

Gendered Color Lines: The Effects of Skin Color on Immigrants' Employment

Andrea Gómez Cervantes and ChangHwan Kim
The University of Kansas

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Research Question

- What are the effects of skin color and race on legal immigrants' employment opportunities?
- Do these differ according to gender?

Skin Color and Race

- Historically Black-White dichotomy: whites having superiority in social and psychological status and depicting blacks as complete opposites and inferior.
- Color line has been a synonym of racial division.
- Light skin → whiteness, or Caucasian
- Dark skin → blackness and African American

Colorism

- ◆ Different treatment of people of the same race based on their skin color.
- ◆ Socially constructed meanings attached to skin color
- ◆ Two prevailing mechanisms (Wilder 2015)
 - ◆ Normative ideology: privileges light skin over dark skin
 - ◆ Oppositional ideology: equalizes all shades of blackness into one common experience



Skin Color Matters

- Immigrants with the lightest skin color earned between 16-23% more than those with the darkest skin color (Hersch 2008; 2011).
- Latinos with darker skin earn on average \$2,500 less per year than Latinos with lighter skin color (Frank and Redstone 2010) .



Hypothesis 1

- Immigrants with darker skin color will be less likely to be employed than immigrants with lighter skin color after controlling for race and other covariates including education.
- Importantly, when skin color is controlled for, race will not affect the likelihood of employment



Race and Skin Color Intersecting with Gender

- Skin color → Gendered
- Whiteness, typically attributed to beauty and purity is often feminized.
- Blackness is linked to ideals of masculinity including fear, criminality, aggression, and dominance.
 - Dark skin → Threat

(1) The “triple disadvantage”

Race + Gender + Color

(2) **Gender intersects with Skin Color**



Hypothesis 2



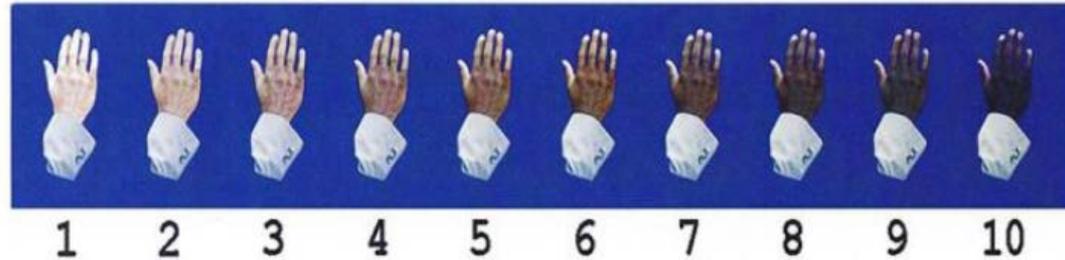
- Because perceptions of skin color themselves are gendered—light skin being associated with femininity and dark skin with masculinity—women's gender will intersect with the effect of skin tone, leaving a stronger negative effect of skin tone on men and not women.

Data

- 2003 Adult sample of the New Immigrant Survey
- Composed of immigrants who are older than 18 years of age, upon admission to the “Lawful Permanent Residence Program”, which includes both new arrived immigrants and “adjustee immigrants.”
- Sample restrictions: Those who are currently in labor force & have skin color information.
- Sample sizes are 1,983 for men and 1,515 for women.

Measures

- Employment
- Skin color scale: 1-9
- Race: Non-Hispanic Whites (=reference group); Non-Hispanic Blacks; Hispanics; Asians and Others
- Control variables:
 - Age, Age squared, level of education, if degree was obtained in the US, years since migration, years since migration missing, speak English well, speak English well missing, and region of residency



Model Specifications

$$\text{Logit}(Y_i) = \alpha + \beta \text{Skin Color}_i + \sum_j \gamma_j \text{Race}_{ij} + \sum_k \delta_k X_{ik}$$

- $\text{Logit}(Y_i)$ is the logit of employment for individual i
- Race_{ij} refers to the J number of racial groups
- X_{ik} refers to the K number of control variables
- Weighted: Original Weight * Inverse of the likelihood of reporting skin color (based on logit estimates of reporting skin color).

