

A Review Essay on Howard Bodenhorn's *The Color Factor: The Economics of African-American Well-Being in the Nineteenth-Century South*[†]

ALLISON SHERTZER*

In The Color Factor: The Economics of African-American Well-Being in the Nineteenth-Century South, Howard Bodenhorn investigates the origins, health, and socioeconomic performance of mixed-race people in the antebellum Southern United States. The central conclusion of the book is that mixed-race people fared better than darker-skinned blacks on nearly every dimension; however, they were still disadvantaged relative to whites. This review essay discusses the book's valuable data contributions and relates Bodenhorn's conclusions to the broader literature on colorism. I close with implications for future research on the economics of skin color. (JEL I12, I31, J15, J31, J71, N31)

1. Introduction

In his new book, *The Color Factor*, Howard Bodenhorn employs a multitude of historical data sources to explore how skin color shaped the lives of black Southerners in the nineteenth century. Using census manuscripts, marriage records from the Freedman's Bureau, court records from trials of racial determination, county registers of free African Americans, and a wealth of qualitative historical evidence, he finds that

the common black–white paradigm is inadequate for analyzing the economic well-being of both enslaved and free blacks. Bodenhorn provides a comprehensive picture of the economic-history literature on colorism while providing some of the strongest quantitative evidence to date on the impact of skin color on the lived experience of African Americans.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, formal institutions in the United States operated largely under a “one-drop rule” definition of race. Bodenhorn begins with a fascinating primer on the more nuanced rules of the nineteenth century, which used racial arithmetic to determine who was white, mixed race, or black. In late eighteenth-century Virginia, a person could have one-quarter African

* University of Pittsburgh.

[†] Go to <https://doi.org/10.1257/jel.20161375> to visit the article page and view author disclosure statement(s).

ancestry and still be legally white, while anyone with between three-quarters and one-half European ancestry was considered mulatto or mixed. In 1924, Virginia passed the Racial Integrity Act, which adopted the one-drop rule of racial classification. Any person with discernable African features or known African ancestry was henceforth simply black. Meanwhile, the census abandoned the trichotomous racial classification, which had allowed individuals to be enumerated as black, white, or mixed, in 1930. Mixed-race people thus disappeared from the statistical history of the United States for over seventy years. Respondents could not indicate mixed-race heritage again until 2000, when widespread public interest in multiracialism emerged.

The Color Factor persuasively argues that mixed-race people were a distinct group in the nineteenth-century South. A fair summary of the empirical work in the book is that the well-being of people who appeared to have both African and European ancestry usually fell between that of blacks and whites; however, the fortunes of mixed-race people resembled those of blacks more so than whites. To draw these conclusions, Bodenhorn relies heavily on the mulatto classification in the 1860 census. He also uncovered several important secondary sources that recorded skin color along with economic outcomes such as height or the date of manumission for former slaves. The empirical work is accompanied by a laudable set of chapters covering the legal, literary, and scientific context of race and color.

I organize my review into four parts:

- (1) *Economic outcomes*: There was a stark relationship between skin color and economic outcomes including occupation and wealth. Most of the data underlying these chapters is from the 1860 census, and I discuss the benefits and limitations of this approach.
- (2) *Marriage and family outcomes*: Color also impacted marriage markets and family structure for African Americans in the South. These analyses rely on the 1860 census, as well as records from the Freedman's Bureau.
- (3) *Height and mortality*: Color also influenced the health of black and mixed-race southerners. Studying the health of historical populations is a challenge, and Bodenhorn relies on height data from county records and death records from the 1860 mortality census to obtain some surprising results on the role of skin color.
- (4) *Slavery and freedom*: The most challenging task undertaken in the book is the investigation of the origins of mixed-race people in the American South. I discuss the book's conclusions, as well as the role of skin color in finding freedom from slavery.

