions, as follows:

$$\gamma_i = \alpha + (\beta + \gamma_1 w_i + \gamma_2 w_i^2 + \gamma_3 w_i^3 + \gamma_4 w_i^4) s_i + \delta w_i + \chi'_i \lambda + \epsilon_i \tag{4}$$

According to this model, the effect of skin tone for any individual will be a function of the cohort year  $w_i$  for that person, such that:

$$\frac{\delta \gamma}{\delta s} = \beta + \gamma_1 w + \gamma_2 w^2 + \gamma_3 w^3 + \gamma_4 w^4 \tag{5}$$

This partial derivative is a fourth-order polynomial function. The  $\gamma$ 's are not directly interpretable, but can be understood graphically. Furthermore, calculus techniques can be used to determine maxima and minima of the function.

The control variables for both types of model differ by the outcome being examined. All models include dummies for gender and region (south vs. non-south dummy). In the occupational and spousal attainment models, I include the respondent's own education (years of schooling) as a control, since education is a prime determinant of both occupation and spousal education. I include father's occupation as a control variable in all models.<sup>3</sup> I also include parental education (years of schooling) in the educational and spousal attainment models. It is important to control for these parental characteristics because skin tone may to some extent be a proxy for the inheritance of family advantage. Without such controls, the direct effect of skin tone will be overestimated. I also experimented with interactions between skin tone and gender and between skin tone and region, but neither interaction produced any notable results. I do, however, include both a gender-birth cohort and an education-birth cohort interaction in the occupational attainment models to capture changes over the course of the century in occupational gender differentials and returns on human capital. Finally, I include a family size variable from the GSS82 which is not available in the NSBA.

There are a large number of missing values for parental education and occupation in both surveys. Hughes and Hertel (1990) and Keith and Herring (1991) apparently omitted these cases, leading to drastic reductions in sample size. I use a different technique here. I impute the mean for all missing values. I then include dummy variables indicating which values were missing. This dummy specification ensures that the mean imputation will not bias the estimate of the parameter for the variable so imputed. This method does not produce better estimates, but does allow me to use the full dataset.<sup>4</sup>

In any analysis of change across cohorts in a single time period, two competing explanations must be addressed. The first is that the observed changes across cohorts are actually changes across age. The second is that younger cohorts differ from older cohorts because of differential mortality in the older cohorts.

The first concern can be addressed by examining multiple waves of the NSBA. If the threshold year truly represents a cohort change, it should not shift across waves. On the other

hand, if the threshold year represents the effect of reaching some particular age, then it should shift to later years in subsequent waves. For example, if the best threshold for educational attainment in Wave I (1980) is 1945, then the threshold applies to 35 year olds. If this threshold is an age effect, the best threshold year in Wave II (1987-88) would be the 1952-1953 birth cohort because that cohort would be 35 in 1987-88. If the effect is truly a cohort effect, on the other hand, then the threshold should not change across waves. In this case, the threshold would remain steady at the 1945 birth cohort across both waves, even though this cohort would be older in Wave II.

The second concern can be addressed in a similar fashion. If mortality attrition at some age created the threshold, then that threshold should move to later years in subsequent waves, assuming that the pattern of selection by age is not changing over time.

## Analysis

Table 2 summarizes the results of fitting the threshold model for each outcome. The table shows the cohort where change begins for the best fitting threshold model from equation (2). The table also compares this model to the no-change model from equation (1). P-values from an F-test between the two models are presented as well as the improvement in BIC in the second model. Small p-values indicate a preference for the threshold model. Negative BIC differences also indicate a preference for the threshold model. The strength of the threshold model over the no-change model by BIC is determined according to the conventions of Raftery (1995, p. 139).

