

Coloring Weight Stigma: On Race, Colorism, Weight Stigma, and the Failure of Additive Intersectionality

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America's obsession with obesity has spawned increasing amounts of research examining how body size shapes social outcomes. Generally, body size negatively correlates with these outcomes, with larger people suffering lower self-esteem, marriage rates, and wages. However, these outcomes are unevenly distributed among racial groups, as black people counterintuitively seem robust to many of the ravages of weight discrimination. Understanding why black people do not suffer a "double burden" where weight is concerned has baffled social scientists using basic models of intersectionality to explain outcomes. The author attempts to deepen understanding of intersectionality and the structure of race in the United States by examining the combined effect of body size and skin tone or color on individual income for black Americans. The author finds that light-skinned black Americans suffer an obesity income penalty similar to white Americans, whereas medium- and dark-skinned black Americans seem to suffer no obesity income penalty.

Keywords

race/ethnicity, colorism, skin-tone stratification, obesity, weight stigma, income inequality

U.S. society has become increasingly obsessed with the idea of obesity. Television commercials, online advertisements, late-night infomercials, and numerous other media show us smiling faces attached to thin bodies posed next to former fat selves to sell us the latest diet or exercise product promising to make us smaller, supposedly fitter, and presumably happier. News programs strike fear into the hearts of viewers with discussions of the dreaded "obesity epidemic"—or even worse, childhood obesity, desperately warning us against getting fat and trying to convince us that death is looming over the shoulder of every fat American. Correspondingly, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention list obesity as one of the top ten public health concerns facing the United States, despite evidence suggesting that the link between body size and mortality is, at best, weak (Helleg, Campbell-Scherer, and Allan 2015). This has led

social scientists and epidemiologists to investigate the social significance of obesity. Some examine how social phenomena such as stigma and poverty contribute to obesity (Lee, Harris, and Gordon-Larsen 2009; Sutin and Terracciano 2013), and others examine how obesity shapes social outcomes. Specifically, researchers have begun to explore how stigma-based discrimination leads to worse social outcomes such as lower self-esteem (Griffiths, Parsons, and Hill 2010) and lower wages (Baum and Ford 2004).

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However, the social consequences of obesity are not evenly distributed among racial groups. Black people and white people not only react differently to body size but also are perceived differently on the basis of their body size. Overall, black people's self-image seems less tied to their body size, and other black people are more accepting of those with bigger bodies (Ali, Rizzo, and Heiland 2013; Ali et al. 2014; Fletcher 2014). Black people also suffer less stigma and discrimination based solely on body size, and this apparent lack of stigma is reflected in the racial differences in the income penalty for black and white people. Whereas white people, especially white women, suffer a relatively severe income penalty for being obese, black people seem to suffer, at worst, a significantly diminished income penalty for obesity and, at best, no penalty at all (Maralani and McKee 2017; Slade 2017). Researchers generally explain this difference by arguing there are different racial standards for body size (Fletcher 2014), although some argue weight-based discrimination may be overshadowed by racial discrimination (Keith et al. 2017). How black people decouple body size from self-esteem and stigma seems to be easily explained by cultural differences. However, the lack of an income penalty has mostly confused researchers, who tend to rely on additive models of intersectional processes to hypothesize that people who are black plus fat¹ (and occasionally plus female), by combining multiple marginalized social positions, should perform worse in the job market. That additive logics have failed to predict the relationship between race, body size, and economic outcomes warrants deeper investigation into how the three concepts may be related and further examination of the limitations of most social scientific applications of intersectionality. Incorporating an analysis of color and skin tone into the discussion of race and body size offers a pathway for achieving both goals.