Scholars wishing to study the importance of skin color in contemporary America must grapple with the fact that administrative data sets from the twentieth century reflect the ubiquitous one-drop rule. Accordingly, it would be very difficult to study the fortunes of mixed-race people in the postwar era as comprehensively as Bodenhorn does for the nineteenth century. Several recent papers have attempted to remedy this shortcoming using data sets that contain more than a simple dichotomous classification of race. I highlight areas of overlap between this literature on colorism and the results from Bodenhorn's book. Nonetheless, the robust findings of *The Color Factor* should serve as a call for more research into the economic well-being of mixed-race people in other contexts. I close with some suggestions for scholars wishing to pursue this task.

2. *Employment and Wealth*

The chapters covering work and wealth pose a simple question: was being darker skinned in nineteenth-century America enough to condemn individuals to a lifetime of menial labor with little hope of advancement? Bodenhorn answers this question using a host of outcomes from the 1860 census. Before reviewing the results in more detail, it is worth noting the differences in the empirical approach taken in the book, relative to the existing research on the economic impact of colorism. A small but important literature documents a wage premium for lighter-skinned blacks relative to those with darker skin using contemporary data sets such as the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth or the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, which both contain information on income and skin color (e.g. Goldsmith, Hamilton, and Darity 2006, 2007; Kreisman and Rangel 2015). The census did not ask about wages or income until 1940, so a less conventional approach is needed to measure economic outcomes in the nineteenth century. Measuring economic well-being using occupational status and wealth, Bodenhorn finds that light-skinned African Americans were more successful than those with darker skin.

One of the most striking examples of the advantages of color can be seen in occupational distribution in agriculture, an important sector of the labor market for the antebellum American South. Mixed-race men (enumerated as mulatto in the census) were more likely to be land-owning farmers than black men were. Black men, for their part, were more likely to be farm laborers. Men enumerated as mulatto were also more likely to be tenant farmers, a category usually associated with Southern whites, than men enumerated as black. In addition to these cross-sectional results, Bodenhorn presents evidence of a life-cycle advantage of light skin. Mixed-race men were more

likely to move up the “agricultural ladder” from laboring to tenancy to ownership over the course of their working lives. However, their ascent was still limited: other scholarship finds that both black and mixed-race men lagged behind whites in the transition to becoming farm owners (Atack 1989).

The overrepresentation of mixed-race men in higher-status jobs also extended to urban areas. Using a simple hierarchical classification with manual jobs at the bottom and managerial and professional positions at the top, Bodenhorn shows that, unsurprisingly, occupational segregation was stark for blacks and whites. What is more surprising is that the color gap for black and mixed-race male employment was only slightly less pronounced than the racial gap. However, the 1860 census only provides a cross-section with which to investigate the determinants of these disparities, making it difficult to determine whether formal bans or informal restrictions and discrimination were more important in keeping blacks out of higher-status occupations.

The book’s empirical investigation of self-employment does shed light on the role of informal barriers and racial distaste. Shopkeeping and barbering were both more common occupations among mixed-race men than black men. Several factors likely explain this disparity. Obtaining a shopkeeper’s license required the support of prominent local white men, while barbering required both the capital to open a shop and the ability to engage in close contact with clients. Mixed-race men were more likely to have family resources, white connections, and the ability to attract white customers, all of which translated into greater success in these occupations. Lower rates of self-employment by blacks in service-related sectors likely reflect the fact that white racial distaste reduced the returns to individuals with darker skin. Darker African Americans sought petty self-employment opportunities

in carting or huckstering, which required less capital and fewer personal interactions with whites. Overall, black men were 19 percent more likely to be self-employed than mixed-race men.

Why would blacks select into self-employment in petty trades instead of common laboring for wages? Here Bodenhorn contributes to a classic literature on the determinants of racial disparities in the labor market, again using the 1860 census. One explanation for the overrepresentation of blacks in self-employment is discrimination in the labor market, which led to African Americans being paid lower wages for similar work (Darity and Mason 2004). Labor-market discrimination may involve companies not wanting to hire blacks at all or adopting employment hierarchies that keep whites from being subservient to blacks (Sundstrom 1994). A second explanation is that lower human capital or worse pre-market characteristics reduced the returns to wage-earning work (Donohue and Heckman 1991; Neal and Johnson 1996). Bodenhorn argues that nineteenth-century southern black men's self-employment choices can be explained using pre-market characteristics such as literacy and real estate holdings rather than discrimination in the labor market *per se*.