**Table 2: Fit of Threshold Models and Best-Fitting Year for Beginning of Change in the Effect of Skin Tone**

Table 2 strongly suggests a change in educational skin tone differentials for cohorts born

Outcome	Year	F-test (p-value)	BIC Difference	BIC Strength
Education (NSBA W1)	1944	<.01	-15.75	Very Strong
Education (NSBA W2)	1944	<.01	-33.28	Very Strong
Education (GSS82)	1948	<.01	-4.89	Positive
Duncan SEI (NSBA W1)	1953	<.01	-8.98	Strong
Duncan SEI (NSBA W2)	1944	<.01	-1.27	Weak
Duncan SEI (NSBA W3)	1945	<.01	-6.56	Strong
Duncan SEI (NSBA W4)	1947	<.01	-2.56	Positive
Duncan SEI (GSS82)	1934	<.01	-4.31	Positive
Spousal Educ. (NSBA W1)	1969	.20	4.11	Not Pref.

Notes: The strength of the BIC statistic is determined according to the conventions of Raftery (1995)

in the mid-1940s. It shows milder, but consistent, support around the same time frame for a decline in occupational skin tone differentials. The threshold model is preferred to the simpler model by both the F-test and BIC in both of these cases. For spousal education, however, there is no evidence of a change in the effect of skin tone across cohorts. The threshold model for spousal attainment is not preferred to the more parsimonious no-change model by either the F-test or BIC. I will now examine each of these outcomes in more detail.

### ***Educational Attainment***

For both waves of the NSBA, the educational attainment threshold model is strongly preferred over the basic model, indicating a change in skin tone differentials beginning with cohorts born around the mid-1940s. This timing corresponds well to the cohorts who grew up during and after the Civil Rights period. Furthermore, the year of the best-fitting model is consistent across Wave I and Wave II of the NSBA, indicating that this change is a true cohort effect. If the threshold model had instead captured an age effect, then the best fitting year would have moved to 1951-52 in Wave II, which was conducted seven to eight years after Wave I. Instead, the best-fitting model remains fixed on the birth cohort of 1944 in both waves, despite the fact that this cohort was seven to eight years older in the second wave. The results for the GSS82 also support a threshold model, although the level is not as strong and the best-fitting year is slightly later.

The multivariate results here suggest a later decline in the influence of skin tone than the bivariate results presented earlier in Figure 1. Exploratory analysis (not shown here) revealed that the apparent early declines in the effect of skin tone observed in Figure 1 disappeared after controls for family background were introduced.<sup>5</sup> The extremely large differences by skin tone for the earliest cohorts were a result of the extreme concentration of privileged backgrounds among lighter-skinned individuals within these cohorts. Imperfection in both the transmission of this privilege and skin tone across generations led to a decline in the gross skin tone effect among early cohorts.

It is possible that the threshold model may be imposing too strict a structure on the pattern of cohort change. The results of the polynomial model presented in Figure 4, however, reveal that the threshold model is a very good approximation of the pattern. This figure fits the skin tone coefficient across birth cohorts, using equation (4). The results from the full models are available in the appendix. The results are strikingly consistent across both waves of the NSBA and the GSS82. All three lines are positive and relatively constant in the early period, and begin to decline dramatically in the 1940s. The GSS82 line increases dramatically with the early cohorts, but this increase should be strongly discounted as the sample size for these early cohorts is quite small.

Based on Figure 4, the threshold model appears to be a reasonable model of change across birth cohorts in terms of educational skin tone differentials. Table 3 shows the important parameters (b and g) for this model in all three surveys. For simplicity, the threshold for each model is set at 1945. The full results are available in the appendix. The effects of the control variables are generally as expected from previous research on educational attainment.