Color can both complicate and reinforce additive models of intersectionality. It complicates the idea by muddying U.S. conventions that race, in this case blackness, is a binary social position rather than a spectrum with darker skinned black people at one end and lighter skinned black people at the other. Conversely, it reinforces the idea through the assumption that darker skin is simply another marginalized social position that increases a person's vulnerability and disadvantage. In most cases, the latter assumption holds. Research shows lighter skinned black Americans are advantaged on a wide variety of metrics, including wages (Goldsmith, Hamilton, and Darity 2006, 2007),

attractiveness (Reece 2016), and health (Diette et al. 2015; Monk 2015), among a number of others (Blair, Judd, and Chapleau 2004; Branigan et al. 2013; Hannon, DeFina, and Bruch 2013; Hill 2000; Monk 2014; Viglione, Hannon, and DeFina 2011). Indeed, some research suggests the wages of light-skinned black Americans may be closer to those of white Americans than they are to those of dark-skinned black Americans (Goldsmith et al. 2007). This is of particular interest when examining the connections among income, race and color, body size, and obesity. Because there appears to be no income penalty for body size among black Americans but a significant penalty for white Americans, it is difficult to predict its relationship to color, but understanding this relationship is crucial to understanding the mechanisms driving the racial differences in perceptions of body size and the structure of race in the United States more broadly. This study leverages the complicated relationship between race, color, body size, and income to explore the limits of our application of intersectionality and the nature of race and color.

RACE, OBESITY, STIGMA, AND INTERSECTIONALITY

A fairly strong literature establishes a robust connection between body mass index (BMI) and social outcomes, particularly wages. In general, these studies find a significant wage penalty for people with larger bodies, especially those who fall in the range of BMI considered "obese" (Baum and Ford 2004; Oreffice and Quintana-Domeque 2016). This wage penalty is credited to weight stigma and discrimination that results from employers' perception of obesity as a sign of lack of self-control and inability to work productively (Mason 2012). Counterintuitively, researchers find this stigma and discrimination actually causes people to gain more weight (Sutin and Terracciano 2013). The wage penalty, however, is not evenly distributed across social groups. White people, particularly white women, are penalized the most, while black Americans suffer the smallest penalty or none at all (Maralani and McKee 2017; Slade 2017).

Slade (2017) examined the effect of BMI on wages across the wage distribution. For white people and Latinos, regardless of gender, body mass is negatively associated with wages and becomes increasingly negative at the upper ends of the wage distribution. Conversely, the effect of body mass on wages remained mostly flat across the entire wage distribution for black women and was actually

increasingly positive at higher wages for black men. Maralani and McKee (2017) use two different data sets to examine whether the effect of body size on wages had changed over time by comparing two different cohorts of people. They found the connection between body size and wages dissipated for the most recent cohort of black people, with data from 2010. Fletcher (2014) found smaller penalties for obesity for black people on three metrics: years of schooling, marital status, and wages. Indeed, he suggested the wage penalty for obesity may manifest primarily among white women. However, an exception to this trend is Amis, Hussey, and Okunade (2014), who found adolescent obesity negatively affected the adult earnings of black people.

The lack of an obesity wage penalty for black Americans is largely attributed to different body expectations for the two groups, both intra- and interracial. Black people report higher ideal body weights than white people, are less likely to perceive themselves as overweight even when they fall into the “overweight” BMI range, and exhibit less internalized antifat bias (Fletcher 2014; Himmelstein, Puhl, and Quinn 2017). Moreover, black people suffer a smaller decrease in perceived attractiveness as their weight increases, and this is consistent whether the perceiver is black or white (Ali et al. 2013; Fletcher 2014). Hebl and Heatherton (1998) even show white women stigmatize other white women much more harshly for their body size than they do black women, rating larger white women lower on attractiveness, intelligence, job success, relationship success, happiness, and popularity.

However, the intersectional theoretical framework researchers generally use to predict how race will interact with body size tends to fall short, not necessarily because of a failure of the theory but because of a failure of its application. The concept of intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1991) to describe how varying social locations, such as race and gender, combine to produce unique ways of interacting with the world, particularly unique types of oppression that differ from its component parts. Essentially, a person who is black and a woman occupies a space as *blackwoman* that differs from being “merely” black or “merely” a woman (indeed, no one occupies a space as “merely” one identity). Blackwoman is not simply the collection of social interactions that govern blackness combined with the social interactions that govern woman-ness; it is its own social location with interactions that govern blackwoman.