The importance of pre-market characteristics for explaining occupational outcomes in this period calls for exploration of these early life disparities. Data on educational attainment from the 1860 census is comparatively limited, but Bodenhorn presents evidence demonstrating that mixed-race children were more likely to continue their education beyond the age of thirteen than black children. The historical record provides additional support for this finding; whites often objected to the formal education of black children unless they were of very light complexion. Lighter-skinned children may also have been more likely to be apprenticed to a tradesman, generating the observed over-

representation of mixed-race men in skilled occupations.

Formal schooling was still the gateway to jobs with the highest earnings. The finding that black children had lower schooling attainment than mixed-race children as early as 1860 provides a starting point for an important literature on the relationship between race and schooling (Margo 1990). Educational attainment played a critical role in determining the wage trajectory of black Americans: recent work has found that wage inequality in the South would have been 40 to 51 percent lower in 1940 if schools had truly been "separate but equal" (Carruthers and Wanamaker 2017). Mixed-race individuals appear to have been at an advantage in navigating the segregated school system, and these color-based disparities persisted into the late-twentieth century. Loury (2009) finds that not even the civil rights movement lessened the educational disadvantages of having very dark skin; the apparent progress of African Americans since then was driven by the convergence of medium-toned blacks on light-toned blacks. African Americans with the darkest skin have thus had worse schooling outcomes from the antebellum period to the present day.

Disparities in formal and informal schooling and occupational status necessarily translated into wealth inequality. In earlier work, Bodenhorn and Ruebeck showed that households enumerated as mulatto in the census held 50 percent of white household wealth while black households held 20 percent (Bodenhorn and Ruebeck 2007). The book provides further exploration of the wealth information contained in the 1860 census, showing that mixed-race families occupied a middle ground between blacks and whites on an array of outcomes. A distributional analysis of personal property provides more insight into these socioeconomic disparities. Black and mixed-race heads of households actually held similarly-valued amounts of

property at lower percentiles of the distribution conditional on occupation, age, and location. The starkest differences emerge for family heads in the ninetieth percentile and above, demonstrating that the most well-to-do class of southern African Americans was dominated by mixed-race individuals.

3. *Marriage and Family*

A chapter on marriage and family provides new insights into the role of skin color in family formation in the antebellum South. Using census manuscripts from 1860, Bodenhorn finds evidence of color-based assortative matching that is consistent with lighter skin having been viewed as a positive attribute in the marriage market. Accordingly, black–black and mixed–mixed marriages were far more likely to appear than mixed–black marriages. In an interesting twist, the low odds of observing marriages across the color line were similar in “color conscious” New Orleans and cities in the upper South that have not been noted by scholars for having a more general preference for light skin (p. 105). Color-based assortative matching likely occurred throughout the South.

The 1860 census had only two categories for individuals of African descent, black and mulatto. In another valuable data contribution, Bodenhorn digitizes marriage records from the Bureau of Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Land that contain more detailed information on skin color. The Bureau took on the task of solemnizing slave marriages, which had no legal standing prior to 1865, after the Civil War. The data from counties in Mississippi and Tennessee are particularly well suited to studying color and marriage outcomes. In addition to Deep South identifiers (e.g. black, brown, yellow, or light), some registers express the racial makeup of spouses according to their fraction of white blood. These unique data also reveal a strong tendency towards marriages

that were homogamous by particular color or white blood fraction. Only in urban areas did couples exhibit a lower rate of assortative matching on color.