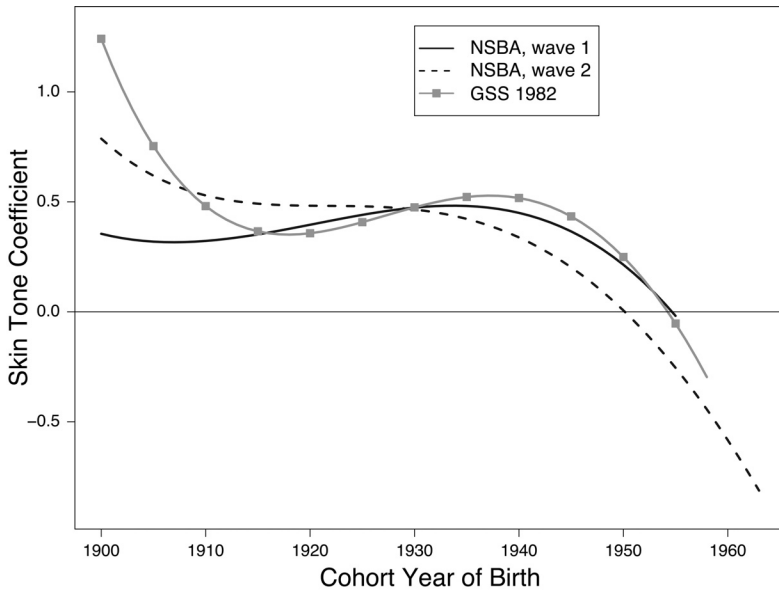
**Table 3: Estimated Skin Tone Parameters for Educational Attainment Threshold Models, National Survey of Black Americans and General Social Survey**

Variable	NSBA, W1		NSBA, W2		GSS82	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
Skin Tone	.341 ***	.419 ***	.195 *	.367 ***	.355 *	.479 **
( )	(.077)	(.078)	(.097)	(.098)	(.156)	(.160)
Skin Tone		-.050 ***		-.053 ***		-.050 **
Decline ( )		(.010)		(.008)		(.017)

Notes: Full models available in the appendix. The first year of the decline is set to 1945 in all models.

\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001

**Figure 4: Predicted Effect of Skin Tone on Educational Attainment (highest grade completed) across Birth Cohorts, Based on Fourth-Order Polynomial Models**



The models predict that individuals with lighter skin tone historically had more years of education, even compared to someone of the same sex, age, region, and parental background. The coefficient of .419 in the second model for Wave I of the NSBA indicates that, prior to 1945, the average difference between someone in the lightest category and someone in the darkest category was 1.68 years of schooling (.419 x 4 degrees of difference).

The second model for all three surveys shows that this skin tone effect has declined dramatically for younger cohorts. The interaction effect,  $g$ , is strongly negative, statistically significant, and consistent across all three surveys. The models predict that for every birth cohort born after 1945, skin tone differences in education between the darkest and the lightest blacks declined by about .2 years of education for each cohort year. At that rate, skin tone had virtually no effect on the educational outcomes of cohorts born after 1953.

The main effect of skin tone ( $b$ ) is also more consistent across the waves of the NSBA in the models including the decline parameter ( $g$ ) than in those models which do not. Because the birth cohort composition shifted to younger cohorts between the waves, the second wave was more representative of cohorts born after the year of change. Models, which don't take into account the cohort decline, find an apparent period decline in  $b$  because of this shift to younger cohorts. Once the decline is accounted for,  $b$  represents the effect only for those cohorts born prior to 1945. The value of this coefficient is stable across the waves, as would be expected if the threshold model is accurate.