Since Crenshaw unveiled the concept, intersectionality has become an increasingly popular idea in the social sciences, generally used to explain how combinations of subordinate social locations produce worse outcomes than a blend of a subordinate social location and a dominant social location. For example, black women earn lower incomes than both black men and white women because they occupy multiple subordinate social locations—black and woman—rather than only one of each. However, such easy formulations can lead to inadequate theorizing of how these social locations interact, and instead researchers may fall prey to simplistic, additive explanations of these phenomena (e.g., being black is bad, and being a woman is bad, therefore being a black woman is doubly bad). But obesity research forces us to complicate our ideas of intersectionality. Additive models of intersectionality fail to explain social outcomes at the intersection of race and body size, particularly when gender is included. As the above review reveals, three subordinate identities—black + fat (+ woman)—do not necessarily produce doubly or triply bad social outcomes. Furthermore, in an attempt to broaden our understandings of race, weight stigma, and intersectionality, this study introduces another social dimension: color. Examining color will help us parse out how weight stigma is applied across racial groups and deepen our discussion of the intersectional processes at work and, in doing so, complicate our understanding of how race functions in the United States.

COLOR, RACE AND INTERSECTIONALITY

“Color” describes the variation in racialized physical characteristics—primarily skin tone but also hair color and texture, eye color and shape, and nose and lip shape—that occurs within racial groups. Although discussions of color stretch back to the earliest discussions of race in the United States, empirical research on the topic was fairly scarce until relatively recently when surveys began to include measures of color as a part of their questionnaires. Indeed, color has become an almost standard inclusion in social science surveys, leading to a recent boom in research. Researchers have found lighter skinned people, particularly black Americans (although colorism has been documented among almost all racial groups and in almost every country in the world [Hunter 2005]), benefit from better social outcomes than their darker skinned counterparts, a phenomenon called



Figure 1. Visual representation of race as a spectrum.

“colorism.” Colorism seems almost ubiquitous. Relative to lighter skinned black Americans, darker skinned black Americans suffer from lower wages (Goldsmith et al. 2006, 2007), less education (Branigan et al. 2013; Monk 2014), worse physical and mental health (Diette et al. 2014; Monk 2015), lower occupational status (Hill 2000), and longer prison sentences and higher conviction rates (Blair et al. 2004; Viglione et al. 2011); are considered less attractive (Reece 2016); and are disciplined more and more harshly in school (Hannon et al. 2013). On some measures the differences between dark-skinned black people and light-skinned black people are so disparate that the social outcomes for light-skinned black people are more similar to those of white people than those of dark-skinned black people (Goldsmith et al. 2007; Monk 2015).

These divergent social outcomes seemed to be explained by research demonstrating darker skinned black Americans report more discrimination than their lighter skinned counterparts, from both white people and black people (Hannon 2015; Keith et al. 2017; Monk 2015). The “preference for whiteness” thesis posits white people—and other people of color to an extent—favor lighter skinned black Americans because they appear closer to white (Goldsmith et al. 2007). Hannon (2015) even found white people view lighter skinned black people as more intelligent than darker skinned black people. In contrast with previous research that documented a “skin color paradox” (Hochschild and Weaver 2007; Seltzer and Smith 1991), more recent research shows darker skinned black people tend to have more liberal political attitudes, and lighter skinned black people hold more stereotypical views of black people (Hutchings et al. 2016; Lerman et al. 2015; Wilkinson and Earle 2012).

Analyzing color and obesity—a heretofore unexamined phenomenon—offers a unique opportunity to gain a better understanding of how society

views black people of varying colors relative to white people, the processes that facilitate colorism, and the nature of racial categorization in the United States. It offers a test for two similar but competing ideas: that white people favor lighter skinned black people because they view them as either (1) closer to white or (2) people of color who are more palatable. Evidence that supports the former idea lends itself to the conclusion that the racial hierarchy in the United States may be more of a spectrum from white to black, more similar to Latin America, as in Figure 1. Along this spectrum, light-skinned black people would be considered closer to white and thus experience similar social outcomes.

Evidence in favor of the latter idea lends itself to the conclusion that the racial hierarchy in the United States has sharper demarcations between the categories, with color differences operating within those relatively neatly divided categories as in Figure 2.

This would mean that light-skinned black people are not necessarily considered closer to white but simply a more palatable type of black person. However, it is important to note this is not a question of whether light-skinned black Americans are more allied with white people or dark-skinned black people but a question of whether racial categories actually have the closed ends we typically take for granted in the United States.