What drove the tendency towards mixed-race couplings? Bodenhorn’s previous work shows that mulatto–mulatto households held nearly twice the wealth of mulatto–black households (2006). These disparities could have arisen for two reasons. First, it could be that both parties brought wealth, human capital, and the advantages of light skin into mulatto–mulatto couplings that enabled them to achieve greater collective economic success. Second, there may have been negative selection into marriages across the color line. The latter explanation would be surprising, given some of the contemporary findings on African American marriages. Scholars have found that light-skinned African American women today are both more likely to be married at all and more likely to be married to higher-status black spouses, suggesting that black men who marry mixed-race women are positively selected (Hamilton, Goldsmith, and Darity 2009).

Some evidence suggests that marriages between mixed women and black men were relatively more common than marriages between black women and mixed men (table 6.1.C), but Bodenhorn does not explore the occupational standing of men who married across the color line. He does provide an analysis of family size for different types of couples using the 1860 census. The primary finding is that families in which both parents were mixed race were larger by about half a person compared with families in which both parents were black. Bodenhorn interprets this finding as evidence that the higher earnings of mixed-race families allowed them to afford more children.¹

¹This explanation relies on the premise that children were a normal good during this era. The evidence on this question is mixed (see Wanamaker 2014).

On the other hand, the evidence for families with parents who intermarried (i.e. one black parent and one mixed parent) provides conflicting signals. If mixed-race men were typically found in higher-earning occupations than black men were, they should have been able to afford larger families whether they were married to mixed or black women. Yet we see mixed men in marriages with black women had smaller families than mixed men in marriages with mixed women. Did lower-status mixed-race men marry black women in the antebellum South? Similarly, did higher-status black men marry mixed-race women, as scholars have shown using contemporary data? These questions suggest new avenues for research into marriage markets and race in the nineteenth century.

In the section on children, Bodenhorn confirms reviews of the historical accounts that African American children were primarily raised in traditional, two-parent families in this period. Would their lives be shaped to a large extent by the skin color they inherited from their parents? A fascinating recent paper examines families where some sons were classified as mulatto while other sons were classified as black by enumerators in the 1910 census (Mill and Stein 2016). The evidence in *The Color Factor* suggests channels through which the differential impact of color should operate even if family characteristics are held constant. Yet Mill and Stein find only small and economically insignificant differences across these sets of brothers in adulthood. This finding indicates that family background may have alleviated some of the disadvantages associated with darker skin, particularly if the parents were light-skinned enough to have produced at least one child who appeared to be of mixed race. The intergenerational transmission of color, with all of its advantages and disadvantages, is also an important topic for future study.

4. *Health and Mortality*

Studying the health of a population using historical data is an inherently difficult exercise. Bodenhorn follows in the footsteps of a long literature in economic history that uses height to proxy for the health of individuals. After providing a thoughtful introduction to the economics of height, he describes how historical data collected by county clerks on the heights of free African Americans living in the Chesapeake region can be used to study the relationship between skin color and health. These data are a legacy of policies that required free blacks to register with the government and pay a fee in order to receive papers establishing their freedom. The registers for a sample of counties in Maryland and Virginia contain detailed information on the color of free black persons, as well as their height.

Building on his previous work (Bodenhorn 2002), Bodenhorn finds that mixed-race men were consistently taller than black men by about half of an inch. This differential holds across both the manumitted and free-born subgroups in the sample, so the result cannot be simply explained by black men having been more likely to have spent part of their lives in bondage. A second finding is that recently manumitted children appeared more similar in height to free-born blacks than slaves, suggesting that these children were treated preferentially in advance of being manumitted. A third finding is that mixed-race individuals who appear in the registered sample were similar in stature to students at Yale and Amherst around the same time. Thus, the most privileged and light-skinned individuals who registered for their freedom papers may have been as healthy as elite whites.

Bodenhorn cautions us not to place too much weight on the comparison to wealthy white college students because the Virginia and Maryland samples may have been

positively selected from the overall black population. Patterns in the data underscore this concern. For instance, recently manumitted children do not exhibit the extreme stunting documented in young slaves by Steckel (1986b) and others. A striking finding from this literature is that even malnourished slave children caught up remarkably by the time they were adults on the height dimension, if they survived. Steckel (1986a) also notes the grim mortality rates of slave children, which suggests that the observed heights of former slaves may have been higher due to negative selection into early mortality.