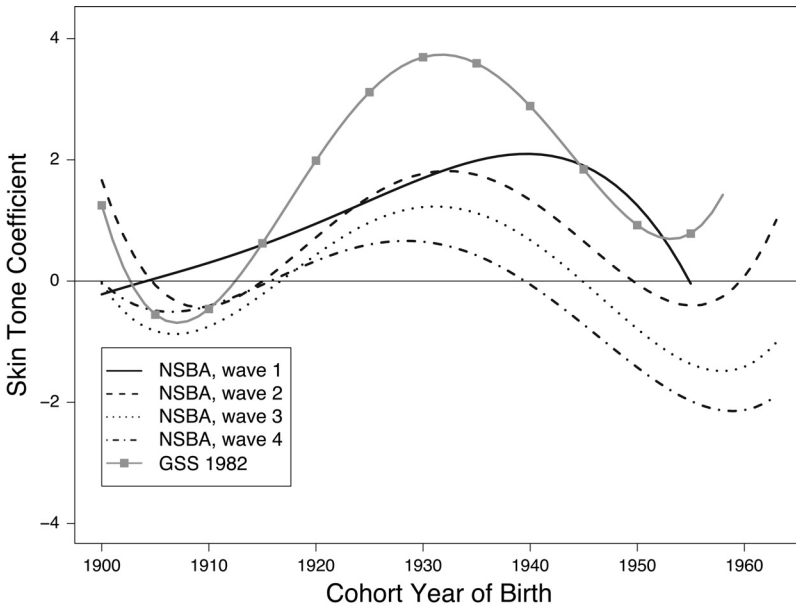
In both the polynomial and threshold models, the data from Wave II of the NSBA suggest an actual reversal in the effect of skin tone for the youngest cohorts studied here. This finding is consistent with Udry, Baumann, and Chase (1971) and cannot be ruled out. Nonetheless, a 95 percent confidence interval of the overall skin tone effect around the final year includes zero, so a reversal must be viewed with some skepticism.

### ***Occupational Attainment***

The results for occupational attainment are more complex than those for educational attainment. Table 2 indicates that the threshold models fit well for Duncan SEI scores, although the results are not quite as strong as those for educational attainment. The threshold years are largely consistent across the waves of the NSBA, indicating a change in the mid-1940s, although Wave I indicates a late year of 1953. The GSS82 on the other hand produces a much earlier threshold of 1934. In any case, the threshold never shifts to later years, suggesting that it is a true cohort effect.

Figure 5, however, reveals that the threshold model may be an oversimplification of the pattern of occupational skin tone differentials across cohorts. This figure shows the effect of skin tone on occupational attainment across birth cohorts based on a fourth-order polynomial model fit using equation (4). According to this figure, the threshold models are indeed concealing considerable complexity in the effect of skin tone across birth cohorts. Two points are important about Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Predicted Effect of Skin Tone on Occupational Attainment (Duncan SEI scores) across Birth Cohorts, Based on Fourth-Order Polynomial Models**



First, among the oldest cohorts, skin tone differentials in occupational attainment actually increased, just as I noted earlier in Figure 2. For these cohorts, skin tone seems to have had no direct effect on occupational attainment, net of the effect it has through education and parental background. Both surveys suggest a rise in the direct effect of skin tone on occupational attainment which peaked somewhere between 1930 and the early 1940s, and then began to decline again. The threshold models fit well because they picked up this latter decline, even though they forced the effect in the earlier period to be constant. There is some indication of a leveling off of this decline in the youngest cohorts.

Second, Figure 5 suggests a period decline in the effect of skin tone. In each wave of the NSBA, the effect of skin tone for each birth cohort is generally lower than the effect in the previous wave. It cannot be ruled out that this decline is a result of selective attrition, but it suggests that there was a period decline between 1980 and 1991 in the effect of skin tone on occupational attainment for all cohorts.

Table 4 shows the approximate minima and maxima birth cohorts for the polynomial models, as well as the main effect of skin tone ( $b$ ) in these models. The full polynomial model is available in the appendix. As the maxima show, the peak of skin tone differentials in occupational attainment occurred for cohorts born in the 1930s. The maximum value appears to be moving backward over waves, which rules out the possibility of an age effect.

**Table 4: Minima and maxima of Occupational Attainment Polynomial Models and The Skin Tone Effect for the 1937 Birth Cohort**

	National Survey of Black Americans				GSS82
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	
Skin Tone ( $\beta$ )	2.07***	1.61*	.96	.24	3.44***
(1937)	(.54)	(.775)	(.84)	(.92)	(.99)
1 <sup>st</sup> Minimum	-	1909	1907	1906	1908
Maximum	1940	1932	1931	1928	1932
2 <sup>nd</sup> Minimum	-	1955	1958	1959	1954

Notes: Full models available in the appendix. For each model, 1937 is set as the baseline birth cohort. There were no real minima for Wave 1 of the NSBA.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

