

Title: Effects of Colorism on Mortality in 19th Century North Carolina  
Authors: Green, Tiffany L. and Hamilton, Tod G.

**Tiffany Green, Ph.D.**  
**Health Disparities Research Scholar**  
**University of Wisconsin-Madison**  
**Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology**

**Tod Hamilton, Ph.D**  
**Harvard School of Public Health**  
**Department of Society, Human Development, and Health**

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## Extended Abstract

Typically, discussions of race and health dichotomize race into black/white categories without considering the existence of intra-group differentials. In the case of African-Americans, evidence indicates that colorism, or discrimination based on skin shade, plays a role in labor market outcomes, educational status, wealth disparities, and health outcomes. This body of literature has demonstrated that race plays an important role in determining the impact of discrimination by phenotype. However, little of this research is grounded in a historical understanding of how socioeconomic status and skin shade may have contributed to both past and contemporary health disparities. More specifically, there is a dearth of historical and empirical research examining the relationships between skin shade, gender, class and health during the post-Emancipation period.

This research seeks to look at the ways in which colorism may have contributed to and exacerbated historical inequalities in health outcomes after the Civil War. To examine these issues, we use a unique new dataset comprised of existing sources, including the 1880 North Carolina Census Death Records and the entire 1880 North Carolina Census. Preliminary results indicate that there were persistent gaps between blacks, mixed-race blacks, and whites in areas such as infant mortality, life expectancy and death from infectious diseases. We continue to investigate the role of gender in determining intra- and inter-group mortality differences.