While mixed-race individuals may have had an advantage in height relative to blacks, the mortality results tell a different story. Using the 1860 mortality census, Bodenhorn computes death rates by color, age, gender, and slave status. While free African Americans exhibited lower mortality at younger ages relative to slaves, by mid-life, surviving slaves had mortality rates similar to free blacks. Surprisingly, he observes no systematic difference in mortality by color for either slaves or free blacks, except for elderly slaves. Thus, while mixed-race people were, on average, wealthier and working in higher-status occupations, the evidence does not indicate that these economic advantages translated into longer lives. This section provides a fascinating counterpoint to the rest of the book: where mortality was concerned, the reaper was colorblind.

5. *Slavery and Freedom*

An exploration of how skin color shaped the fortunes of African American people in the nineteenth century must necessarily grapple with the origins of mixed-race people. Bodenhorn sketches the history of thought on this difficult topic, noting that the scholarly conceptualization of sexual relations on the plantation has experienced successive revisions. Abolitionist tracts on the

unbridled licentiousness of planters gave way to the work of mid-twentieth-century apologists who instead emphasized the “casual adventures of adolescents engaged in sexual experimentation” (Stampp 1967). These more innocent narratives in turn gave way to late-twentieth-century interpretations of interracial plantation sex as exploitation and rape (e.g. Morgan 1999). Bodenhorn’s own interpretation falls somewhere in the middle: he argues that interracial sex was “sometimes an expression of dominance and unequal power...” and sometimes “an expression of slave agency, imperfect as it was” (p. 62).

It is in describing and analyzing this “imperfect” sexual agency of slaves in an economic framework that this otherwise excellent book falls short. Practitioners of the dismal science may cringe at the assertion that the “economic approach to [interracial] sex... finds less compelling narratives of power, assault, abuse, and exploitation than narratives of costs, incentives, opportunities, and constraints” (p. 56). Although Bodenhorn is careful to acknowledge the trauma inflicted on slave women, he describes the extraction of sex in asymmetric power arrangements using economic terms that are at odds with the context. For instance, he claims Sally Hemings was an example of a slave who “leveraged the sexual favors she bestowed on Thomas Jefferson into life in the Big House for herself...” (p. 68). The language choices here, particularly “leverage” and “bestow,” evoke a far more equal arrangement of power than likely existed between the then-future president and his fourteen-year-old slave.

In Bodenhorn’s view, sex on the plantation was not always an expression of unequal power and many types of arrangements existed between slave women and white men. But the claim that “sex on the nineteenth-century plantation was complicated just as it is complicated in the twenty-first-century suburbs” draws a false equivalence (p. 62). American women now

have legal standing to protect themselves from assault, access to law enforcement in case their rights are violated, and live in a society that generally acknowledges the importance of consent in sexual relationships. Slave women living on Southern plantations had none of these rights or privileges.

Female slaves seeking to avoid being worked to death or permanently separated from their families may have allowed their masters or overseers to have sex with them, or even preemptively sought out such sexual arrangements, but presenting these couplings as evidence of agency in an economic sense is problematic. Moreover, the empirical evidence underlying the economic analysis of interracial sex in the book is a simple exercise showing that mixed-race babies were more likely to appear on larger plantations (figure 4.1). Bodenhorn notes that this finding is consistent with a model of assortative mating in which white men were more likely to find a slave they wanted to use for sex when they had a larger pool of potential “matches.” However, this analysis does not provide new evidence on the extent of coercion in couplings between slaves and white men on the plantation. The data currently available to scholars are simply inadequate for empirically analyzing the true costs and benefits, or assault and abuse, associated with interracial sex.