This backward movement of the maximum value across waves is most likely caused by the period decline in skin tone differentials for all cohorts, but possibly affecting younger cohorts more. This period decline is visible in the value of  $b$  over the four waves. I have coded the model such that this value corresponds to the effect of skin tone for the birth cohort of 1937 in all four waves. When this cohort was 43 in 1980, the mean difference in SEI between skin tone groups was 2.1. When this cohort was 50 in 1987, the mean difference had declined to 1.61. When the cohort was 52 in 1989, the skin tone effect had declined to .96, and to .24 by the time the cohort was 55 in 1992. The effect of  $b$  is consistently declining. Within the same birth cohorts, skin tone mattered less in 1992 than it did in 1980.

How can I reconcile these differences between cohort and period change in educational and occupational attainment? Educational credentials are generally received early in the life course and as a result there is no period shift in educational differences later in life. Occupational changes, however, can occur throughout the life cycle. Occupational upward mobility from 1980 to 1992 was greater for darker and medium skinned blacks than for lighter-skinned blacks creating a convergence in skin tone differentials across all cohorts still in the labor market.

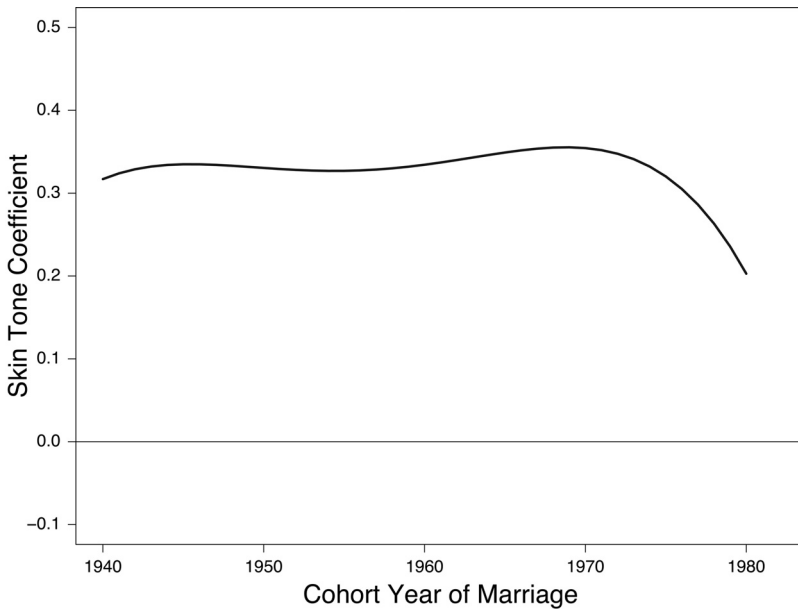
### ***Assortative Mating***

For spousal characteristics, the threshold model is not preferred. Skin tone differentials in spousal characteristics apparently did not change across marital cohorts. This stability is in

sharp contrast to the changes across educational and occupational attainment.

This finding is supported by the fourth-order polynomial model presented in Figure 6. The effect of skin tone is constant across most of the cohorts. It declines somewhat for the later cohorts, but this decline is not statistically significant, using either the threshold or polynomial model. Overall, the polynomial model suggests that the effect of skin tone on spousal education was positive and relatively constant throughout the period.

**Figure 6: Predicted Effect of Skin Tone on Spousal Years of Education across Marriage Cohorts, Based on Fourth-Order Polynomial Models**



The multivariate result for spousal education is inconsistent with the trend shown in Figure 3 which suggests significant convergence in spousal attainment across skin tone groups in the youngest cohorts. Exploratory analysis not shown here suggests that this convergence was driven by the convergence in educational attainment between skin tone groups. Since education is controlled for in the multivariate models, we observe the net effect of skin tone on spousal attainment. This net effect has apparently not changed greatly, although there may have been slight declines for cohorts married in the 1970s.