This is a subtle but important difference that deepens our understanding of the contemporary relationship between race and color, with implications for how we measure race and how we confront inequality. Although colorism cannot exist in the absence of racial difference, because racial hierarchy dictates which colors and skin tones are valued and which are devalued, racism does not necessarily supersede colorism as a form of stratification in modern America. Examining whether the racial structure in the United States is more spectral or

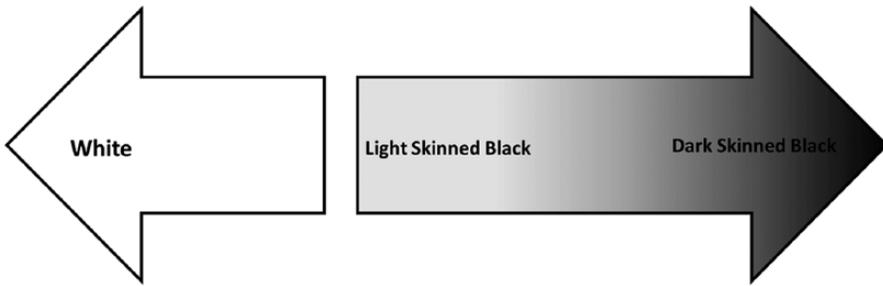


Figure 2. Visual representation of race as closed categories.

categorical helps us understand whether color has come to trump race in shaping social outcomes. It is possible in the absence of formal, legal racial barriers to black advancement in the wake of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, lighter skinned black Americans who had enjoyed superior social outcomes since chattel slavery were poised to rapidly increase their social standing in a way that sharply diverged with darker skinned black Americans (Reece 2018). This may suggest our traditional ways of conceptualizing and measuring race and color have become antiquated as legal barriers were dismantled. We must consider the possibility the American racial structure has become or is becoming more of a spectrum based on color (or maybe even a tri-racial system, as Bonilla-Silva [2017] suggested). Otherwise by continuing to measure inequality with discrete racial categories, we risk obscuring the severity of inequality, particularly underestimating the poor life chances of darker skinned black Americans (Banks 2014; Norwood and Foreman 2014)

However, it is difficult to parse out whether light-skinned black Americans are viewed as more white-like and thus whether race is a spectrum or categorical. The difficulty stems from the fact that most of the social outcomes examined in relation to color follow a hierarchy that mirrors the racial hierarchy: light to dark/white to black; the idea that light-skinned people are viewed more white-like than dark-skinned people seems intuitive even though there is no formal test for an alternate hypothesis. But if the social outcomes of light-skinned people mirror those of white people on a metric that does not follow the racial hierarchy, it offers fairly robust evidence of the perceived similarities between the two groups relative to the similarities between light- and dark-skinned black people. Particularly, if light-skinned black people suffer an obesity income penalty similar to that of white people, it may mean they are viewed as

closer to white. If light-skinned black people suffer—or fail to suffer—an obesity income penalty similar to black people or dark-skinned black people, it may mean they are viewed as more tolerable black people rather than closer to white.

This complicates additive models of intersectionality, particularly where color is involved. It forces us to consider the complex ways color and race intersect to create distinctive ways of interacting with the social world rather than simply, in the case of whiteness and darker skin, compounding negative social outcomes or, in the case of blackness and lighter skin, partially alleviating a negative social outcome. In this study, the question concerns what it means to be *black+fat+darkskinned* versus black + fat + dark-skinned, pushing past the seemingly intuitive idea that black + fat + dark-skinned results in a wage penalty that increases with each additional subordinate social location rather than the three social categories combining to shape the wage penalty in a way that stands apart from its individual categories.

The only extant study on the intersection of race, color, and body size falls victim to the additive intersectionality trap. Keith et al. (2017) deployed a standard additive model of intersectionality that predicted people would report more discrimination as their number of subordinate social categories increases (e.g., large, dark-skinned black women should report the most discrimination). This model ultimately failed to explain their results, which revealed no connection between reported discrimination and BMI for black people and no connection between reported discrimination, BMI, and color, even though they found dark-skinned people reported more discrimination in general. The present study expands this exploration of the connection between race, color, and body size by testing how they intersect to shape income.

By examining color differences in the wage penalty for body size, this study begins to help us understand whether light-skinned black Americans are held to body standards similar to those of white people. This will help us understand how body size stigma may vary by color and the mechanisms driving colorism in the United States.