The book next turns to the question of how skin color impacted the likelihood of a slave finding freedom, beginning with an investigation into the determinants of manumission using data from the Virginia Register Sample. This data set covers free black individuals in the state between 1794 and 1865, and, importantly, contains information on how each registrant came to be free as well as a vivid descriptor of skin color. Bodenhorn considers a model of incentives for manumission in which owners bargained with slaves to elicit greater effort prior to releasing them, building on his previous work (Bodenhorn 2011). Mixed-race slaves

were more likely to be manumitted and were manumitted at younger ages, reflecting the outcome of negotiations between masters and slaves who had a greater ability to blend in with the already lighter-skinned free population if they ran away. Manumission thus served as a solution to an agency problem for owners, which allowed them to extract more effort from mixed-race slaves, particularly when those slaves worked in high asymmetric information tasks (Dari-Mattiacci 2013). As a result, light-skinned slaves spent eight percent less of their lives in bondage, conditional on having been manumitted.

Conventional wisdom holds that plantation owners often freed their children and perhaps their mistresses upon their deaths, making the manumission of mixed-race slaves more common. However, Bodenhorn notes that this simple story is unlikely to fully explain the phenomenon, particularly given the constraints on freeing slaves imposed by state legislators (and the fact that many owners may not have admitted paternity of their offspring). A fuller explanation for the relative prevalence of light-skinned slave manumissions requires consideration of the economic advantages already held by these privileged few. Mixed-race slaves were more likely to be allowed to work a side job and keep their earnings, enabling them to save up and buy their own freedom; Bodenhorn cites estimates that 10 to 20 percent of manumissions occurred through self-purchase.

The comparative wealth of mixed-race families meant that there were also greater resources available to purchase the freedom of husbands, wives, sons, and daughters, which accounted for another 10 to 20 percent of manumissions. Kotlikoff’s 1979 analysis of New Orleans slave prices compiled by Fogel and Engerman for *Time on the Cross* (1995) reveals a premium for light-skinned slaves. The light skin premium was greatest for female children and older women, suggesting the sexual desires of buyers were not

driving the price differential. Furthermore, the premium was greatest when free African Americans were among the most active buyers, presumably because they were highly motivated to free their relatives. The slave price findings reveal the snowballing advantages of mixed-race individuals: they were more likely to have some education or skill training, work as house servants and gain the personal favor of their masters, or be given free movement to earn wages off the plantation. These advantages translated into a greater likelihood of earning or being granted their own freedom, as well as having the resources to purchase the freedom of family members.

While white ancestry enabled slaves to facilitate the end of their own enslavement within the formal institutions of the antebellum South, the advantages of color carried into the extralegal path to freedom as well. A simple economic analysis suggests that slaves should have run away when the costs were low and the benefits high. Lighter skin was associated with a host of benefits for runaways. First, they were in a better position to support themselves with their skills and training and to finance their escape with saved-up earnings. Second, because lighter-skinned African Americans were overrepresented across generations of manumissions and successful escapes, mixed-raced runaways were thus in a better position to blend in with the free African American population of urban areas. Running away may thus have been a key mechanism through which light-skinned slaves found freedom.

6. *Implications for Future Research into Colorism*

Perhaps one of the most important lessons from *The Color Factor* is that societies produced records for what was deemed essential at the time. Nineteenth-century southern society considered skin color to be vital enough to have documented it for

individuals across a broad range of contexts. As a consequence, we can learn a great deal about how color shaped the fortunes of African Americans in this era. To some extent, the current proliferation of multiracial indicators (the American Community Survey now allows respondents to report up to three racial categories) represents a return to a more nuanced understanding of race. Interest in the matter of skin color has thus come full circle.

There is still much we do not know, and there are many questions we are ill equipped to answer. Most significantly, colorism during the 1930 to 1990 period remains understudied and significant obstacles exist for scholars wishing to investigate race and skin color during the era of the one-drop rule. The National Survey of Black Americans (Jackson and Neighbors 1997) is the only large data set with information on skin tone from this period.² Compiling new data sets with detailed racial descriptors is challenging, but not always impossible. One potential strategy is to combine data sources including pictures, for instance from an online repository for yearbooks, with a systematic rule for assigning race. For instance, in their work on the impact of city council ethnicity and public spending, Brian Beach and Daniel Jones (2017) used Amazon Mechanical Turk to crowdsource the ethnic identification of several thousand California city council members using publicly available photos.