## Conclusions

Previous research on colorism in the post-Civil Rights era has neglected to adequately examine differences between cohorts. When these differences are taken into account, some of the previous results are completely reversed. Beginning with cohorts born in the 1940s, skin tone differences in educational and occupational attainment which have traditionally privileged lighter-skinned blacks declined significantly. The decline was so dramatic that skin tone does not appear to have been relevant at all for cohorts born at the

end of the study period (1963). There is also some evidence of a period decline for skin tone differentials in occupational attainment from 1980 to the early 1990s, affecting all cohorts still in the labor market. However, there is no evidence of change in the importance of skin tone in the marriage market, where lighter skin still plays an important role in providing access to high quality spouses.

I have also discovered an apparent rise in occupational skin tone earlier in this century. For cohorts born early in the century, occupational differentials by skin tone were simply carried over from skin-tone privileges within the educational system. By mid-century, the independent effect of skin tone on occupational attainment had actually grown. The mulatto elite originally established its dominance through the educational system (Williamson [1980] 1995). This early dominance of the educational system may explain the unusual pattern. As skin tone began to take on a meaning of its own, occupational differentiation grew.

The purpose of this study has been to document changes in skin tone differentials across recent birth and marital cohorts. In addressing this issue, however, it has brought up further questions as to the nature of the observed decline. These questions will need to be addressed by future research, but I offer a few observations here.

It may seem necessary to reconcile the findings here with research in social psychology which emphasizes the continuing salience of skin tone for blacks, particularly in evaluations of physical attractiveness (Bond and Cash 1992; Hill 2002b; Porter 1991; Powell-Hopson and Hopson 1988; Robinson and Ward 1995). However, a decline of skin tone differentials does not necessarily imply that prejudice based on skin color has declined. I have suggested that the skin tone hierarchy may have been based on lighter-skinned blacks' dominance of access to opportunity, irrespective of how they were viewed by other blacks. Integration during the Civil Rights period may have reduced this dominance, because it generated new white gatekeepers of opportunity who, while not race-blind, may have been largely tone-blind.

Therefore, color preferences might still remain (although not necessarily favoring lighter skin), but structural changes in larger race relations have reduced the advantage it previously gave to lighter-skinned individuals. This supposition is only speculative, however, since we have no information on precisely why the decline occurred. Nonetheless, this hypothesis helps reconcile the results presented here with evidence which suggests that skin tone remains salient among blacks. It also helps reconcile the discrepancy between marital and other outcomes. Because marriage remains predominantly intraracial, we would expect less change in the effect of skin tone if skin tone preferences in the realm of physical attractiveness still remain strong.

Ultimately, this paper clearly demonstrates that our data on skin tone are woefully out of date. Hopefully, the results presented here will generate renewed interest and exploration of this topic, particularly as the growth of a contemporary black/white biracial population adds a completely new dimension to the issue.

**Table 5: OLS Regression Models Predicting Total Number of Grades Completed, National Survey of Black Americans and the General Social Survey, 1982**