DATA AND METHODS

The data for this study come from the National Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), a nationally representative longitudinal survey that has followed a cohort of adolescents through four waves of data collection since 1994.² The study was originally designed to focus on youth networks and risk behaviors, but as the respondents have aged, it has become an ideal tool to analyze health and social factors over time.

My sample includes black and white people on the basis of their self-identified race in Wave 3, in which the interviewers also recorded skin tone/color. For respondents who selected multiple races, I coded them on the basis of the single race they said they most strongly identified with. For example, a respondent who selected black and white but most strongly identified as white would be coded as white; a respondent who selected white and Asian but most strongly identified as Asian would be coded as Asian and thus excluded from the sample.

Focal Independent Variables

My primary independent variables are color and body size. I measure color using a variable for skin tone. Although “color” includes an interplay of skin tone and other physical characteristics, it is difficult to capture characteristics such as nose shape and eye shape in survey data, so studies using surveys generally default to using skin tone as a proxy. Experiments show racial classification, particularly for black people, is more strongly tied to skin tone than other characteristics (Dunham et al. 2016; Feliciano 2016). As the most salient physical marker of race for black people, skin tone should also serve as a robust measure of color.

Add Health coded skin tone using an interviewer coded five-point scale during Wave 3, with 1 representing the darkest skin tone and 5 representing the lightest skin tone. However, for ease of interpretation, I reverse-coded the variable so 5 is the darkest skin tone and 1 is the lightest so the variable is a progressive scale of skin darkness. Where the models indicate categorical skin color

divisions (light-skinned, medium-skinned, and dark-skinned), I collapsed the scale at the extremes such that 1 and 2 are light-skinned, 3 is medium-skinned, and 4 and 5 are dark-skinned.

I measure body size using BMI, which I calculated using measured height and weight for Wave 3. BMI is admittedly a crude measure of body size and definitely does not follow a smooth gradient such that higher BMIs necessarily signal larger bodies, as people vary in how their weight is distributed and their amount of muscle mass and bone density. However, creating BMI groupings offers a broad measure of body size such that we can be sure that the groups actually capture the differences in body size we hope to measure. To that end, I created dichotomous variables for overweight (BMI > 24.9 kg/m²) and obese (BMI > 29.9 kg/m²).³ My dependent variable is measured in Wave 4, but I use Wave 3 for body size to avoid the inherent endogeneity of measuring the primary explanatory variable and dependent variable at the same time point.

Other Variables

The dependent variable is a measure of individual annual income in Wave 4. I also control for a number of other factors: gender, age, education, weekly hours worked, whether the respondent grew up in a two-parent household, and parents’ cumulative education. Gender is a dichotomous variable for whether a respondent is a woman. Age is each respondent’s age in Wave 4. Education is a measure of total years of schooling, such that a high school education is 12, a bachelor’s degree is 16, a master’s degree is 18, and so on. Weekly hours worked is the respondent’s report of how many hours he or she typically works in a week. Two-parent household and parents’ education are designed to measure family background to account for the effect of childhood affluence on future income and/or body size. Two-parent household is a dichotomous variable for whether a respondent reported having both parents at home during Wave 1, and parents’ education is the combined number of years of education of the respondent’s parents using the same coding scheme as respondent’s education.

Analytic Strategy

I use a multipronged analytic strategy to not only test the different effects of body size on income by skin tone but understand how those effects compare with the effect of body size on income for the total white population and black population.

I first ran a series of models estimating the effect of body size on income for black and white people. The first model includes all black and white respondents, the second includes white respondents, and the third includes black respondents. Each model includes the control variables: gender, age, education, weekly hours worked, two-parent household, and parents' education. This series of models serves as a baseline against which I can compare the results of the models of skin tone to examine whether they more closely align with the results of white people or black people.

Next, I estimated a series of models for black people that included skin tone and body size. This serves as an additional baseline for the next model by establishing the independent effects of skin tone and body size.

The following model begins to delve into the core of my study by testing whether skin-tone disadvantage and weight disadvantage combine to produce a magnified negative effect on income. The model includes dummy variables for each possible combination of weight and skin-tone category. This means the model includes dummy variables for dark-skinned/normal weight, dark-skinned/overweight, dark-skinned/obese, medium-skinned/normal weight, medium-skinned/overweight, medium-skinned/obese, light-skinned/overweight, and light-skinned/obese. I excluded light-skinned/normal weight as the reference category.