Of course, this type of approach necessarily relies on being able to locate photos for a large sample of people, which is not always possible. There will always be limits on what scholars can recover from the past. The future, on the other hand, holds more promise. For instance, new data sets could include both self-identified race and the race or color assigned by an observer. In a world

²The four waves were collected between 1979 and 1992.

where multiracial people are becoming more common, the question of which racial classification has predictive power for economic outcomes is of great interest.

New sources of data will facilitate deeper inquiry into little-studied consequences of skin color. Two areas in particular call for additional study. First, as highlighted in section 3, very little is known about the intergenerational transmission of the advantages and disadvantages of color. *The Color Factor* documents that mixed-race people were healthier (as measured by height) and better educated. If their children were also taller and more successful, was it because of the intergenerational transmission of these advantages or skin color per se? There is strong evidence that parents bequeath many characteristics to their children, including those fundamental to economic outcomes (Black, Devereux, and Salvanes 2009). The mechanisms through which color and associated traits are transmitted to the next generation have important implications for the elimination of persistent racial disparities.

The second area that warrants further study is the social effects of skin color. The findings of a recent paper by Fryer et al. (2012) demonstrate that mixed-race adolescents engage in disproportionate amounts of risky and antisocial behaviors, regardless of their school's racial composition. Meanwhile, their academic achievement falls somewhere between that of black and white pupils, a finding that is more in line with the extant literature. Why do the patterns look so much different for these worrisome behaviors? The authors posit that mixed-race adolescents experience social difficulties related to "fitting in" that not even their black peers face. Overall, more work is needed to understand the implications of skin color for social interactions, peer effects, and networks in the labor market.

A final lesson from *The Color Factor* can be applied to economics more broadly, which is that scholars should be wary of treating

heterogeneous minority groups as monoliths. Bodenhorn shows that skin color is one differentiating factor for southern blacks in the nineteenth century. My recent work with Tate Twinam and Randall Walsh (Shertzer, Twinam, and Walsh 2016) demonstrates that geographic origins are a key factor for early twentieth century urban areas; we show that an early comprehensive zoning ordinance discriminated against southern-born blacks, but not blacks who had been longstanding residents of northern cities. Teasing out differences across minority subgroups is often challenging, but essential for understanding the full picture of their economic well-being.