Logit Estimates on The Effects of Skin Color on Employment by Immigrants' Race without Controlling for Other Covariates

	All	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic	Asian
I. Men					
Skin Color	-.0815 ** (.0293)	-.0917 (.0931)	.0120 (.2037)	-.1297 * (.0562)	-.1426 * (.0651)
N	1,983	376	127	861	470
II. Women					
Skin Color	-.0268 (.0319)	.0115 (.0908)	-.0633 (.0977)	-.0595 (.0556)	.0803 (.0754)
N	1,515	278	85	671	408

Notes: Numbers within parenthesis are robust standard errors.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Logit Estimates of Employment for Immigrants with the Control of Other Covariates

	Men Model 1	Men Model 2	Women Model 1	Women Model 2
Skin Color	-.0880 ** (.0317)	-.0939 * (.0380)	-.0282 (.0340)	.0018 (.0377)
Race (Ref = non-Hispanic White)				
Non-Hispanic Blacks		-.1690 (.3627)		-1.0456 ** (.3931)
Hispanics		.4562 (.2499)		-.1555 (.2788)
Asians		-.2525 (.2436)		-.7609 ** (.2490)
Others		.2483 (.3252)		-1.0078 ** (.3504)
Pseudo. <i>R</i> -squared	.0878	.0978	.1065	.1230
Log Likelihood	-1,432.0	-1,416.4	-1,582.8	-1,553.6
N	1,983	1,983	1,515	1,515

Notes: Numbers within parenthesis are robust standard errors.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests)

Logit Estimates on The Effects of Skin Color on Employment by Immigrants' Race with the Control of Other Covariates

	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic	Asian
I. Men				
Skin Color	-.1093 (.1066)	-.1254 (.2214)	-.0691 (.0536)	-.1884 * (.0823)
N	376	126	861	470
II. Women				
Skin Color	.0712 (.1124)	-.1084 (.1131)	-.0235 (.0581)	.1087 (.0821)
N	275	84	671	408

Notes: Numbers within parenthesis are robust standard errors.
 p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Logit Estimates on The Effects of Skin Color on Employment by Level of Education with the Control of Other Covariates

	Low Educated Men	Highly Educated Men	Low Educated Women	Highly Educated Women
Skin Color	-1.1075 * (.0491)	-.0882 (.0640)	.0073 (.0446)	.0569 (.0829)
Race (Ref = non-Hispanic White)				
Non-Hispanic Blacks	-.7870 (.5081)	.3739 (.5678)	-1.3891 ** (.5109)	-.8068 (.8995)
Hispanics	.2244 (.3266)	.3416 (.4681)	-.4019 (.3964)	.3971 (.5271)
Asians	-.6376 (.3454)	.0159 (.3605)	-1.1419 ** (.3631)	-.2906 (.3935)
Others	-.0054 (.4373)	.4158 (.5115)	-1.3228 ** (.4747)	-.0692 (.5880)
N	1,209	717	980	484

Notes: The low educated refers to those who have high school or less education, while the highly educated are those who have a bachelor's or higher degree.

p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Logit Estimates of High Status Occupation for Immigrants

	Men Model 1	Men Model 2	Women Model 1	Women Model 2
Skin Color	-.0959 * (.0436)	-.0635 (.0532)	-.0107 (.0537)	.0637 (.0632)
Race (Ref = non-Hispanic White)				
Non-Hispanic Blacks		-.8398 (.5840)		-.9379 (.6206)
Hispanics		-.3269 (.3150)		-.9156 * (.4075)
Asians		.5509 (.2940)		-.8650 ** (.3339)
Others		-.8985* (.4528)		-.2514 (.5669)
N	1,595	1,595	1,037	1,037

Notes: Samples are limited to those who currently have a job. High status occupations refer to professional and managerial occupations, education and teaching occupations, and health-related occupations. Numbers within parenthesis are standard errors.

p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)



Conclusions

- Skin color matters for immigrants' employment probabilities, **but** these effects differ by **gender**.
 - **Skin color** matters for men but not for women
 - For women **race** matters
- Meanings of femininity and masculinity are intertwined with those of skin color.
- Possibility:
 - Dark skinned immigrant men might be regarded as threats.

Implications

- Intersectionality: race, skin color, and gender
 - Meanings are fluid → Change
- **Race alone is no longer enough to understand the current stratification system**
- Immigrant integration
 - Work
 - Segmented Assimilation based on:
 - Race and Skin Color
 - Low educated, Asian men
- Future research





Thank you!