Finally, I estimated a series of models to examine whether the effect of body size on income differs by skin tone. For this, I estimated three models: one for light-skinned black people, one for medium-skinned black people, and one for dark-skinned black people. Each model included the variable for overweight, the variable for obese, and the control variables. This series of models also offers a comparison for the effect of body size on income for white people, allowing me to explore similarities between them and black people of various skin tones.

Notably, research also suggests the skin-tone wage penalty and the obesity wage penalty may differ by gender, but my models do not disaggregate by gender because such an analysis is outside the scope of the current manuscript.

Because Add Health uses a complex sampling design to ensure broad representation of regions and racial and ethnic groups, it is important to use the correct weighting strategies. I used PROC SURVEYREG in SAS statistical software and was careful to apply the appropriate weights as dictated by the Add Health documentation to ensure accurate results.

RESULTS

The results both support and build on existing research, expanding knowledge of weight and body size stigma, colorism, and the workings of race in the United States.

Table 1 lists descriptive statistics. Table 2 shows the results of the models comparing the body size penalty for black people and white people. The results are as expected on the basis of previous research. When both racial groups are included in the same model, although overweight is nonsignificant, obesity is negative and significant, indicating obese people on average earn less than nonobese people. However, the race-specific models reveal a more complex story. Obesity remains negative and significant for white people but is nonsignificant for black people. Consistent with previous work, black people appear to suffer a noticeably smaller body size penalty than their white counterparts. Indeed, my results indicate obese black people, on average, do not earn less than nonobese black people.

Table 3 shows the results of models estimating skin tone and body size for black people separately. Again, the estimates here are consistent with previous research, but, like the previous series of models, important for providing a baseline for the other analyses. In the first model, as expected, skin tone is negative and significant, meaning darker skinned black people tend to earn less than lighter skinned black people. The second model includes overweight and obesity, but the relationships between body size and income and skin tone and income for black people remain consistent. Overweight and obesity are both nonsignificant, and skin tone is negative and significant. The next series of models begin to answer the major questions guiding this research by testing the effects of combinations of skin tone and body size.

Table 4 shows estimates of combinations of skin tones and body sizes for black people. The results seem to counter additive conceptions of intersectionality. All of the body size combinations for medium- and dark-skinned black people are nonsignificant, meaning body size does not affect the incomes of medium- and dark-skinned black people. However, the variable for light-skinned and obese is negative and significant, meaning light-skinned obese people tend to earn smaller incomes than nonobese light-skinned people. This result reveals the complex dimensions of race, color, and body weight. It is clear that simply combining subordinate social categories—in this case black,

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Black and White		Black		White	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Income (\$)	32,998	848.69	26,172	1,328.81	34,314	902.70
Skin tone	1.57	0.06	3.71	.06	1.12	.02
Overweight	.50	—	.55	—	.48	—
Obese	.25	—	.29	—	.24	—
Woman	.50	—	.51	—	.50	—
Age (years)	28.53	0.11	28.75	.19	28.48	.12
Two parents	.70	—	.43	—	.75	—
Parents' education	22.49	.30	18.45	.38	23.32	.29
Education	14.07	.08	13.60	.15	14.16	.09
Weekly hours	40.65	.34	38.81	.69	41.04	.37
<i>n</i>	8,445		2,047		6,398	

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of Wages by Race.

Variable	Blacks and Whites		Whites		Blacks	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Intercept	-71,200.19***	11,520.58	-70,126.74***	13,557.95	-80,934.78***	16,784.32
Overweight	1,159.15	1,273.88	671.53	1,461.78	2,752.36	1,953.27
Obese	-2,823.52**	1,389.38	-2,858.32*	1,648.62	-2,662.96	2,193.17
Black	-4,798.96***	1,122.22	—	—	—	—
Woman	-10,934.71***	1,200.80	-11,983.76***	1,377.96	-5,406.09***	1,899.55
Age	1,268.43***	345.41	1,283.83***	406.11	1,295.51**	522.09
Education	3,379.97***	432.73	3,392.25***	508.04	3,097.24***	404.67
Weekly hours	612.72***	58.41	619.39***	67.08	536.43***	60.19
Two parents	949.02	2,823.10	802.34	3,069.53	-2,120.05	5,358.09
Parent education	34.28	253.31	-11.98	286.71	496.52	342.49
R^2	.11		.11		.16	
<i>n</i>	7,914		6,095		1,819	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .0001$.