REFERENCES

- Atack, Jeremy. 1989. "The Agricultural Ladder Revisited: A New Look at an Old Question with Some Data for 1860." *Agricultural History* 63 (1): 1–25.
- Beach, Brian, and Daniel B. Jones. 2017. "Gridlock: Ethnic Diversity in Government and the Provision of Public Goods." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 9 (1): 112–36.
- Black, Sandra E., Paul J. Devereux, and Kjell G. Salvanes. 2009. "Like Father, Like Son? A Note on the Intergenerational Transmission of IQ Scores." *Economics Letters* 105 (1): 138–40.
- Bodenhorn, Howard. 2002. "The Mulatto Advantage: The Biological Consequences of Complexion in Rural Antebellum Virginia." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33 (1): 21–46.
- Bodenhorn, Howard. 2006. "Colorism, Complexion Homogamy, and Household Wealth: Some Historical Evidence." *American Economic Review* 96 (2): 256–60.
- Bodenhorn, Howard. 2011. "Manumission in Nineteenth-Century Virginia." *Cliometrica* 5 (2): 145–64.
- Bodenhorn, Howard, and Christopher S. Ruebeck. 2007. "Colourism and African-American Wealth: Evidence from the Nineteenth-Century South." *Journal of Population Economics* 20 (3): 599–620.
- Carruthers, Celeste K., and Marianne H. Wanamaker. 2017. "Separate and Unequal in the Labor Market: Human Capital and the Jim Crow Wage Gap." *Journal of Labor Economics* 35 (3): 655–96.
- Dari-Mattiacci, Giuseppe. 2013. "Slavery and Information." *Journal of Economic History* 73 (1): 79–116.
- Darity, William A., Jr., and Patrick L. Mason. 2004. "Evidence on Discrimination in Employment: Codes of Color, Codes of Gender." In *The African American Urban Experience: Perspectives from the Colonial Period to the Present*, edited by Joe W. Trotter, Earl Lewis, and Tera W. Hunter, 156–86. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Donohue, John, and James Heckman. 1991. "Continuous versus Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks." *Journal of Economic Literature* 29 (4): 1603–43.
- Fogel, Robert William, and Stanley L. Engerman. 1995. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, Volume 1. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Fryer, Roland G., Jr., Lisa Kahn, Steven D. Levitt, and Jörg L. Spenkuch. 2012. "The Plight of Mixed-Race Adolescents." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 94 (3): 621–34.
- Goldsmith, Arthur H., Darrick Hamilton, and William Darity, Jr. 2006. "Shades of Discrimination: Skin Tone and Wages." *American Economic Review* 96 (2): 242–45.
- Goldsmith, Arthur H., Darrick Hamilton, and William Darity, Jr. 2007. "From Dark to Light: Skin Color and Wages among African-Americans." *Journal of Human Resources* 42 (4): 701–38.
- Hamilton, Darrick, Arthur H. Goldsmith, and William Darity, Jr. 2009. "Shedding 'Light' on Marriage: The Influence of Skin Shade on Marriage for Black Females." *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 72 (1): 30–50.
- Jackson, James S., and Harold W. Neighbors. 1997. *National Survey of Black Americans, Waves 1–4, 1979–1980, 1987–1988, 1988–1989, 1992*. Ann Arbor: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.
- Kotlikoff, Laurence J. 1979. "The Structure of Slave Prices in New Orleans, 1804 to 1862." *Economic Inquiry* 17 (4): 496–518.
- Kreisman, Daniel, and Marcos A. Rangel. 2015. "On the Blurring of the Color Line: Wages and Employment for Black Males of Different Skin Tones." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 97 (1): 1–13.
- Loury, Linda Datcher. 2009. "Am I Still Too Black For You? Schooling and Secular Change in Skin Tone Effects." *Economics of Education Review* 28 (4): 428–33.
- Margo, Robert A. 1990. *Race and Schooling in the South, 1880–1950: An Economic History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mill, Roy, and Luke C. D. Stein. 2016. "Race, Skin Color, and Economic Outcomes in Early Twentieth-Century America." Unpublished.
- Morgan, Philip. 1999. "Interracial Sex in the Chesapeake and the British Atlantic World, c. 1700–1820." In *Sally Hemings & Thomas Jefferson: History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, edited by Jan Ellen Lewis and Peter S. Onuf, 52–86. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Neal, Derek A., and William R. Johnson. 1996. "The Role of Premarket Factors in Black–White Wage Differences." *Journal of Political Economy* 104 (5): 869–95.
- Shertzer, Allison, Tate Twinam, and Randall P. Walsh. 2016. "Race, Ethnicity, and Discriminatory Zoning." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 8 (3): 217–46.
- Stampp, Kenneth M. 1967. *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Steckel, Richard H. 1986a. "A Dreadful Childhood: The Excess Mortality of American Slaves." *Social Science History* 10 (4): 427–65.
- Steckel, Richard H. 1986b. "A Peculiar Population: The Nutrition, Health, and Mortality of American Slaves from Childhood to Maturity." *Journal of Economic History* 46 (3): 721–41.
- Sundstrom, William A. 1994. "The Color Line: Racial Norms and Discrimination in Urban Labor Markets, 1910–1950." *Journal of Economic History* 54 (2): 382–96.
- Wanamaker, Marianne H. 2014. "Fertility and the Price of Children: Evidence from Slavery and Slave Emancipation." *Journal of Economic History* 74 (4): 1045–71.