Variable	NSBA, W1		NSBA, W2		GSS82	
	I	II	I	II	I	II
Intercept	12.72 *** (.290)	12.99 *** (.293)	13.65 *** (.356)	13.95 *** (.351)	12.94 *** (.814)	13.26 *** (.814)
Skin Tone ( $\beta$ )	.341 *** (.077)	.419 *** (.078)	.195 * (.097)	.367 *** (.098)	.355 * (.156)	.479 ** (.160)
Skin Tone Decline ( $\gamma$ )		-.050 *** (.010)		-.053 *** (.008)		-.050 ** (.017)
Father's Occupation	.142 *** (.017)	.145 *** (.017)	.127 *** (.022)	.127 *** (.021)	.008 (.015)	.007 (.015)
Father's Education	.037 (.027)	.051 (.027)	.045 (.033)	.067 * (.032)	.020 (.054)	.020 (.054)
Mother's Education	.166 *** (.028)	.168 *** (.027)	.138 *** (.034)	.148 *** (.033)	.272 *** (.051)	.278 *** (.051)
Birth Year	.079 *** (.005)	.097 *** (.006)	.058 *** (.006)	.093 *** (.008)	.067 *** (.010)	.093 *** (.013)
Male	.036 (.143)	.024 (.142)	.056 (.182)	.042 (.178)	.292 (.300)	.299 (.297)
South	-.787 *** (.140)	-.756 *** (.139)	-.779 *** (.174)	-.735 *** (.170)	-.383 (.303)	-.372 (.300)
No. of Siblings					-.087 * (.037)	-.090 * (.037)
Father Occ. Missing	-.065 (.188)	-.037 (.186)	-.170 (.235)	-.070 (.230)	.049 (.416)	.062 (.412)
Father's Ed Missing	-.588 *** (.176)	-.590 *** (.175)	-.570 ** (.217)	-.548 ** (.212)	-1.191 ** (.410)	-1.176 ** (.407)
Mother's Ed Missing	-1.487 *** (.182)	-1.487 *** (.181)	-1.655 *** (.230)	-1.599 *** (.225)	-.681 (.369)	-.736 * (.366)
N	1651	1651	877	877	385	385
R <sup>2</sup>	.406	.415	.390	.417	.347	.362

Notes: The first year of the decline is set to 1945 in all models. In both surveys, father's occupation is centered on the mean, parental education is centered on 12 years of schooling, and birth year is centered on the 1945 birth cohort.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 6: Polynomial OLS Regression Models Predicting Total Number of Grades Completed, National Survey of Black Americans and the General Social Survey, 1982**

Variable	NSBA W1	NSBA W2	GSS82
Intercept	9.13 *** (.391)	10.56 *** (.457)	12.61 *** (.673)
Skin Tone ( $\beta$ )	.365 *** (.104)	.202 (.112)	.434 * (.196)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_1$ )	-.023 *** (.006)	-.031 *** (.008)	-.026 (.014)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_2$ )	-.0013 * (.0006)	-.0012 *** (.0003)	-.0020 * (.0009)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_3$ )	-.00002 (.00004)	-.00001 (.00002)	-.00003 (.00007)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_4$ )	.0000001 (.0000005)	.0000001 (.0000004)	.0000007 (.0000010)
Father's Occupation	.146 *** (.017)	.127 *** (.021)	.007 (.015)
Father's Education	.048 (.028)	.068 * (.033)	.025 (.054)
Mother's Education	.171 *** (.028)	.146 *** (.033)	.280 *** (.051)
Birth Year	.089 *** (.014)	.112 *** (.017)	.094 (.029)
Male	.024 (.143)	.044 (.179)	.282 (.297)
South	-.739 *** (.140)	-.739 *** (.171)	-.392 (.300)
No. of Siblings			-0.094 * (.037)
Father Occ. Missing	-.040 (.187)	-.066 (.230)	.127 (.414)
Father's Ed Missing	-.601 *** (.175)	-.564 *** (.213)	-1.216 ** (.408)
Mother's Ed Missing	-1.491 *** (.181)	-1.587 *** (.226)	-.686 (.366)
N	1651	877	385
R <sup>2</sup>	.415	.419	.368

Notes: In both surveys, father's occupation and parental education are centered on the mean and birth year is centered on 1945.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 7: Polynomial OLS Regression Models Predicting Occupational Prestige (Duncan SEI Score), National Survey of Black Americans and the General Social Survey, 1982**