dark-skinned, and obese—does not necessarily produce compounding negative social effects. This forces us to dig deeper to understand the reasons underlying the impact of combined social categories. Specifically, this leads us to ask why light-skinned black people seem to suffer an income penalty for obesity, whereas darker skinned black people do not. The next model begins to offer a way to answer that question.

Table 5 shows the results of a series of models estimating the effect of body size on income for white people, light-skinned black people, medium-skinned black people, and dark-skinned black people. This allows me to compare the effect of body size across the four groups, thus helping us understand the workings of weight stigma and the

contours of race and color in the United States. As in all of the previous models, overweight remains nonsignificant for each of the four groups. However, obesity is negative and significant for white people and light-skinned black people, even though it is nonsignificant for medium-skinned black people and dark-skinned black people. This means white people and light-skinned black people appear to suffer an income penalty for obesity, whereas medium- and dark-skinned black people do not. As counterintuitive as it may seem that darker black people do not suffer compounding disadvantages for obesity, that the obesity penalty for light-skinned black people mirrors that of white people offers important insights into the processes governing race and color advantage in the United States.

Table 3. Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of the Effect of Skin Tone and Body Size on Wages for Blacks.

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	SE	β	SE
Intercept	-75,323.85***	15,573.98	-74,957.36***	15,352.79
Overweight			2,807.88	1,937.11
Obese			-2,512.80	2,174.60
Skin tone	-1,289.37**	623.59	-1,279.91**	611.34
Woman	-5,704.26**	1,902.49	-5,702.54***	1,896.78
Age	1,273.86**	505.48	1,276.97**	507.73
Education	3,062.66***	411.25	3,042.18***	404.34
Weekly hours	542.40**	58.67	539.16***	59.94
Two parents	-2,073.82	5,526.54	-2,313.12	5,422.40
Parent education	491.47	274.71	502.56	344.09
R ²	.16		.16	
n	1,814		1,814	

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .0001$.

Table 4. Ordinary Least Squares Estimate of Additive Effect of Skin Tone and Body Size on Wages for Blacks.

Variable	B	SE
Intercept	-77,435.16***	16,206.83
Light-skinned and overweight	6,654.51	4,451.00
Light-skinned and obese	-6,097.46*	3,614.88
Medium-skinned and normal weight	-2,550.39	2,608.39
Medium-skinned and overweight	2,609.81	4,434.58
Medium-skinned and obese	-4,127.78	4,356.38
Dark-skinned and normal weight	-2,620.49	2,332.33
Dark-skinned and overweight	-1,999.57	2,893.18
Dark-skinned and obese	-676.82	2,417.99
Woman	-5,707.28***	1,904.60
Age	1,270.94**	506.78
Education	3,052.39***	410.42
Weekly hours	537.15***	60.25
Two parents	-2,485.27	5,428.85
Parent education	509.57	348.63
R ²	.16	
n	1,814	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .0001$.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

On Body Size and Intersectionality

Although intersectionality remains a useful analytical tool for understanding how multiple social locations interact with one another, this study

provides additional evidence that it is vital for social scientists to move beyond simple additive conceptions of intersectionality. We must begin to seriously consider how combinations of social locations create new ways of interacting with the social world rather than stacking on top of each other in a pile of disadvantage or propping us up on

Table 5. Ordinary Least Squares Estimates of Wages by Skin Tone and Race.

Variable	Whites			Light-Skinned			Medium-Skinned			Dark-Skinned		
	B	SE	n	B	SE	n	B	SE	n	B	SE	n
Intercept	-70,126.74***	13,557.95		-54,534.57	31,448.25		-14,8229.22***	26,443.17		-54,855.77***	20,684.85	
Overweight	671.53	1,461.78		5,166.13	4,196.96		5,323.67	4,541.13		632.68	1,984.24	
Obese	-2,858.32*	1,648.62		-5,545.11*	3,172.34		-4,611.15	4,344.68		-823.20	2,419.30	
Woman	-11,983.76***	1,377.96		-10,219.38**	4,537.65		-5,934.89	3,914.77		-4,515.21**	2,001.92	
Age	1,283.83***	406.11		1,299.22	1,003.34		3,039.76***	761.50		549.97	667.42	
Education	3,392.25***	508.04		2,578.16***	707.90		3,641.44***	1,004.90		2,768.94***	457.49	
Weekly hours	619.39***	67.08		567.99***	147.43		551.77***	104.23		517.59***	68.66	
Two parents	802.34	3,069.53		12,469.23	9,296.48		-9,930.40	14,207.06		-2,059.98	3,635.95	
Parent education	-11.98	286.71		-629.28	536.01		1,138.09	895.79		476.80*	256.66	
R ²		.11			.21			.21			.13	
n		6,095			285			538			991	

p < .0001***; p < .01**; p < .05*.

a pedestal of advantage. Considering the differential effects of body size on income by race and color offers entrée into that necessary reconsideration of how we think of, analyze, and interpret intersectionality.

It is clear body size cannot be consistently tacked on to another social category to magnify its negativity but it relies on a network of stigma that is racialized and colored (and gendered) in ways we are only beginning to understand. Even though researchers increasingly acknowledge white people and black people have different body expectations and those different standards seem to shape a number of social outcomes, we have yet to understand why. A fair number of historical accounts chronicle the development of fat stigma in the United States (e.g., Farrell 2011), but none examine how such different body standards developed for black people and white people, and, perhaps more vexingly, why do white people hold seemingly more relaxed body standards for black people than they do for themselves? These are the complex questions true intersectional analysis must be prepared to tackle.

Another important dimension to consider is the connection between weight stigma and health and, ultimately, what it means that black people seem to be more resistant to the negativity of weight stigma. An increasing amount of research questions the connection between body size and health, suggesting many of the health effects we associate with body size may actually be driven by a combination of the stress associated with weight stigma and dangerous weight loss behaviors (Puhl et al. 2017; Sutin, Stephan, and Terracciano 2015). If black people's different body standards shift how they are affected by weight discrimination, are they also more resistant to the physical health effects of weight stigma?

On the Nature of Race

Race in the United States was long thought to be unique from race in places like Latin America. Whereas race in Latin America is commonly thought of as a spectrum from white to black, in the United States, "one-drop rules" led most of us to think of race as categorical. Whereas in Brazil, for example, a person can define his or her racial ancestry in terms of degrees of whiteness or degrees of blackness, in the United States, a person is generally considered either black or white, with a sharp demarcation between the two groups. However, increasing explorations of color stratification and racial reclassification (e.g., Liebler et al. 2017; Saperstein and Penner

2010, 2014) in the United States have led race scholars to reexamine the strength of the boundaries between racial groups and consider race in the United States may also operate on a type of spectrum (Goldsmith et al. 2007; Painter, Holmes, and Bateman 2015). Nevertheless, a consistent theorization of how color and race interact in the United States continues to elude us, with one of the guiding questions revolving around why white people confer favor onto lighter skinned black people at the expense of darker skinned black people. Are lighter skinned people actually considered "more white" or simply the least repulsive option among black people? The results of this study lend themselves to the former conclusion.

That white people and light-skinned black people both suffer an income penalty, whereas darker black people do not, may be an indication that light-skinned black people are held to similar body standards as white people. Experiencing similar types of body stigma, especially if white people stigmatize the large bodies of light-skinned black people in the same ways they do to themselves, may suggest white people actually view light-skinned black people as more similar to themselves and closer to white. If light-skinned black people were considered "black but palatable," presumably their body expectations—and ultimately how their body size shapes their social outcomes—would be more similar to darker skinned black people.

NOTES

1. I use various terms throughout this paper to refer to body size. *Obesity* and *obese* are medical terms I tend to use only when the literature refers to body size that way or when I am referring to the clinic definition of the term. Otherwise, I lean on the term *fat*, which I generally use to refer to larger bodies, particularly how they fit into systems of stigma and discrimination.
2. Wave 5 was being collected at the time of this writing.
3. My results are consistent whether I use a continuous measure of BMI or dichotomous variables.

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