Variable	NSBA				GSS82
	W1	W2	W3	W4	
Intercept	24.02 *** (1.586)	28.74 *** (2.300)	30.77 *** (2.498)	34.15 *** (2.753)	25.83 *** (2.941)
Skin Tone ( $\beta$ )	2.065 *** (.540)	1.614 (.775)	.964 (.839)	.240 (.919)	3.435 *** (.989)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_1$ )	.026 (.045)	-.080 (.056)	-.086 (.062)	-.094 (.069)	-.122 (.089)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_2$ )	-.0046 ** (.002)	-.0073 * (.002)	-.0064 * (.003)	-.0047 (.003)	-.0112 * (.005)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_3$ )	-.00017 (.00012)	.00016 (.00082)	.00012 (.00009)	.00010 (.00010)	.00030 (.00016)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_4$ )	-.000018 (.000003)	.000080 (.000003)	.000056 (.000004)	.000040 (.000005)	.000013 (.000009)
Education	3.964 *** (.172)	4.433 *** (.254)	4.578 *** (.278)	4.564 *** (.294)	3.239 *** (.280)
Father's Occupation	.317 ** (.104)	.389 * (.153)	.400 * (.163)	.424 * (.176)	.073 (.075)
Birth Year	.098 (.095)	.177 (.134)	.195 (.147)	.281 (.170)	.113 (.228)
Male	-1.310 (.891)	-1.497 (1.317)	-2.439 (1.436)	-3.738 * (1.607)	1.454 (1.696)
South	-.686 (.858)	-2.102 (1.263)	-1.418 (1.373)	-2.097 (1.516)	-.848 (1.612)
Birth Year	-.307 *** (.057)	-.395 ** (.087)	-.296 ** (.096)	-.343 ** (.115)	-.213 (.129)
*Male Birth Year	.073 *** (.009)	.093 *** (.015)	.099 *** (.017)	.080 *** (.020)	.032 (.025)
*Education Father Occ.	1.227 (1.093)	-0.350 (1.607)	.013 (1.763)	.307 (1.963)	2.102 (1.812)
Missing					
N	1546	862	725	607	206
R <sup>2</sup>	.385	.390	.408	.413	.529

Notes: In both surveys, father's occupation and parental education are centered on the mean and birth year is centered on 1937.

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

**Table 8: Polynomial OLS Regression Models Predicting Spouse's Years of Schooling, Married Adults in the National Survey of Black Americans, Wave 1**

Variable	Estimate
Intercept	9.25 *** (.443)
Skin Tone ( $\beta$ )	.342 ** (.104)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_1$ )	.0031 (.010)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_2$ )	.000024 (.00035)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_3$ )	-.000023 (.00002)
Skin Tone Change ( $\gamma_4$ )	-.00000089 (.0000006)
Education	.431 *** (.031)
Father's Occupation	.040 (.023)
Father's Education	-.035 (.034)
Mother's Education	.085 * (.034)
Marriage Year	.342 ** (.104)
Male	.052 * (.021)
South	-.035 (.034)
Marriage Year *Male	-.044 *** (.012)
Father Occ. Missing	.061 (.241)
Father's Ed Missing	-.251 (.213)
Mother's Ed Missing	-.255 (.225)
N	784
R <sup>2</sup>	.472

Notes: In both surveys, father's occupation and parental education are centered on the mean and marriage year is centered on 1963.  
\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001

## Notes

1. Absolute differences are only one way of measuring convergence. I could also measure the differences relative to the level of education for each light-skinned cohort (in percentage terms). The results of such figures are very similar and so I do not include them here.
2. Careful observers will note that I do not include  $ti$  as a term in its own right. I cannot do this because the collinearity in the model would be prohibitively high. I can, however, capture the effect of this variable by including polynomial terms of birth year. The substantive results of such models are similar to ones without the polynomials, so I exclude them from models presented here.
3. In the NSBA, this is coded as a 31 category list which is roughly ordered by prestige. I include it as a continuous variable. In the GSS82, father's occupation is included as a Duncan SEI score.
4. The large number of imputations performed here might be a concern if parental background was the primary interest. My central concern here is skin tone differences across cohorts. Parental background is only included to provide a better specification, so the additional information added by the imputation is well worth the cost. Alternative models which did omit cases produced similar results, but I prefer the models which make use of the entire dataset.
5. This exploratory analysis used a model with three skin tone groups interacted with five-year cohort dummy variables in order to replicate the bivariate results. A similar exploratory model was constructed for spousal attainment. These models are available from the author upon request.

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